

What do the Symbols of Christmas Mean?



Star represents the bright star that shone the night Jesus was born. *“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east and have come to worship him.”* Matthew 2:2



Candy Cane represents the shepherd’s staff. Christ is also called the Good Shepherd. *And there in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.* Luke 2:8



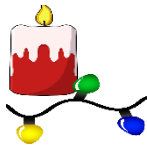
Gifts represent gold, frankincense, and myrrh. *...And when they opened, they had opened their treasures, they presented him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.* Matthew 2:11



The evergreen tree represents the eternal life. *For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* John 3:16



Christmas carolers represent the multitude of angels that sang on the night Jesus was born. *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest...”* Luke 2:13-14



Christmas candles and lights represent the light that Jesus has brought to the world. *To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.* Luke 1:79



Holy Berries represent the blood that Christ shed for us. *For this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many remission of sins.* Matthew 26:28



Nativity scene represents the scene in the manger where Jesus was born. *And she brought for her firstborn son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the inn.* Luke 2:7



Christmas wreath represents the crown of thorns that Jesus wore when he was crucified. *The soldiers made a crown of thorns and put it on his head...* John 19:2



Christmas Bells represent the call of mankind to worship the Lord. *For the Son of Man came to seek, and to save that which was lost.* Luke 19:10

December 2024 Newsletter

“On Wings Like Eagles”

...but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength
They shall mount up with *wings like eagles*,
They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.
Isaiah 40:31



St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
PO Box 2, 772 St. Johns Road
Saint Johns, PA 18247

Church Office Phone Number: 570.788.2685

Email: stjohns@epix.net

Facebook: [SJELC.StJohnsPA](https://www.facebook.com/SJELC.StJohnsPA)

Website: www.sjlutheran.org



Pastor Designate: Reverend Michele Kaufman

Organist: Brenda Zimmerman

Church Secretary: Rose Fox

Phone: 570-788-2685

Office Hours: M-W 9 am to 1 pm; F – 9 am to 12 pm

Our Purpose

(Our sense of what God is calling us to be and do in the mission of the Church)

God's purpose for our congregation is to be a Christ-centered community, glorifying God and sharing the gospel and blessings with our neighbors.

Sunday Mornings

Adult Bible Study @ 8:45 am

Youth Sunday School is held at 10 am/during Worship

Coffee Hour following Worship on the first Sunday of the month

Catechism Classes

Catechism Classes for youth in grades 6, 7, and 8th grades is available.

Parents and P. Kaufman agree to a schedule that is compatible for all.

All are invited to join us for our worship/fellowship opportunities.

Contact Information

Pastor Michele Kaufman – Pastor Designate

Phone Number: 570-881-2371

If you have a pastoral need such as a request for a hospital visit, pastoral care need, or spiritual counseling, please contact P. Kaufman.

For other requests such as a baptism, funeral, or wedding, please contact the church office @ 570-788-2685. If necessary, please leave a message including your full name, phone number, the reason for your call, and the best time to contact you.

2024 Church Council Officers/Members

Melody Hinderer - President

Donna Cassarella - Vice President

Jane Krouse - Secretary

Jan Jacobus - Assistant Secretary

Jennifer Cipriani - Treasurer

Sherry Grenzberg - Assistant Treasurer

Jim Cassarella

Patty Phile

Church Ministries – See Calendar for Scheduled Meetings/Events

Finance Team – TBA, Chairperson

Lay Eucharistic Ministry Team: Melody Hinderer, Judy Mundie

Learning Ministry Team: Kim Deliman, Chairperson

Lutheran Church Women (LCW): Mary Ellen Sims, President

Prayer Circle Ministry: Kim Deliman, Chairperson

Prayer Shawl Ministry: TBA, Chairperson

Property Team: Jim Cassarella, Chairperson

S.E.R.V.E. Ministry: Donna Cassarella, Melody Hinderer, Co-Chairpersons

Worship and Music Ministry Team: TBA, Chairperson

We offer many opportunities for ministry. If interested, please contact the church office, a council member, or the chairperson(s) listed above.

From Pastor Michele Kaufman:

Happy New Year! The church calendar is slightly off kilter when it comes to the recognized calendar year. Christ the King Sunday celebrates the full authority of Christ as King and Lord of the universe. The liturgical year begins with Advent, which is the season of awaiting the coming of Christ. Observing Christ the King Sunday at the end of the liturgical year celebrates and emphasizes the Kingship of Christ. Many Christians don't know the history of the title "Christ the King." The feast is actually a relatively new addition to the liturgical calendar. However, referring to Christ as "King" is not new.

There are countless passages throughout the New Testament where Jesus is referring to as "King." Some of these include Matthew 27:11 which says, "Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, 'You have said so.'" Another passage is First Timothy 1:17 which says, "To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." Revelation 19:6 also says, "On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed King of kings and Lord of lords." From these passages, we see that "King" was one of the earliest titles given to Jesus Christ.

We know from Scripture that Jesus is the way and as a spiritual King, He provides direction to His Kingdom on earth and in heave. John 14:16 says, "Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me." It's important that we recognize His authority so that we can determine own spiritual direction. We know that when we make Jesus the focus of our lives, we have direction. He navigates our life. When we are lost spiritually, we have no idea where we're going. Remember, Jesus is not "a way" but "the way". Jesus is not just "a king" but "the King." Our call as Christians is to follow and honor His rule.

Advent begins the new church year. It is a season of anticipation: a season of hope and waiting. It is a time of preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ. Just as Advent moves us toward the remembrance of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem in the first century, it also reminds us that we need to be prepared for Christ's coming again.



PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

Almighty God,

My parish family is composed of people like me.

I help make it what it is.

It will be friendly, if I am.

Its pews will be filled, if I help fill them.

It will do great work, if I work.

It will make generous gifts to many causes, if I am a generous giver.

It will bring other people into its worship and fellowship, if I invite and bring them.

It will be a parish family of loyalty and love, of fearlessness and faith, and a parish with a noble spirit, if I, who make it what it is, and filled with these same qualities.

Therefore, with the help of God-

I will dedicate myself to the task of being all the things that I want my parish family to be.

Bless my journey Lord God, that I might build the Church through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN

Highlights from the Church Council Meeting on November 14, 2024

Attendance for September: P. Michele Kaufman, Melody Hinderer, Jan Jacobus, Jane Krouse, Sherry Grenzberg, Donna Cassarella, Jim Cassarella, Patty Phile, Jennifer Cipriani

Treasurer's Report: Approved October 2024 bills. Budget meeting Thursday, Nov 21st @ 6 pm. Finance workshop was held Nov. 9th. Workshop was taped, written report will be reviewed.

Cemetery Treasurer's Report: No report

Council Minutes: Church Council Minutes of October 10, 2024, approved.

Pastor's Report: Pastor will have office hours in our church on Thursdays from 9 – 12. No report received.

- Blue Christmas Service to be held at our church: Sunday, December 22nd @ 3 pm. P. Michele Kaufman to preside.

Worship Team: Chairperson needed.

- Head Usher responsibilities for December: Jim and Donna Cassarella.
- Supply Pastor Schedule for December
December 1: Pastor John Hazel, Jr.
December 8: Pastor Chip Fairchild
December 15: Pastor Chip Fairchild
December 22: Pastor Melvin Mundie
December 24: Christmas Eve Service: Pastor Chip Fairchild
December 29: Pastor Robert Reier
- Sunday December 8th: Congregation Christmas Party @ Noon; Tom's Kitchen
- Friday, December 13th: Tree decorating @ 5 pm – Leitner Family will decorate, all children are invited to help decorate; refreshments will be served.
- Sunday, December 15th: Hanging of the Greens; decorate after church service
- Melody Hinderer ordered Avent calendars and devotion booklets for our members

SERVE Team: Donna Cassarella and Melody Hinderer – Co-Chairpersons

- Next Meeting Thursday, January 23rd, 2025 @ 6:30 pm

Learning Ministry Team: Kim Deliman – Chairperson

- No report received.
- Movie showing: "Why the Nativity?" will be held on Saturday, December 14th at 2 pm. Free admission, all are invited to attend. Light refreshments will be served.
- Kid's Night in November was a success. Another Kid's Night is planned for December.

Property Team: Jim Cassarella – Chairperson

- Heating issues in the Shuster Education Wing will be addressed when time allows.
- Disposable toilet seat covers will be installed in the restrooms.
- Suggestion for our parking lot to have lines painted

LCW: Mary Ellen Sims – Chairperson

- Meeting held Tuesday, November 11 @ 1 pm
- Motion passed to accept the resignation of Mary Ellen Sims as President to be effective Dec 31st, 2024.
- Willow Foundation Heartwood Center asked for much needed donations. Donations will be accepted until Dec 1st. List of needed items is attached to the donation box in the St. Stephen's room.
- Please see the bulletin for all Advent giving donations and tributes.
- Funeral Dinners: Families will have all funeral dinners catered; our church will continue to serve the funeral dinners. Donations from the family is welcomed.

Continuation of Meeting Highlights...

- Any events that a bake sale will be held, church members will participate, but another team will be in charge of the bake sale.
- \$ 200.00 will be given for the 4 separate Advent giving Sundays.
- \$ 200.00 will be donated to the Willow Foundation.
- No donations will be given in 2025 from the LCW to their normal ministries they have supported.
- All monies left at the end of the year will be put in the Mundie Fund to help pay for coffee supplies.
- Next meeting is December 31st, 2024 to close the LCW checking account.

Lay Eucharist: Melody Hinderer and Judy Mundie will make visits in December; Pastor Michele will visit in November. The shut-ins will be given an Anniversary Gift bag.

Call Committee Team: Melody Hinderer, Chairperson – No update

- Members: Jim Cassarella, Jane Krouse, David Leitner, Judy Mundie, Sheila Maslo

Carillon Team: Members: Dave Cunfer, Judy Mundie, Arlene Poltrock, Peggy Hawk, and Sherry Grenzberg.

- No update.

225th Anniversary Team: Melody Hinderer – Chairperson

Members are Donna Cassarella, Jim Cassarella, Jennifer Cipriani, Dawn Klick, Jane Krouse, Judy Mundie, Sally Russo, Mary Ellen Sims, Kim Washko, and Joe Washko.

- Time capsule that was buried in June 2000 was opened followed by a light lunch.
- Items are on display in the St. Stephen's room.
- If we can make it happen, we will rebury the time capsule and bury another time capsule for our 225th Anniversary celebration.

New Business: Melody Hinderer sent the following:

Thank You note to Sand Springs for their exceptional luncheon for us on October 6th.

Acknowledgements of Hunger Appeal donations given to P. Joe Scholtes, Jr., P. Chip Fairchild, P. Michele Kaufman, and P. Mel Mundie were mailed to each of them.

Thank you note was sent to Matthew Shuster for his donation to our church.

Sent invitations to the family of Sister Janet Stump, and P. Buglio to attend our Anniversary service and dinner and to be here on All Saints Sunday for the dedication of the Sunday school room in Sister Janet's honor.

- **Hazleton Lehigh Mission District Meeting was held November 6th @ 7 pm.**

Synod Assembly for 2025 will be held the last week in May at Christ Hamilton Square (near Stroudsburg).

Suggestion to have two people sign all checks.

Grants are available for ministries that need financial help.

Christ Lutheran Conyngham is having Advent services, plus their drive thru nativity dates are found on our bulletin board in the St. Stephen's room.

Next meeting, February 26th @ St. John's Mahoning Twp. @ 7 pm.

- **Council nomination ballots will be distributed the first 3 weeks in December.**
- **There are 8 three-year terms to fulfill the council open seats.**
- **TEAM CHAIRPERSONS MUST HAVE THEIR REPORTS FOR 2024 SENT TO THE CHURCH OFFICE BY JANUARY 6th, 2025.**
- **All reports for the January newsletter are due by December 15th.**

Next council meeting December 12, 2024 @ 7 pm.

Meeting adjourned @ 8:00 pm; closed meeting by praying the Lord's Prayer.

December Supply Pastor Schedule

- 1 - Rev. John Hazel, Jr.
- 8 - Rev. Chip Fairchild
- 15 - Rev. Chip Fairchild
- 22 - Rev. Melvin Mundie
- 24 - Rev. Chip Fairchild
- 29 - Rev. Robert Reier

Altar Flower Sponsors

- In Loving Memory of Hilda & Willard Wenner and Children by Don & Betty Wenner & Family
- In Loving Memory of Gene E. Mundie by Mundie Family
- In Loving Memory of Priscilla (Chich) Mundie
- In Honor of the LCW by Melody & Steve Hinderer
- Christmas Poinsettias
- In Loving Memory of Loved Ones by Peggy Hawk

Bulletin Sponsor for the weeks in December: In Memory of Loved Ones by Sandy Zamba

Christmas Worship Schedule



A Blue Christmas Service will be held on Sunday, December 22nd at 3 pm. A service of healing and hope through the Holidays.

Please join us for our Christmas Eve Service on Tuesday, December 24th as we celebrate the joy of our Christ’s birth. Special music will begin prior to the worship service at 7 pm.

An Old Fashioned Worship Service will be held on Sunday, December 29th. This service will be from the “Black” Service Book and Hymnal, copyrighted in 1918.



This year’s Christmas Tree is donated in memory of
Karl and Nadine Sauer
with love from the Sauer and Solon families

December Birthdays and Baptisms Celebrations

We publish these celebrations with permission and information given by our members. If your celebration is missing from our list, please call the church secretary with the information and your information will be updated. Thank you!

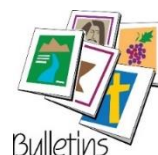


- 5 - Connie Barbush
- 19- Mason Floyd
- 25 - Barry Schell
- 30 – Sheila Maslo
- 30 – Colyn Smith

2 – Emily Barbush

Bulletin Sponsors

You may sponsor our weekly church bulletins for 2024. The cost for one week is \$10.00. Available Dates Chart and forms are available in the St. Stephen’s room. Please fill out the form along with your check payable to St. John’s Lutheran Church and return it to our church secretary. **The 2025 Sponsor sheet is now available.**



2025 Altar Flower Chart



The 2025 Altar Flower chart is available in the St. Stephen's Room.

Monthly Coffee Hour



The next Coffee Hour will be on **December 1st** sponsored by The Mundie Family celebrating the December birthdays. If you are interested in sponsoring the month of January, please sign up in the St. Stephen's Room.

The 2025 Sponsor sheet is now available.

Valley Food Pantry



The Valley Food Pantry will distribute special "Christmas" food boxes. Our church will sponsor cans of green beans. Other items needed are coffee and regular tea bags. Donations must be in by December 15th. **Please make sure the products are within the expiration date.** No medications/vitamins, etc., are accepted. Thank you for your generosity and support throughout the year to the Valley Food Pantry.

Sunday School



the message of God's Grace and love.

Sunday School starts **at 10:00 am during worship service**. The children will begin in the church sanctuary with everyone else. This will allow the children to still have some exposure to the worship service before they begin their lessons. The Pastor will then dismiss them about 15 minutes later to go to their classroom. Sunday School helps to build a strong foundation of faith in the life of your child. The teachers are looking forward to greeting the kids and sharing

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Do you knit or crochet? We meet on the first and third Wednesdays of the month for about 2 hours. If the winter weather is bad or for some reason we aren't meeting, we will call. If interested, call the church office at 570-788-2685.



Kid's Night



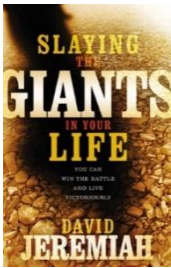
Come out and join us for Kids' Night, on Tuesday, **December 10, at 6:00 pm**. Kids will be creating their own gingerbread houses. Registration is required in order to ensure we have enough houses for everyone. Light refreshments will be provided. All are welcome. Come for fellowship and enjoy our Christmas treats and movie! Please contact the church office to register.

Prayer Circle

Do you have a prayer request for yourself or someone else? Please contact Kim Deliman at 570-788-4459. Tell me if you would like the prayer request to be included in the bulletin and placed on the prayer circle list? Do you want to be contacted by Pastor Michele Kaufman? You may also call the church office or, sign the Prayer Request list located on the table in the St. Stephen's Room.



Jeremiah 29:12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you.



Adult Bible Study

Adult bible study is held on Sundays at 8:45 am.

Join us in studying: **Dr. David Jeremiah's message on "Slaying the Giants in Your Life".**
Fight fear, destroy discouragement, win against worry, and disarm your doubts.

Each weekly topic is listed below:

Dec. 1 – Slaying the Giant of Failure Dec. 8 – Slaying the Giant of Jealousy

Advent Season Begins December 1st

Below is the list of our Advent Giving. Monetary donations are accepted. Make checks payable to St. John's Lutheran Church. In the memo section, state which organization you are giving a donation to.

Do not wrap the donations.



December 1st: St. Luke's Manor White Gifts: Socks, tissues, perfume, cologne, and lotion, for men and women

December 8th: Salvation Army: (NEW) Gloves, hats, and scarves for men, women, and children

December 15th: Head Start: Books, games, toys, socks, sweatshirts, and sweatpants suitable for children ages 3 & 4.

December 22nd: VALOR Clinic Foundation: Monetary donations (make checks payable to St. John's Lutheran Church) VALOR'S Mission is to provide Veterans with assistance accessing benefits, securing shelter, and providing long-lasting Post Traumatic Stress resources Unstoppable Program. Located in Kunkletown, PA known as "Paul's House" at the Old Jonas Hotel. Visit the website valorclinic.org for more information.



Congregation Christmas Dinner – December 8th

All members are invited to the Congregation Christmas Dinner held on December 8th at 12 pm held at Tom's Kitchen. Members **MUST** prepay by December 1st. Your reservation will not be made without prepayment. The cost is \$15.00 per adult and \$7.50 per child. Children under 5 are free. **If you plan to attend, please contact Mary Ellen Sims after the church services on Sunday or call 570-788-2866.**

Please join us for this time of fellowship as we celebrate the
"Reason for the Season"

Mission Opportunity

Hello everyone!

I was hoping to share with all of you on the 27th the various opportunities that are available to members of the synod through our companion synod program. I realize the Synod E-news does not reach a large portion of our membership, so I want to ask for your help. I am excited to announce that we have two opportunities next year- an exchange group to Germany (tentatively April 22 -May 1) and for the first time, an opportunity for us to visit Argentina (June 12-22). Both trips are intergenerational. There are sightseeing opportunities as well as opportunities for conversation and discussions and a chance to see various ministries in both locations. It is a very personalized way to travel as we are not simply tourists, but we have that opportunity to meet and mingle with people of faith. Please let folks in the congregations know these opportunities are available and I would be happy to share more details with those who are interested.



Thanks again for spreading the word!

Pr. Michele Kaufman
Companion Synod Coordinator for NEPS
570-881-2371 kaufman19@verizon.net



Thrivent

Are you aware that a \$20 investment would allow you access to a Thrivent associate membership and a \$250 Action team card? If you are interested, please contact Pr. Kaufman about an application form. It's quick and easy and imagine the projects we could underwrite and the difference we can make!

Our congregation would like to express our deepest condolences to the family of

John P. Billig, Jr.



May the prayer below be a prayer of comfort and strength and carry you all through the days ahead.
Our prayer to the family and all who loved John.

Father, we thank you, that you are the source of all true joy in life. Your word says that, even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. The loss of my loved one feels like a dark valley.

I ask that you lead me through this difficult time.

May I find the comfort I desire in you and the strength I need in your name.

May your presence be with me every hour of the day.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



Blue Christmas Worship Service

We will be hosting a Blue Christmas Service of healing and hope through the Holidays. Pastor Michele Kaufman will conduct the service on **Sunday, December 22nd at 3 pm.**

Request from the Willow Foundation Heartwood Center

(Homeless shelter located in Hazleton)

Willow Foundation is hosting a 9 Days of Giving campaign from November 18th to November 26th, which is the National Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week.

Our church was asked to participate and to bring awareness of those who hunger and are homeless in our area.

We are extending the donation period to December 1st; there will be a donation box in the St. Stephen's room for the following donations. We thank the LCW for helping by making a \$ 200 donation.

Please give if you can; the items most needed are in **BOLD LETTERS**.

- **HYGIENE PRODUCTS: shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, body wash/soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, cleansing body wipes.**
- **Feminine Hygiene Products**
- **Floor Cleaner**
- **Disinfectant Wipes**
- **Winter Hats**
- **Winter Gloves**
- **Socks**
- **Men and Women's Underwear**
- Toilet Paper
- Paper Towels
- Coffee Cups
- Paper Plates
- Plastic Silverware
- Napkins
- Styrofoam to go Containers
- Kitchen Garbage Bags
- Contractor Bags
- Sugar
- Eggs
- Bread

- First Aid Supplies
- Hand Warmers
- Backpacks
- Canned Goods



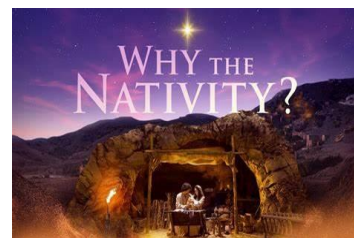
Wreaths Across America



The Wreaths Across America ceremony will be held on **Saturday, December 14th** beginning at 12 pm. Please come out and support our scouts and our veterans. Light refreshments will be served immediately after in Luther Hall. If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Cipriani.

December 14th – Why the Nativity? Docudrama Film

Following the Wreaths Across America Program (approx. 2 pm), join us in Luther Hall for the docudrama film, *Why the Nativity?* A cinematic journey through the most pivotal moment in history, the birth of Jesus Christ! Refreshments will be served.





Christmas Tributes

Please use the following form for Christmas Tributes. Forms are due no later than December 8th.



Christmas Tributes

Christmas Tributes are given to the Glory of God in celebration of the birth of our Savior. This year, you may sponsor a Christmas Tribute by purchasing poinsettias (\$7.30 each) and/or donating to ELCA Disaster Response (any amount). The poinsettias will adorn the church nave on Christmas Eve; you may take your sponsored flowers home following the service.

DONATION TO: ELCA DISASTER RESPONSE: \$ _____
 In memory/honor of: _____
 In memory/honor of: _____
 In memory/honor of: _____

POINSETTIAS (6" pot with 4-6 blooms):
 (Quantity) _____ X \$7.30 = (total) \$ _____
 In memory/honor of: _____
 In memory/honor of: _____
 In memory/honor of: _____

RED ONLY

TOTAL SUBMITTED FOR ALL ITEMS: \$ _____
YOUR NAME (SPONSOR): _____

Please give this form with payment to Janet Brady no later than Sunday, December 8th. If you wish to mail your sponsor form and payment to the church office (P.O. Box 2, Saint Johns, Pa. 18247), it must be received by Sunday, December 8th. Additional forms are on the narthex table. Cash / or checks to: St. John's Lutheran Church.

Running on



You're invited!

Join us at
Sunday School
(for ages 3-12)

**Our Sunday
School time
has
Changed to
10:00 am**

Bring your child/grandchild to our new Sunday School Program where they can learn about God's love through interactive stories, songs, and activities.

We begin in the main worship service and then they are released to go to their classroom following brief words from the pastor.

We look forward to welcoming your child/grandchild to our fun and supportive learning environment.





A Call to Serve: Bishop deForest on Living Faithfully in Today's World

"I may be saved for all eternity, just like all of you [in worship this morning]. But I want my first moments in eternity to be surrounded more by people I helped than by people I hurt; by more celebration than condemnation; and by a Jesus more glad at me than mad at me."

This excerpt from Bishop Christopher deForest's sermon, preached during a service at Maiden creek in Blandon on November 10, captures the heart of his message.

The Gospel lectionary for November 10 was Mark 12:38-44, where Jesus observes people putting money into the temple treasury, noticing a poor widow contributing two small copper coins—all she had to live on. Jesus explains to his disciples that the widow has put in more than all the others, as she gave out of her poverty, while they gave out of their wealth.



Bishop Christopher deForest preaching and worshipping at Maiden creek, Blandon on Nov 10, 2024

Bishop deForest focused his sermon on Lutheranism, particularly since that Sunday was also Martin Luther's birthday. "Martin Luther himself would likely say that this story from the Gospel of Mark is a great example of the kind of things that got Luther all worked up in the first place," said Bishop deForest. He argued that Jesus would not want us just to "be like the widow" or celebrate "sacrificial giving" or "cheerful givers" as illustrated by the widow. Rather, he pointed out that Jesus was expressing strong anger at a system that ignored the plight of the poor and those harmed by economic inequalities and injustice. Bishop deForest compared Jesus' angry response in the Gospel of Mark to the time when Jesus overturned the tables in the temple.

He also paralleled the recent election with Jesus' reaction to the widow's offering. "Lots of people voted, in similar anger. They - or someone they love, care about, feel concern for - are being forgotten," he noted. He reminded us that regardless of political affiliations, Christ died and came to save all of us. Quoting John 3:16, he said, "God so loved the world, that God gave God's only son, that everyone who believes in him, may not perish but may have eternal life." He emphasized, "Eternal life. Forever. Which I will spend, with these same folks. On all sides." That includes the widows and the scribes. The elites and the forgotten. The celebrities and the nobodies.



Bishop deForest concluded his sermon with a call to action: "While we're still here, and we can still offer love like Jesus, healing like Jesus, and side-by-side engagement like Jesus - with our friends and enemies, strangers and neighbors - well then, Jesus calls us out, the same as all his disciples - to get to work, while we can."

To read Bishop Christopher deForest's full sermon in his recent "On The Way" blog visit godsllove.org/onthewaynov11

Submitted by: Stacey Burke, NEPA Synod Communications & Growing Young Coordinator

Learning Ministries' Day



January 25, 2025

8:30am-3:30pm

Sponsored by the NEPS Faith Formation Resource Ministry Team

Jordan Lutheran Church, Orefield

godsllove.org/LMD

"What does it mean to be a Christian in a culture that challenges our faith?"

Registration information available soon




- 1 - 1st Sunday of Advent; Adult Bible Study @ 8:45 am; Church & Sunday School @ 10 am;
Coffee Hour; Deadline for Christmas Dinner reservations
- 2 - Scouts @ 6 pm
- 4 - Prayer Shawl Ministry @ 9:30 am
- 7 - Funeral @ 11 am – John Billig
- 8 - 2nd Sunday of Advent; Adult Bible Study @ 8:45 am; Church & Sunday School @ 10 am;
Christmas Party @ 12 pm held at Tom's Kitchen
- 9 - Scouts @ 6 pm
- 10 - Kids' Night @ 6 pm
- 12 - Church Council Meeting @ 7 pm
- 13 - Tree Decorating @ 5 pm
- 14 - Wreaths Across America @ 12 pm; *Why the Nativity?* Docudrama Film @ 2 pm
- 15 - 3rd Sunday of Advent; Church & Sunday School @ 10 am; Hanging of the Greens
- 16 - January Newsletter Deadline; Scouts @ 6 pm
- 18 - Prayer Shawl Ministry @ 9:30 am
- 22 - 4th Sunday of Advent; Church & Sunday School @ 10 am; Blue Christmas Service @ 3 pm
- 23 - Scouts @ 6 pm
- 24 - Christmas Eve Service @ 7 pm; church office closed
- 29 – Old-Fashioned Church Service @ 10 am
- 30 - Scouts @ 6 pm

Upcoming COMMUNITY EVENTS

- December 5 – Christ Lutheran Church Conyngham – Potluck dinner in Roth Hall @ 6 pm followed by a service of Lessons and Carols beginning @ 7 pm. Feel free to attend the service if you cannot be at the potluck.
- December 7 & 8 – Christmas at Eckley, from 10 am to 4 pm, both days the antique pipe organ will be played.
- December 7 & 8 – Christ Lutheran Church, Conyngham - Living Nativity @ 5 to 7 pm
- December 8 – Freeland Area Community Choir will perform “Miracle” at 3 pm held at St. John's Reformed UCC, Freeland
- December 12 – Saint John Bosco Catholic Church, Blood Drive from 1 to 6 pm
- December 12 – Christ Lutheran Church Conyngham – Potluck Dinner in Roth Hall @ 6 pm followed by a service of light and warmth called the Holden Evening Prayer.
- December 15 – Freeland Area Community Choir will perform “Miracle” at 3 pm held at Faith UCC, Hazleton
- December 15 – Saint John Bosco Catholic Church, Living Nativity Presentation at 6 pm
- December 21 – Black Creek United Methodist Church – Blue Christmas Service at 6 pm

DECEMBER 2024

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|--|---|--|--|---|--|
| 1 Adult Bible Study @ 8:45 am Church & SS @ 10 am Coffee Hour | 2 Scouts @ 6 pm | 3 | 4 Prayer Shawl Ministry @ 9:30 am | 5 | 6 | 7 Funeral/ John Billig @ 11 am |
| 8 Adult Bible Study @ 8:45 am Church & SS @ 10 am Christmas Dinner - Tom's Kitchen @ Noon | 9 Scouts @ 6 pm | 10 Kids Night Gingerbread houses 6 pm | 11 | 12 Church Council Meeting @ 7 pm | 13 Tree Decorating @ 5 pm | 14 Wreaths Across America @ 12pm Why the Nativity? Film @ 2 pm |
| 15 Church & SS @ 10 am Hanging of the Greens | 16 Scouts @ 6 pm January Newsletter Deadline | 17 | 18 Prayer Shawl Ministry @ 9:30 am | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 Church & SS @ 10 am Blue Christmas Service @ 3 pm | 23 Scouts @ 6 pm | 24 Christmas Eve Service @ 7 pm Church office closed | 25 Christmas Day | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 Church & SS @ 10 am | 30 Scouts @ 6 pm | 31 Church office closed |  | | | |