

The Revelations of St. John



During this busy season, we do a lot of preparing.

If we are having guests, we prepare our homes.

If we are attending parties or celebrating with gifts, we prepare by shopping and making special dishes to pass.

If we send cards, we prepare our lists and purchase stamps.

If we decorate our homes, we prepare our rooms, bring up boxes and set up trees and other festive items.

The church prepares, too. This season of Advent, we will prepare to welcome the Christ Child. We will journey through the season of Advent, through the readings of Isaiah, to prepare our hearts to receive him and worship him. Knowing the end of the story does not change the waiting we will do. If anything, our waiting has a purpose to remember his humble beginnings and the fulfillment of prophecy.

This season, we encourage you in all of your preparations to also prepare for the coming of the Christ Child, to open your heart more to his Good News, and to share his love with all. Come, let us adore him! Come, Lord Jesus!

The above banner image is from the postcard that will be mailed to many areas in the 19422 zip code. Be sure to welcome your neighbor to church this season! All are welcome at St. John!

Season Highlights

Sunday, Dec. 3 — First Sunday of Advent
Services at 8:15 and 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, Dec. 10 — Second Sunday of Advent
Services at 8:15 and 10:30 a.m.
Annual Business Meeting at 9:30 a.m.

Sunday, Dec. 17 — Third Sunday of Advent
Services at 8:15 and 10:30 a.m.
Cookie Walk Fundraiser from 9 to 10:15 a.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 20 — Children's Christmas Service at 6:30 p.m.
Followed by a birthday cake for Jesus in Fellowship Hall. See inside for more details.

Sunday, Dec. 24 — Christmas Eve Day
ONE Sunday Morning service at 9:30 a.m.

Candlelight Services at 5 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.
Special Music Offering will be from 9 to 9:30 p.m.

Monday, Dec. 25 — Christmas Day
Service at 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, Dec. 31 — First Sunday of Christmas
Service at 9:30 a.m.
Lessons and Carols Service



A Report from our Council President

Dear St. John family,

Hard as it is to believe, 2017 is winding down quickly. It has been a busy year filled with so many wonderful opportunities for us to share and strengthen our faith. We've welcomed many new members, sadly said good bye to others and worked side by side to spread the word of God in our community.

2018 promises to be even better! Your church council has been working very hard on long range planning, setting goals and priorities, and evaluating all our activities in light of our mission and goals. They seek to involve all members of our congregation in worship, learning, witness, service & support and try to promote a congregational climate of peace and goodwill. I hope you will join me in saying thank you to the tireless volunteers who serve on council and work hard to make St. John Lutheran Church the best it can be.

We are so fortunate to have an amazing group of people who keep St. John running smoothly on a day to day basis. Pastor Sarah continues to be an energetic, enthusiastic and loving leader. Her leadership has brought about many positive changes which are bearing fruit, as evidenced by our new members. We thank God for leading her to us. Of course, there is also the beautiful music that graces the sanctuary each Sunday from our Music Director, Larry Baker. What a wonderful gift!

We also thank Barry Stock for his dedicated service keeping things running smoothly. And a big thank you to our two newest staff members. Susan Flanagan, Office Assistant and Marcie Godby, Bookkeeper. Both have hit the ground running and have been assets to our staff. Thank you all! With so many to thank it is clear that God has been good to St. John's.

I hope you and your families have a blessed Christmas. We look forward to more opportunities to work together in 2018 to spread Christ's word and to share in his blessings with each other. So, as we move forward into 2018, we praise God as the angels did on that holy night over 2000 years ago. *Glory to God in the highest and on Earth peace, good will toward men. Luke 2:14*

Warmly,

Kathy Erdman
Council President

Some Quick Notes for You!

- At our Annual Business Meeting on Sunday, Dec. 10 at 9:30 a.m., we will have Sunday School for children and youth but not for adults. Also, we will elect new Council Members, approve our 2018 Budget and also approve changes to our Constitution.
- Pastor Sarah hopes to visit "homebound" members in December and January. ***If you would like a home visit, please contact the Church Office and schedule a time through Susan, our Church Office Assistant.***
- Still haven't turned in your 2018 Commitment Card? Please do! We need as many cards returned as possible so that we can plan our budget accordingly.
- "Pastor, do we still have plots available in the cemetery?" Yes, we do! We have a new brochure available for you to see. Please contact the Church Office to have one mailed home to you.

Council Members 2017

Executive Committee

President: Kathy Erdman
erdmankath@gmail.com

Vice-President: Phil Vande Berg
philvandeberg@yahoo.com

Secretary: Monika Bontempo
mbontempo2015@gmail.com

Treasurer: Jack Ruse
jackruse@gmail.com

Pastor Sarah Stobie
pastorsarahstobie@gmail.com

Congregation Council Members

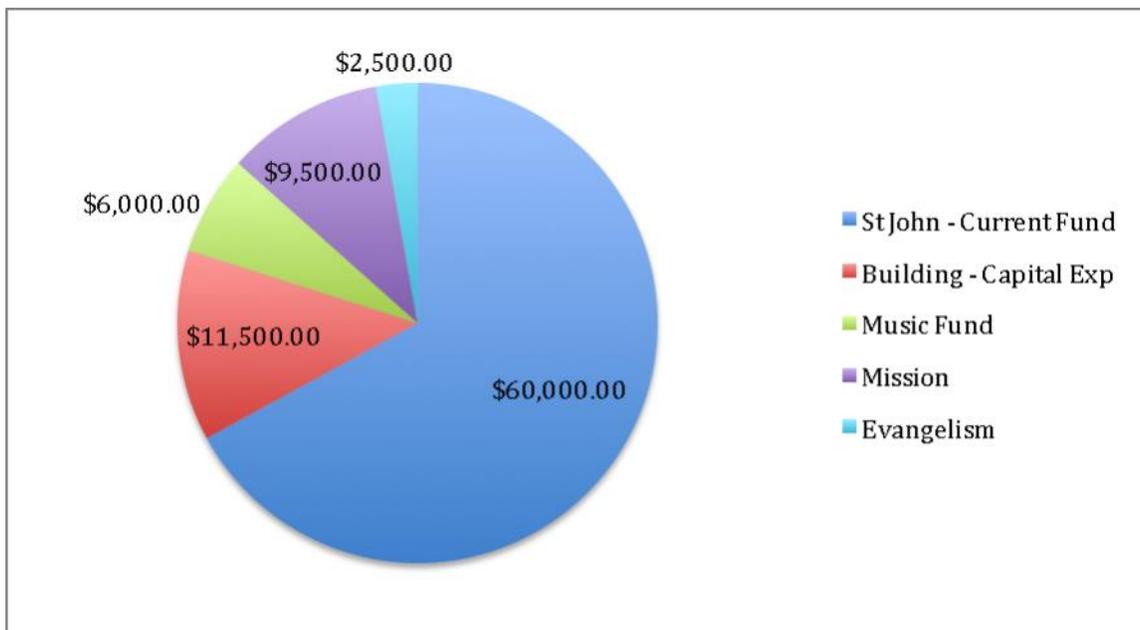
Jeff Brown
Maripat Brown
Carol Gorman
Sue Lorenski
Joy McCabe
Michael McConnell
Evan Speece
Carol Weidler

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO REDUCE OUR OPERATING DEFICIT

The last couple of weeks Larry Erdman has spoken to the congregation about stewardship and the need to reduce the deficit in our annual operating expenses.

We have an annual shortfall in our operating expenses. In order to pay our bills we need to draw funds from our endowment to cover this deficit. When the stock market is doing well (like this year) we usually make enough money from our investments to replace the funds we spend from the endowment. In addition, in the good years we have profits left over to increase the endowment principal.

The chart below shows how we used the funds taken out of the endowment this year.



67% of those funds were needed to cover one item – the shortfall in our operating budget (Current Fund).

The endowment fund should earn a 10%+ return in the stock market this year. Ten percent plus returns are rare and we can't count on achieving that level of performance most years. Despite our stock market success we will need to use 80% to 85% of our investment profits to replace the funds drawn down from the endowment this year. That only leaves 15% to 20% of those profits, to reinvest back into endowment for future growth. If we had only earned 8% this year (which is still a very good return), we would not have had enough profits to fully fund our programs without dipping into our endowment principal.

In 2018, if we reduce our deficit to \$45,000, we will need to make at least 6.5% return on our investments to cover our budget and not dip into principal. If we meet our full goal of reducing the deficit to \$30,000, we only need a 5% to 5.5% return to cover our budgeted funding needs.

In 2017 we expect to add \$26,000 to \$28,000 to the endowment from our investment profits after deducting all disbursements. If we only had a \$30,000 operating deficit this year, we would be adding \$56,000 to \$58,000 to the endowment, a significant gain. Every year we grow the endowment we have more funds to invest, and more profits in the future to fund our programs.

With the support of the congregation, determined fiscal prudence, and reasonable stock market conditions, together we can put St. John in a position of long-term financial stability.

Jack Ruse

Nursery School News

The Nursery School has enjoyed a warm, pleasant fall with lots of outdoor play, exciting activities, tastes and stories. The students and teachers now have their Native American beads and head dresses and Pilgrim collars and hats ready to go for Thanksgiving. The children will feast during school hours as they celebrate friendships and remember all of the things they are thankful for. They are also working hard to get ready for their Advent Programs. The children will sing for their parents on December 5, followed by crafts and fellowship. Although it is early yet, it is impossible not to catch the holiday spirit from their vibrant voices. Enrollment for next year will begin on January 2 for current students and open to the general public on January 22. As always, we appreciate the support and recommendations from St. John's members for our school. Merry Christmas!
Carrie Engel, Nursery School Director

**Children's
Christmas Service
Wednesday, Dec. 20
at 6:30 p.m.**

Once again, Pastor is having a special "children-only" service for our youngest members. Parents, of course you should come! But, please know that this service is geared to children, does not have communion, and should not replace Christmas Eve/Morning services!

We will sing songs the children know, and hear the story of Jesus' birth through reading and drama. A special guest will also be making an appearance to teach us about shepherds!

Following the brief service, we will have a birthday party with cake for Baby Jesus in Fellowship Hall.

It is our hope to bring the story of Jesus' birth in a meaningful way so that our children understand our Christmas time better! All are welcome to join us! If you have questions, please connect with Pastor Sarah.

Middle School Youth

All 6-8th graders are encouraged to attend our monthly Youth Group gathering on Sunday, Dec. 10 when we will be attending a movie at a local theatre. At the time of printing, the exact details are uncertain. Please watch your email or our website for details.

High School Youth Group

Our high school students meet weekly for Sunday School at 9:15 a.m. in the Youth Room downstairs. All students in high school are welcome to attend, and to bring friends, too.

Fundraising has begun for the next ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston, Texas. For more details about this, please connect with Megan & Justin Kiefski, or Jessica Brunner. We are hoping to have some "dine-out" events locally to support the trip!



Cookie Walk 2017 is almost here!

Calling on all bakers! Our annual Fundraiser for the Youth will be Sunday, Dec. 17 in Fellowship Hall. We will have cookies, cookies, cookies for purchasing!

We also need your cookies to make this a success. You may drop off your cookies on Thursday or Friday, Dec. 14 or 15, during Office Hours, or you may drop off on Saturday morning the 16th. Plates of cookies should be wrapped well to keep them fresh!

Thank you for your help!



Pastor Sarah's Bible Study

Pastor's Tuesday Morning Bible Study will resume after the New Year. We have a dedicated group that gathers at 10:30 a.m. to study the word of God, and to also share our own interpretations and stories of faith.

Our study will resume Tuesday, Jan. 16 at 10:30 a.m. We all share in the hospitality of providing a snack and coffee, too! All are welcome!

Hatha Yoga Classes

Our popular yoga classes continue on Thursdays at 2 p.m. Please watch our bulletin and website for our next Session!



Our instructor, Kelli Pannepacker, will guide us through gentle moves and poses. All levels of skill are welcome; Kelli is quick to assist you. The cost for the 8-week session is \$35, or you may drop-in for \$8 a session. No pre-registration is necessary. We meet in Fellowship Hall; please bring a mat or towel to use. Questions? Please connect with Pastor Sarah or Kathy Erdman.



Boomers at the Bar is our fellowship opportunity for Baby Boomers and older—to gather for eating, drinking and intentional conversation.

We will NOT meet in December, but plan on meeting on Tuesday, January 22 at 7 p.m. at Cantina Feliz in Fort Washington. RSVPs are needed by noon on January 22. Thank you!



Pub Theology

Pub Theology is a new movement in the Lutheran Church for our young adults, ages 25-50ish. Martin Luther gathered frequently with the young adults of his time over a stein to discuss faith, theology and life in a relaxed setting. We will honor this old tradition by gathering monthly in a local pub on the second Tuesday of every month.



Join us Tuesday, Dec. 12, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at MaGerks in Fort Washington. RSVPs are helpful—please email Pastor Sarah.



Our Women's Winter Retreat is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 20 from 9:30 to 1 p.m. A light lunch will be served. Friends and family members are invited! Our topic will be Grace in the Meantime. Come, and enjoy fellowship with other women while also discussing faith in a joyful environment. Please RSVP to Pastor Sarah no later than Jan. 12. Thank you!

Connecting With Others – Good Ways to Meet People & Invite Others



Our **Flower Arranging Class** is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 19 at 7 p.m.

Our class for December will focus on creating a beautiful centerpiece for your Christmas

meal. It is also a wonderful gift to your host/hostess if you are attending a meal as a guest.

Our instructor has asked that everyone brings:

- * Scissors
- * Wire cutters
- * A small bag of Christmas greens, such as yew or pine boughs, from your yard.
- * If you attended last month, please bring your green container.
- * Small trash bag
- * Box to carry arrangement home (rectangle!)

Please RSVP by Friday, Dec. 15 through the Church Office or by emailing stjohn1802@gmail.com. Thank you!

Yarn Crafters returns in January



Our next monthly gathering of Yarn Crafters will be Wednesday, Jan. 17, at 7:30 p.m.

We will be offering a workshop on Crochet 101 — how to make a basic piece that can be altered to

make a potholder, scarf, baby blanket, and even a baby hat! There is no cost to come, but... please bring the materials needed for the workshop.

- * A “J” Hook, sometimes also called 6 mm.
- * 1-2 skeins of Medium (4) weight of yarn.
- * Please avoid other sizes for yarn, especially bulky or baby. Worsted weight is good!
- * You may invite friends and neighbors to join you.

Visual Arts Classes Resume!



The winter session of art classes is set to begin the week of January 7 at St. John.

This session the focus will be on color. Classes are run like a one room school house and are filled with students of all skill levels working in all mediums. New sessions start 4 times a year and new students are always welcome. So if you always wanted to learn to draw or paint check out the art class at St. John. They are very affordable, only \$80 for ten 2 hour sessions, plus you will be supporting the church.

If you would like to get on the email list and receive notifications when the new sessions start or have any questions, please drop Ann L. Brennan a note at annlb609@gmail.com.





Quilting Group News

Our Monday morning Quilting Group assembled about 2 dozen warm quilts to distribute locally in December. We thank our congregation for all the generous donations of fabric and sheets this past year. We would also like to welcome new members! If you can spare an hour or 2 on Monday mornings, please

come and join us. We won't meet in December, but will be starting up once again in 2018 on Monday, January 8th.

Questions? Call Anita Hill at 610-279-2421.



Help on Sundays is often needed.

To make it more simple, we have 1 sign up online, under signupgenius.com. You will find direct links and instructions on our website for how to use it.

Every Sunday we need ushers, lectors, communion assistants, etc. If you are able to assist, please feel free to sign up online or *call the Church Office and we will sign you up over the phone*. Thank you for serving!



Altar Flowers are a wonderful way to remember a special person or date. Please sign up to sponsor our altar flowers (or bulletins) by using the pink clipboard, located on the Information Table in the Great Room, or by contacting the Church Office.

We continue to collect items for the Seminary Student Food Bank at ULS in Philadelphia.



The need is great. Seminary students often make choices between paying bills and buying food. Our offerings help. Please donated canned goods, ready-to-make meals, and other items that are non-perishable. We also need drivers to deliver the food once a month. Donated items may be dropped off any time and left in the front closet by the main entrance. Thank you!

Special Christmas Offering



A Christmas Collection for our staff will happen on Sunday, Dec. 17. We will pass out envelopes on Sunday, Dec. 10, for this purpose, for this purpose, to be returned by December 17. You may place the envelope in the offering plate! Thank you for remembering our staff members: Barry, Larry, Susan, Marcie and Pastor Sarah.

And, for our **December Collection, our Social Ministry** would like to gather toiletries for the **Being Beautiful Foundation**. We have lifted up this special charity which organizes group foster homes in the Ambler area. You may bring in items to the Church all month long—shampoo, shaving cream, razors, towels, washcloths, lotions, etc. Please remember that the items will be used by teenage girls! Thank you!



Final Reminders

Do you desire to purchase a **Poinsettia** to honor or remember a loved one? We will soon have a chart for members and guests in our Great Room. The poinsettias will be displayed at our Christmas Eve services. We will list all names in our Christmas Eve and Christmas Morning bulletins.

The best way to get the latest news? Sign up for our eNewsletter which is sent every week on Wednesdays. You may do this by emailing Pastor Sarah from the email address you wish to receive the eNews.



COME LORD JESUS

Sunday, Christmas Eve

Sunday Morning Service at 9:30 a.m.

Candlelight Services at 5 and 9:30 p.m.
*Special Music Offering will be from
9 to 9:30 p.m.*

Sunday, Christmas Morning Service at 10:30 a.m.

Parking can be a challenge on Christmas Eve!
Plan ahead and if possible, car-pool within families.
Don't forget our service times!
Invite others to join you as well.

St. John Lutheran Church

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Blue Bell, PA 19422

Office: 610-277-1086

Office Hours: 9 a.m. – noon on M

9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on T, W, F

12:30 p.m. - 5 p.m. TH

Nursery School: 610-272-7163

www.stjohnsns.org



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



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Staff

Rev. Sarah Stobie, Pastor

Lawrence Baker, Director of Music

Susan Flanagan, Church Office Assistant

Barry Stock, Facilities Coordinator

Carrie Engel, Nursery School Director

Katie Myers, Sunday School Director/Webmaster

Ann Brennan, Visual Arts Program Coordinator

Marcie Godby, Bookkeeper

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