



The Messenger

December 2023 Edition

A Monthly Newsletter from St. John Lutheran Church and School

Inside this Issue...

Devotional Corner	page 2
Today's Christian Parenting	page 3-4
Poinsettia Order Form	page 4
Events	page 5
Church Highlights	page 6
School Highlights	page 7
Additional News	page 8
Contact Information	page 8

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Gather. Grow. Go. To the Glory of God!



The “One and Only” is Jesus, who came to our world to help us know God better. The birth of Jesus is a big celebration because it is what God did for us to get closer to him. On the night of his birth an angel told shepherds,

Devotional Corner: I want to get closer to God. Can God help me know him better?

Steve and Caroline attended the Christmas party for Steve’s company. It was difficult, though. Even though the partygoers were enjoying each other’s company, Steve and Caroline were pretty much ignored. In the middle of the holiday cheer, they didn’t really fit in.

There’s a reason for that. Steve recently joined the company and didn’t know many people at work. He knew many of their names but didn’t really know the people very well. And when you’re the quiet type anyway, it’s hard to jump into Christmas party conversations.

If only someone could bridge the gap and help Steve and Caroline get to know those people better!

Do you ever feel distant from your Creator - you know there’s a God, but you just don’t feel close to him? It’s a rotten feeling. But God bridged the gap to help us get to know him better. The Bible tells us,

No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known. John 1: 18

*Today a Savior has been born to you!
Luke 2:11*

You see, the selfish things we’ve done or said create distance between us and our Creator. God knew that and sent Jesus to bridge the gap. He came to us and took the punishment for our selfish words and actions so we could see and understand God’s love. His birth was the start; his death was the clincher.

Do you know the feeling Steve and Caroline had? You won’t have that with God because of Christmas. Jesus came so we would know God better.

Join us this Christmas to find out how Jesus made God’s forgiveness known. That’s how we get closer to God - through Jesus, whose birth we celebrate.

In Christ's Service and Yours!
Pastor Mike Gehl



Worship With Us!

Sundays at 8:00 and 10:30am

Thursdays at 6:30 pm

Bible Classes and Sunday School Sundays at 9:15 am

Christian Parenting Today



Christian Parenting Today: How to Develop Healthy Habits

Excerpts from a Forward in Christ article by
Karrie Balza

*Every good and perfect gift is from above.
James 1:17*

Our bodies, our minds, our gifts, our talents, our money, our “things” are all gifts from God and therefore should be treasured and cared for in a way that shows gratitude and glorifies him. This is an important truth for all of us to remember, but how do we encourage this principle in our children? Where do we start? We start with habits.

Positive, healthy habits are a great way to ensure we are being good stewards of the blessings God has given us. Do you find your child wasting too much time playing video games or scrolling through social media? Or eating way too much junk food? Or spending too much money on things? When we do these things, we squander our blessings and miss opportunities to glorify God, fulfill his purpose for us, and serve others. Having these conversations with our children is a wonderful way to help them understand the importance of positive, healthy habits from a Christian perspective. It becomes less about Mom and Dad nagging and more about honoring God. A clean house, healthy body, and smooth-running household are just bonuses.

New habits don't start naturally. It's kind of like growing a plant. A tiny seed needs to be nurtured and given the right environment to grow deep roots and eventually thrive on its own. When a habit is solidly formed, it occurs automatically, thriving on its own, with little conscious thought. Prior to this autopilot state, however, we as parents need to create the right environment for habits to take root in our children.

We can develop this optimal environment by establishing habits that are clear, consistent, time-sensitive, easy, and reinforced.

Be clear. When expectations are vague (clean your room, clean the kitchen, take care of the dog), parents run the risk of frustrating their children and themselves. Children don't know exactly what is expected, and parents get frustrated that their children aren't mind readers and don't complete the task as expected. For a habit to stick, it needs to be clear and specific. Instead of saying, “Clean your room,” try saying, “Make sure your bed is made, your dirty clothes are in the hamper, your toys are where they belong, and there is nothing on the floor.” This gives your children specific expectations so they know exactly when the task has been completed. Parents benefit by ensuring the completed task meets expectations.

Be consistent. People often ask me how long it takes for a task to become a habit. The answer has less to do with time and more to do with consistency. When there is consistency with expectations, the task being completed, and positive reinforcement of the completed task, the habit will form sooner. It's important to recognize that while habits appear to be behaviorally driven, neurological connections are actually being formed within the brain that eventually allow these habits to occur automatically. These neurological connections thrive on consistency and feedback. In a nutshell, the more we are consistent, the quicker these neurological connections will form and the sooner a task will become a habit.

Be time-sensitive. Open-ended habits with no deadline become easy to delay, postpone, and even avoid. “I'll exercise later.” “I'll clean my room later.” Habits have a higher likelihood of developing when we eliminate the element of thinking about when we want to complete the task. Instead of saying, “We'll do a family devotion this week,” you can say, “Every night, after the dinner dishes are taken care of, we will do a family devotion.” Even if the time has to change on certain days to accommodate scheduling conflicts, the expectation of when the habit will occur should always be clearly stated.

Article continues on next page

Today's Christian Parenting: Building Healthy Habits continues from page 3:

Be easy. Our sinful nature will always resist doing difficult things. We are in constant pursuit of the path of least resistance. When we're trying to develop habits, they need to be easy to complete. It's hard for children to clean their rooms if their drawers are overstuffed, there are no hangers, and things don't have a designated home. Set your child up for success by starting with a clean slate. This means making sure everything has a home and the tools (i.e., hangers, bins, space, etc.) are available to get each item back to its home easily. These steps will eliminate the obstacles of completing a task and increase the likelihood it will be repeated.

Be reinforced. As children are developing habits, positive reinforcement and validation are important motivators to keep them inspired. Remember, there is a learning curve involved. It's not going to be perfect immediately. Parents should acknowledge progress, not perfection. Verbal praise and visual cues are helpful. Make simple lists so children have visual reminders of their responsibilities. Tracking charts, where children can cross out tasks or put stickers each time they

complete a task, are great for children to see the progress they've made and encourage continued effort and improvement. Keeping these resources in high-traffic areas provides repeated reminders and feedback to your children throughout the day.

Final thoughts:

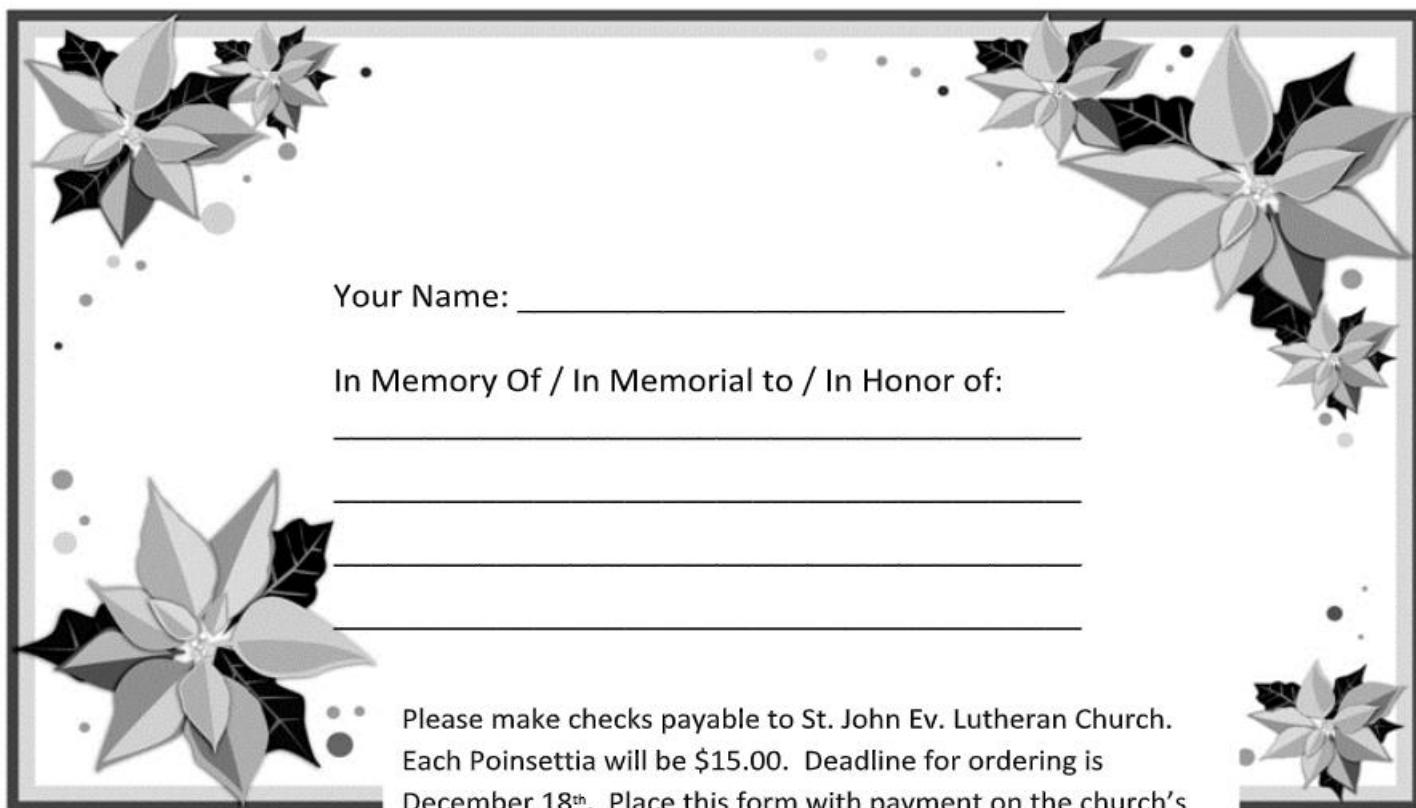
Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Galatians 6:9

Over time, as a habit becomes more ingrained, less nurturing is required to keep it going. The roots will grow deep, and it can thrive on its own. While it may take a little more effort on the parents' part initially to create systems and an environment conducive to developing positive habits for children, the benefits are worth the effort. Not only will your children be able to contribute to the daily activities within your home, but they are also internalizing the value and positive impact of habits that will set them up for a lifetime of opportunities to serve God and be great stewards of his blessings.

To view this article in its entirety, visit forwardinchrist.net/develop-healthy-habits/

Poinsettia Order Form (For Church Decoration)



Your Name: _____

In Memory Of / In Memorial to / In Honor of:

Please make checks payable to St. John Ev. Lutheran Church. Each Poinsettia will be \$15.00. Deadline for ordering is December 18th. Place this form with payment on the church's reception desk in the office. Thank you.

Upcoming Events

Children's Christmas Services

We are gearing up for this year's annual children's Christmas services! Be sure to join us to hear our little ones praising their Savior, sharing the Christmas story, and celebrating Jesus' birth.

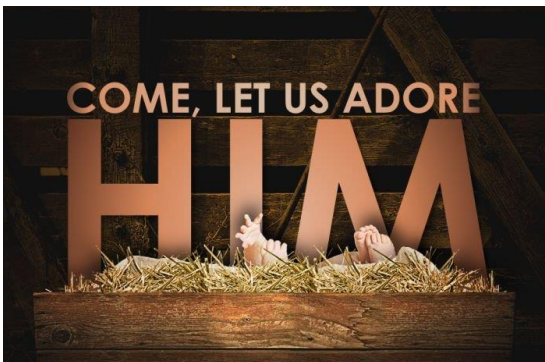
Early Childhood Christmas Service

The early childhood (preschool and pre-K) classes will hold a single service on Friday, December 8th. Come worship with us beginning at 6:00 pm, then stay for cookies and milk after the service. Parents of participating students should drop them off at the gym at 5:30 for final preparations and practice before the service. They will remain with their class during the service, so there is no need to save them a spot to sit.



K-8th Grade Christmas Services

Our elementary and middle school classes will have their Christmas service on Sunday, December 17th. Due to the number of students and family members who wish to attend, we have decided to do two services at 9:00 and 10:30 am. Space will be limited, so please sign up on campus or through a link that was emailed out so that you know there will be room at your chosen time. Parents of participating students should drop them off at the gym at 8:45, let them stay for both services, and plan to pick them around 11:30. Our schedule will be busy, with a regular service offering communion at 7:30, so please be respectful of services that may still be in session if you arrive early.



St. John on Parade

St. John Lutheran Church and School is once again proud to participate in Wrightstown's annual Christmas parade! Join us on Friday, December 1st to help us decorate the float. We will be meeting at the Heimmermann house (6966 Shanty Road) from 6:00-8:00 pm. As we decorate, there will be cookie, cocoa, fellowship, and fun!

Then come and walk in the parade with us on Saturday! We will meet at 4:00 on School Street to walk the route and hand out candy and evangelism packets. Watch for float #28. The parade will start at 4:30. We will allow students who walk with us to ride the float back to school for pickup rather than getting mixed up with the crowd at the end of the route.

Mark Your Calendars!

- December 1- Float Decorating
- December 2- Wrightstown Christmas Parade
- December 8- Early Childhood Christmas Service
- December 9- FVL Schools Band Concert
- December 12- Monthly Fellowship Luncheon
- December 16- Adult Party & Ornament Exchange
- December 17- K-8th Grade Christmas Services
FVL Choirs Concert
- December 22- Last Day of School
Hot Lunch
- December 24- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
- December 25- Christmas Day Worship
- December 25- January 2- No School
- January 3- Classes Resume
- January 6- Tres Reyes Event (Hispanic Epiphany Celebration and Fellowship)

Church Highlights

Christmas Worship Schedule

Join us for the following special times and dates of worship during this Christmas Season:

*Friday, December 8th, 6:00 pm
Early Childhood Christmas Program*

*Sunday, December 17th, 7:30 am
Regular Worship with Adjusted Time
(Communion Available)*

*Sunday, December 24th, 6:30 pm
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
(in addition to regular morning services)*

*Monday, December 25th, 9:00 am
Christmas Day Worship*

Please also note that due to holiday celebrations and special service times, there will be no Sunday School or adult Bible classes on December 17th, 24th, or 31st. Classes will resume January 7th.



Poinsettia Orders Open Now

Poinsettia orders are now being taken to help decorate the church for Christmas. You can use the order form on page 4 of this newsletter or stop in to our office to order. Cost is \$15 each.



Bake Sale- Sunday, December 17

Cookies, candies, and bars will be offered up for sale in the gym following all services on Sunday, December 17th. Anyone who wishes to donate goodies can drop them in the kitchen on Friday the 15th during our regular (7:00 am-5:00 pm) hours or on Saturday, December 16th from 8:00-10:00 am. There is no need to price any donated items. All items will be available for a free will offering. Profits will be directed towards window blinds for the worship area.



Tres Reyes Celebration

St. John will play host to a Fox Valley Tres Reyes (Three Kings) event on Saturday, January 6th, from 12:00-3:00 pm. Tres Reyes is an important holiday for Hispanic culture, often taking on the importance that Christmas Day holds for other western cultures. Regardless of your culture or language, we invite you to celebrate this special event with us! We will join with pastors and congregants from St. Paul/San Pablo, Green Bay and Bethel Lutheran/Betel Luterana, Menasha. This event will also help us to begin our own church's outreach to the local Hispanic families, of which there is a large population nearby.

Church Birthdays

Happy birthday to our church members celebrating during December!

Dec 3 Pastor Gehl
Dec 4 Lincoln Cisler
Dec 5 Danielle Bruecker
Dec 6 Mason Kussow
Dec 7 Carol Just
Dec 7 Eric Kraus
Dec 8 Christopher Wicker
Dec 9 Shawn Jandrey
Dec 11 Jared Hendricks
Dec 11 Lynn Zirbel

Happy Birthday!



Dec 13 Joshua Vickman
Dec 18 Paige Schisel
Dec 25 Jules Cappelle
Dec 25 Holly Schmidt
Dec 27 Kay Neuman
Dec 27 Leah Uitenbroek
Dec 28 Janet Wierschke
Dec 30 Samuel Reschke
Dec 30 Jonathan Van Schyndel
Dec 30 Judith Wicker

School Highlights



Raise Right (Scrip) Gift Cards Make Great Christmas Gifts!

Raise Right gift cards are available all year long, but Christmas is one of the best times to use them. Besides our regular, in-stock cards, we can access gift cards from hundreds of retailers, restaurants, and attractions in amounts ranging from \$5 (great for stocking stuffers) to \$500. Cards are available to help with your basic shopping needs, purchasing Christmas gifts, accessing hotels and vacation spots, or to give directly to those you wish to bless this Christmas! Speak with Dierdra Stary or Rebecca Wicks to order your cards now... cards that are not in-stock need to be pre-ordered to assure that they will be here in time for Christmas. Don't forget, every purchase helps our school's tuition assistance fund and can even take money off of your own family's tuition bill!



Classroom Christmas Parties

Watch for upcoming information on our individual classroom parties! We enjoy celebrating with our classes as we enjoy treats, games, and gift exchanges. For early childhood students who are not normally scheduled on the day of their parties, please speak with your teacher if your child wishes to join the celebration. Most celebrations will take place on our last day of school prior to Christmas—Friday, December 22nd.

Help Wanted

There are currently multiple opportunities for individuals to help out around St. John Lutheran School. Please contact Rebecca Wicks if you can assist with any of the following areas:

1. Helpers are wanted to work one-on-one with students who are new to the English language. There is no need to speak another language; initial exposure focuses on teaching vocabulary using pictures, simply pointing out a picture, clearly stating the English word, and having the students repeat the words back to you. You can set your own schedule for these times. Materials and basic instructions are available.
2. Helpers are being sought to reinforce basic phonics skills, getting students into the habit of matching letters and letter combinations with the sounds they make. This is also a one-on-one role that lets you pick your own schedule, though afternoon times are preferred. Materials and instructions are available.
3. Send in your small boxes! To help keep library books from being shoved behind each other, we are looking for small boxes to place behind the books, which will help keep our shelves neat and our books accessible. Tissue boxes and boxes of similar size are best. Many boxes will be needed, so keep them coming all year!

Happy Birthday!

Happy birthday to our students celebrating during December!

- December 2nd- Aria R.
- December 4th- Lincoln C.
- December 10th- Ellery O.
- December 13th- Finnegan A.
- December 19th- Daxton S.
- December 25th- Jules C.



Employment Opportunity:

Our Shepherd Child Care and Family Ministry is looking to hire quality staff to meet the needs of the many families that we serve. Potential positions include classroom leads/assistants. Both full time and part time positions are available. We are looking for positive, professional, dedicated, self-propelled individuals. If you have past childcare experience and/or education in early childhood we want to hear from you! We offer competitive wages, paid vacation days, a sign-on bonus, and discounted childcare. If you believe that you would work well in a fast-paced, friendly work environment, please stop in at Our Shepherd to fill out an application or call 920-733-3344 and speak with Heather Neta or Christina Coon.



Members of the evangelism committee met recently to prepare bags to hand out at the parade.



Early childhood classes had a Thanksgiving themed "Pastor Play Day" in the school library.



Contact Us

Church Office

School Office

Pastor Mike Gehl

Tim Raddatz, principal and
4th-5th grade teacher

Dillon Solomon, 6th-8th grade teacher

Rebecca Wicks, 2nd-3rd grade teacher

Jamie Buss, early childhood director
and K-1st grade teacher

Leah Gamboa, preK teacher

Madie Otto, preschool teacher

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