



ST. JOHN'S EPISTLE

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
BERRYSBURG, PA | DECEMBER 2022/JANUARY 2023

Letter from the Pastor

Dear Friends in Jesus,

As we continue our journey forward into our "new normal", the seasons of Advent and Christmas will continue to look and feel more familiar this year. On **December 11**, as Miss Laurie also mentions in her letter following mine in this *Epistle*, our congregational family Advent/Christmas gathering will once again have a much more interactive and intergenerational feel as all ages come together for **One Starry Night**. After numerous activities inside from 4:00 to 6:00 P.M., including a light supper, during which folks may come and stay when and for as much time as they are able, we will head outside to our pavilion for a Live Nativity presentation of the story of Jesus' Birth, following which we will finish up inside with warm refreshments.

And on **Christmas Eve**, our **4:00 P.M.** worship will once again have its own special focus and feel. We will do that with a focus on our young persons, including a Sunny Sermon and special music by our youngest members, set within worship that will, in general, be simpler and less formal than our traditional candlelight worship later that evening. Then, at **8:00 P.M.**, our traditional candlelight festival liturgy of Holy Communion will again take place in the nave with carols galore. Our goal at both 4:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M. is to provide the most meaningful opportunities to worship our Newborn King for the most people of God. Please come and worship at one or both and please note that our musical preludes will be planned so that they wrap up and worship begins at the top of the hour, at 4:00 and 8:00. **If you have music of any kind that you would like to share at either 4:00 or 8:00 (or both), please contact Pastor Tom as soon as possible if you have not already done so.**

As we again enter into this holy time, reminded of just how very much God loves you and me and all that God has made, I want to thank you, my sisters and brothers in this wonderful congregational family, for another year of productive and, we pray, faithful ministry together – and I want to join with Ann to wish you a most blessed Advent and Christmas celebration and a strong beginning to another new year. A lot has changed over the past 22½ years, for all of us, and we know that change is built by God right into the very fabric of Creation, but the thankfulness that we both feel to be a part of the St. John congregational family – the honor that it is to journey in faith together – does not change. Thank you – and thank you for your kind attention in reading on in this **St. John's Epistle!**

Pastor Tom

News from Miss Laurie, Young Christians Minister

Hey, everyone! Can you believe it's DECEMBER already?! Even though it's not "officially" winter, it's sure starting to feel that way! We've even seen a little bit of the "white stuff"! Right after Thanksgiving, I programmed my car with ALL holiday music (at least I waited until it was ALMOST December)!! And then there are the lights, and decorations, and Christmas trees....yep, it's December all right!

With the craziness that comes in December and the Christmas season, please take note of these fun, holiday events we've got scheduled and save some space on your calendars:



- Sunday, December 4th – We'll be "Preparing for Jesus" by decorating our Celebration Space! The fun starts at 9:00!
- Wednesday, December 7th – It's our "Cavalcade of Candy Canes" Celebration Club! Join us from 6:30 – 8:00 and be part of the fun!
- Sunday, December 18th – Join us at the church for our "One Starry Night" Advent event!
- Sunday, December 18th – It's our "Here Comes Christmas" SONday Celebration! Join us as we get ready for Jesus' arrival!
- Saturday, December 24th – Join us at 4:00 for our Christmas Eve "Celebration" Service – a kid friendly, more contemporary service with a Sunny Sermon and a performance by the "Jingle Elves"! AND/OR
- At 8:00 on Saturday, December 24th - It's the traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service!

As you can see, the month is filled with opportunities to fill your hearts with the joy of Christmas! Please join us for all the fun!!

Wishing you all the happiest of holidays and a blessed and Christ-filled Christmas!!

Miss Laurie

Six Little Stories with Lots of Meanings

1. Once all villagers decided to pray for rain. On the day of prayer, all the people gathered, but only one boy came with an umbrella.
That is faith.

2. When you throw babies in the air, they laugh because they know you will catch them.
That is trust.

3. Every night we go to bed without any assurance of being alive the next morning, but still we set the alarms to wake up.
That is hope.

4. We plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future.
That is confidence.

5. We see the world suffering, but still, we get married and have children.
That is love.

6. On an old man's shirt was written a sentence 'I am not 80 years old; I am sweet 16 with 64 years of experience.'
That is attitude.

Have a happy day and live your life like these six stories. Remember - Good friends are the rare jewels of life, difficult to find and impossible to replace!!

Join us at St. John's at 4:00 on
Sunday, December 11th



Our interactive Advent experience!

Come enjoy the excitement of Bethlehem on the night

Jesus was born!

There will be food, games, crafts and activities from 4:00-6:00.

Then, we'll head out to the pavilion to hear and see the

Nativity Story unfold.

Afterwards, we'll come back inside to warm up with cookies

and drinks!

The whole family is invited to share in the magic and

Fellowship of that first Christmas night!!

Book Group

December through January, Book Group will meet on Zoom at 6:30 pm. Please join us!

- December 5 -- The Parables of Peanuts by Robert L Short

2023 - save the dates (books still to be chosen):

- January 9
- February 6
- March 6

Call or email Ann 717.362.7895 rahbruner@gmail.com if you need a book or have questions.

Annual Congregational Meeting to be Held

As specified in our congregational constitution, our Annual Congregational Meeting will be held in two parts. On **Sunday, December 11**, we will meet following worship to take action on the election of four members to our Congregational Council and to adopt a spending plan for 2023. On **Sunday, January 15**, we will again meet following worship to receive and act on reports of the ministry of our congregation conducted during 2022 and take care of such other business as may come before the gathered body. For both parts of the meeting, it is **very important** that we have a good turnout of voting members! Voting members are confirmed members of the congregation who have communed and made a contribution of record during 2021 and/or 2022. For those attending either or both parts of the meeting via Zoom, the Zoom host of the morning will make sure to keep a close eye on all Zoom participants for any questions that need forwarding to the floor of the meeting and when hands need to be raised for any voting.

To aid you in preparing for the December 11 meeting, the proposed 2023 combined budget for the Current, Children and Youth (C&Y), Flower, and Improvement Funds, along with the budget for the Benevolence Fund, are included in this **Epistle**.

To focus on that combined budget for a moment, covering the funds which handle far and away most of the day-to-day work of congregational ministry, you will notice that total anticipated 2022 expenditures show an increase of 5.9% from 2022. This unusually-large increase comes about in part because of well-deserved increases in compensation for Miss Laurie and our other paid staff and a necessary increase in heating oil expense, but it is mostly the result of a proposed (7.2%) increase in Pastor Tom's area of the budget, to keep his compensation in line with synodical guidelines and, for the first time in several years, to provide for covering half of the cost of adding Ann to Pastor Tom's health insurance plan for the coming year, after several years of savings in this area with Ann on a separate plan. This change in insurance will not be a "forever" thing if approved – only for 2023 and potentially for 2024 (subject to separate approval in next year's budgeting process).

Please don't miss this opportunity to help in the faithful strengthening of our ministry together – plan to join in these brief but important gatherings on December 11 and January 15!

Our winter session of Midweek Bible Study will get underway on **Wednesday, January 11** and run for six weeks, meeting each week from 6:30 to 8:00pm and wrapping up in time for the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday. Pending COVID and other illness developments, we will plan to meet in-person at the church, with the option for participants who would prefer to do so to "Zoom in" (and the possibility of going to Zoom-only if necessary). Our topic is being finalized as this **St. John's Epistle** "goes to press", so please watch for further details. As always with these studies, no previous Bible study experience is required – only an interest and enthusiasm to study, reflect on, and (if and when you are comfortable doing so) discuss God's Word together! So that the correct number of study books can be ordered for our study, please register in advance (by speaking with Pastor Tom) **by the end of the morning on Christmas Day.**

Bible Study

Our winter session of Midweek Bible Study will get underway on **Wednesday, January 11** and run for six weeks, meeting each week from 6:30 to 8:00pm and wrapping up in time for the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday. Pending COVID and other illness developments, we will plan to meet in-person at the church, with the option for participants who would prefer to do so to “Zoom in” (and the possibility of going to Zoom-only if necessary). The title of our study this winter will be ***Dialogues On: Race***, during which we will take time, as Brothers and Sisters in Jesus, to honestly and respectfully reflect on and talk about what our Bible, our Church traditions, and our history tell us about this potentially difficult and divisive topic. Using a study book and a documentary-style DVD, we will delve into the scholarship, the stories, and the experiences of people of many different racial backgrounds as we engage in this six-week process. As always with these studies, no previous Bible study experience is required – only an interest and enthusiasm to study, reflect on, and (if and when you are comfortable doing so) discuss God’s Word together! So that the correct number of study books can be ordered for our study, please register in advance (by speaking with Pastor Tom) **by the end of the day on Tuesday, December 20.**

Women of the ELCA – Shut-Ins

Last year the congregation was involved in a card shower at Christmas to include our shut-in members and nearly shut-in members.. They so appreciated getting them and being remembered. We have decided to do the same this year. Following are the names and addresses for our shut-in members and not exactly shut-in members who would very much appreciate receiving a Christmas Card from our St. John's congregation:

- **Judy Cheatham** - Rm. #47B, Cadia Healthcare, 900 Van Buren Street, Annapolis, MD 21403
- **Timothy Enders** - Rm. #122, The Gardens at York Terrace, 2401 W. Market St., Pottsville, 17901
- **Jane Grosser** - Rm. #705, Northern Dauphin Nursing and Rehab. Center, Millersburg, 17061
- **Joyce Matter** - Commonwealth Senior Living at Harrisburg, Room 128, 150 Kempton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17111
- **Cora Mace** - Masonic Health Care Center, Room #3647, Roosevelt 3, 600 Freemason Drive, Elizabethtown, PA 17022
- **Dianne Schell** - 646 North Street, Lykens, PA 17048
- **Dawn Warner** - Halifax Village LLC, 66 Kip Road, Halifax, PA 17032
- **Robert Schaffer** - Polk Personal Care Center, Apt. #125, 301 North Street, Millersburg, PA 17061

Thank you in advance for participating in this mission.

Looking Ahead to Our Annual Strawberry Festival

The date of next year’s Annual Strawberry Festival is set for Wednesday, June 7, 2023. This appears to be the first time we have ever planned the Festival for the first Wednesday in June, so it may take some extra work on all of our parts to help folks realize it won’t be the very familiar “second Wednesday in June” next year. It has been checked and confirmed that going with this earlier date won’t conflict in any way with local school schedules and shouldn’t cause any problems with regard to having strawberries. (The first planning meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 7, at 7:00pm at the church.)

Sponsor Sheets

Three new 2023 sponsor sheets are now available (currently on the table outside of Pastor Tom's office, but soon being posted on a bulletin board in the foyer area) – for continuing ministry support for our **Celebrate** bulletin inserts (\$22/month); for **Tree 4 Hope**, an innovative anti-poverty ministry begun by our neighbors at Tree of Life Evangelical Lutheran Church, Linglestown Road, Harrisburg, and serving those in need in Guatemala, involving an orphanage, mission trips from our area, and, now, a new girls' school called “Hope Academy” - a world mission with a local connection (\$50/month) – and for providing one month of a **Konde Diocese (in Tanzania, Africa) Pastors Salary** (\$50/month) . To sponsor any of these three ministries in honor or in memory of loved ones or events, please stop by the table to sign up or, if easier, please feel free to call or email Pastor Tom, who can place your name on the desired month(s).

Please note that a separate sign-up calendar will soon be posted for 2023 altar flowers.

Lector Schedule for 2023

The following is the schedule of folks scheduled to serve as lectors during 2023:

January: Reyann Cheatham

February: Barry Williard

March: Judith Cheatham

April: Donald Deibler

May: Amy Gehring

June: Joshua Paul

July: Carl Baumgardner

August: Gary Daniels

September: Vincent Lamenza

October: Jamie Doyle

November: The Henry Family

December: Matt Williard

We thank them for serving in this important ministry of worship. ***(And on Sunday, January 15, we will join in praying God's blessing on them as they share God's Word throughout the coming year!)***

Pastoral Acts

At the Font

During worship on Sunday, November 13, Pastor Tom presided as we welcomed **Benjamin Allen Paul**, the young son of **Sara & Joshua**, into the Kingdom of God and the St. John Congregational Family in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. We pray God's blessings on Benjamin, his parents, his sponsors, and his other family members as they live out the promises they have made!

At the Altar

Pastor Tom presided on Reformation Sunday, October 30, as we celebrated with **Brooklyn Bender, Derrick Henry, Kyan Peters, and Bennett Troutman** and their families as they received their First Holy Communions, after completing instruction with Pastor Tom. (Brooklyn had received Holy Communion previously but was recognized for completing her instruction with Pastor Tom.)

At Graveside

Pastor Tom presided at funeral worship for **Mary Yeager**, who died at her home at the Polk Assisted Living facility in Millersburg on October 14. Worship took place at the church on October 24, with interment in Riverview Cemetery at Halifax. Pastor Tom also led a time of Memorial Worship in the Polk Chapel on October 19 for Mary's "Polk Family". We pray God's comfort in the promise of the Resurrection of Jesus for **Dana and LuAnn** and Mary's other family members and loved ones!

Congratulations to Our Graduates!

Congratulations to **Carissa Barder** for earning her Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. Carissa graduated *summa cum laude* from Central Penn College and completed the required courses three months earlier than anticipated.

And to **Kristen (Spicher) Eisenberg** who graduated from the University of Southern California in August of 2021 with her Masters of Science in Nursing and with a concentration of family/primary care nurse practitioner. Then, in August of 2022, she completed her post-Master's certificate program with a concentration of adult gerontology acute care nurse practitioner. She will begin her career at Piedmont Cardiology in Atlanta, Georgia in February 2023.

Thank you!

With gifts received on Sunday, November 13, we reached a significant milestone in our **Restoration 250** project, with more received in gifts and pledged gifts than we were hoping for/planning on. You may remember that the estimated total project cost is **\$220,000** and that we have designated **\$88,000** of interest from our Memorials Fund toward that cost (while setting aside a \$100,000 reserve in that interest for our recent steeple repair and any other unexpected needs). This means that we were in need of **\$132,000** in other support. As of November 13, we have now received **\$76,775** in gifts and a further **\$55,390** in pledged gifts, which means we have now exceeded that \$132,000 goal by **\$165**. (This \$165 and any additional gifts received will allow us to save some of that \$88,000 in interest money for future needs – a very good thing!) As of the middle of November, there are still a few small details which the contractor will be addressing before we make our final payment, and it appears that we may well come in under the \$220,000 budget when all is said and done. And, of course, the sooner those of us who have made pledges can fulfill those pledges, the sooner the project will be entirely completed. Thank you all so much – and well done!

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
Congregational Council Minutes
October 2, 2022

The council meeting was called to order by President Roy Henry. Pastor Tom opened the meeting with devotions and a prayer.

Present: Roy Henry, Pastor Tom Bruner, Gail Billow, Joshua Paul, Ira Antes, Heidi Lehman, Lorri Motter, Craig Peters, Dana Klouser, Sheila Barder, Michael Henninger and Courtney Foreman. Excused: Carl Baumgardner

Minutes: Motion by Heidi Lehman to accept the July 2022 minutes as read. Second by Craig Peters. Motion approved unanimously.

Reception of Petitions and Communications:

1. Discussion was held related to the opportunity for a heating oil price cap as described in a previous email from Pastor Tom. A motion was made by Craig Peters to participate in the price cap program. Second by Josh Paul. The motion passed unanimously.
2. The inspector from the insurance company visited in late July. There were no recommendations for repairs needed.
3. There is \$23,000 - \$24,000 remaining to meet the goal for the Reno 250 fund drive. There is a \$20,000 pledge pending that should help close the gap toward goal.

Pastor's Report: Motion to accept Pastor Tom's reports from May/June and July/August was made by Josh Paul. Second by Michael Henninger. Motion approved unanimously.

Children and Youth Ministry Report: Motion to accept Miss Laurie's reports for July/August/September by Heidi Lehman. Second by Lorri Motter. Motion approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Reports: Motion to accept the treasurer's reports for July/August by Josh Paul. Second by Michael Henninger. Motion approved unanimously. Bicentennial Fund report submitted by Lynn Henninger.

Reports of Standing Committees:

Church Property: No report.

Finance Committee: Next meeting scheduled for October 18, 2022.

Worship and Music: Ascension Day: May 18, 2023, join cluster event at Peace UCC in Berrysburg. Motion and Second from Worship and Music committee. Motion approved unanimously by council.

"Return to Normal" Communion at the altar to begin this month. Pastor Tom is looking for assistants for Communion.

Return to Liturgy adapted and streamlined service once per month presented with a motion and second from the Committee. Council passed the motion unanimously.

Faith Formation: No report.

Youth Ministry: We hosted the LYO school kit project. Planning an outing to Nawakwa on 10/23/22 for Fall Festival.

Mutual Ministry: Meeting scheduled for next Sunday.

Executive: No report.

Nominating: No report.

History and Archive: No report.

Women of the ELCA: Soup sale is coming up. Orders and money are due 10/23/22, pick up is scheduled for 11/5/22.

Cemetery Association: No report.

Strawberry Festival: No report.

Unfinished Business:

Bell ringing training: Bell to ring at 10:00 by lead usher. 7 peals of the bell.

AED pads have arrived.

New Business:

A discussion was held about considering active shooter training/drills. Josh Paul is to contact the State Troopers Association to get guidance on planning.

Craig Peters has a use for the old John Deere tractor that is no longer being used. Council approved unanimously.

Sheila Barder is to be lead usher in January.

Lead Usher will recruit 3 other ushers to help during worship service.

Next Council Meeting: November 13, 2022 at 6 pm.

Adjournment: Motion by Gail Billow, Second by Craig Peters to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved unanimously. The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Courtney Foreman, Secretary

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Name of Jesus 9am - Adult Bible Study**, Youth Bible Time with Matt & Olivia**, SONDay Celebration with Miss Laurie** 10:15am - Traditional Lessons & Carols Worship*, including Celebration Time with Miss Laurie for Young Persons In-Person New Year's Day		7:30pm - Senior Choir Rehearsal	6:30-8pm - Monthly Celebration Club with Miss Laurie		Epiphany of Our Lord	Pastor Tom's Weekly Day Off
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> Pastor Tom Off – Returning to the Office on January 5 </div>						
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Baptism of Our Lord 9am - Adult Bible Study**, Youth Bible Time with Matt & Olivia**, Confirmation Class**, SONDay Celebration with Miss Laurie** 10:15am – Worship*, including Sacrament of Holy Communion, Recognition of Recently-Baptized and Celebration Time with Miss Laurie for Young Persons In-Person 11:30am - Mutual Ministry Committee Quarterly Meeting 2pm - Women's Group Meeting 4pm - Congregational Council Meeting	9am - "Blanket Bunch" Blanket Making for Lutheran World Relief 6:30pm - Book Discussion Group Monthly Gathering (On Zoom) Day of Prayer for Peace with Justice, Beginning in the Middle East	7:30pm - Senior Choir Rehearsal	6:30-8pm - Midweek Bible Study			Pastor Tom's Weekly Day Off
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
2nd Sunday after Epiphany 9am - Adult Bible Study**, Youth Bible Time with Matt & Olivia**, Confirmation Class**, SONDay Celebration with Miss Laurie** 10:15am - Worship*, including Sunny Sermon and Celebration Time with Miss Laurie for Young Persons In-Person 11:15am - Annual Congregational Meeting – Part 2* Deadline to Submit Items for February "St. John's Epistle"	Pastor Tom Taking Monthly Extra Day Off 9am - "Blanket Bunch" Blanket Making for Lutheran World Relief Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	6:15pm - Worship & Music Committee Meeting 7:30pm - Senior Choir Rehearsal	Confession of Peter 6:30-8pm - Midweek Bible Study			Pastor Tom's Weekly Day Off
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
3rd Sunday after Epiphany 9am - Adult Bible Study**, Youth Bible Time with Matt & Olivia**, Confirmation Class**, SONDay Celebration with Miss Laurie** 10:15am – Worship*, including Celebration Time with Miss Laurie for Young Persons In-Person	9am - "Blanket Bunch" Blanket Making for Lutheran World Relief 7:30pm - Church Dartball League Match – St. John at Faith United Methodist, Fisherville	6:15pm - Property Committee Meeting 7:30pm - Senior Choir Rehearsal	Conversion of Paul 6:30-8pm - Midweek Bible Study			Pastor Tom's Weekly Day Off
29	30	31				
4th Sunday after Epiphany 9am - Adult Bible Study**, Youth Bible Time with Matt & Olivia**, Confirmation Class**, SONDay Celebration with Miss Laurie** 10:15am – Worship*, including Celebration Time with Miss Laurie for Young Persons In-Person	9am - "Blanket Bunch" Blanket Making for Lutheran World Relief 7:30pm - Church Dartball League Match – Lykens United Methodist at St. John	7:30pm - Senior Choir Rehearsal	*Both In-Person and on Zoom ** In-Person			

Pastor Tom's Office Hours

Monday, Tuesday: 8am – 9:30am

Wednesday, Thursday: 8am – 12 noon

Friday: 8am - 9:30am

(Other times by appointment)

Contact Information

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Lewis Weaver, Sexton	bootsdagreat@gmail.com	570-809-1014
Grace Weaver, Sexton	No Email	570-809-1510
Judith Ferree, Organist	jjferree@epix.net	717-362-4228
Carol Hubler, Choir Director	mchubler@gmail.com	570-758-5052
Rachel Henry, Secretary	henryfamily2004@gmail.com	717-439-3897
Roy Henry, Council President	henryfamily2004@gmail.com	717-215-9837
Fay Nichols, Prayer Chain Coordinator	fnichols46@comcast.net	717-329-7447

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