

The Messenger

December 2025 Edition



A Monthly Newsletter from St. John Lutheran Church and School

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ST. JOHN
LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

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

Devotional Corner



Devotion Corner: How can I be happy when I'm busting my budget for Christmas?

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD."

Psalms 118:26

"All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth." Perhaps you recognize these words from a famous song by Don Gardner. The main goal of the young child was to have his two front teeth so that he could wish you a Merry Christmas. It seems so simple, so stress-free, so undemanding.

Do you remember a time like that? Do you remember a time when the world seemed so stress-free? Do you remember a time when life was so simple?

Christmas is right around the corner. Signs of this have been noticeable for quite some time now. Christmas decorations have been in the stores for several months. Since Thanksgiving some radio stations have been playing Christmas music non-stop, reminding us of how many days we have left until Christmas. There's so much for all of us to do!

Decorations! Parties! Presents! And children don't just ask for their two front teeth anymore. They want their iPhones and iPads to keep them happy. But can I be happy when I'm busting my budget for Christmas?

For help this Christmas season, remember this Bible verse from Psalm 118:26: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD." There was a time when

God showed us something so simple, so stress-free, so undemanding. It happened about 2,000 years ago.

Shepherds went to visit a newborn baby. No kings, no queens, no rulers—just lowly shepherds. And when they got there, this baby did not seem so special. No fancy hospitals, no doctors, no nurses. Just Mary and Joseph and their infant son Jesus wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. So simple, so stress-free, so undemanding.

And yet, here is the place where you find your answer when you seem to be busting your budget for Christmas. Do what the shepherds did! Go to Bethlehem this Christmas season. Look in the manger and see your Savior.

No, you won't find some extra cash to restore a healthy balance in your checkbook. But you will find happiness for your soul. You will find a Savior who will never leave you. And you will find a Savior who will fill your spiritual checkbook with many blessings that can never be depleted.

Because there you will find Jesus!



Join us for holiday worship!

Christmas Eve at 5:30 pm

and

Christmas Day at 9:00 am

Worship With Us Sundays at 9:00 am

Christian Parenting Today

Christian Parenting Today: Christmas with a 2035* Perspective

Excerpts from a ChristianParenting.org article by Janet Denison

What do you remember about your childhood Christmas celebrations? How do you want your kids to answer that question someday? If you're like me, you don't tend to remember the gifts you were given as much as the special moments. One of my great regrets with my kids is that our Christmas season was often too crowded with everyone else's agendas rather than the one we set for our family. Jim and I tried to attend everything we thought we should, which meant we were gone from our kids more often than we wished.

The preacher and his wife are supposed to be at every music program of the church and celebrate with the men's and women's Bible studies and the various service groups. There are usually a few community events that asked for something as well. It took some strategic planning to make sure we could share Christmas as a family. Eventually, I decided to look at the holiday with a larger perspective. I remember thinking that, twenty years from now, the people who would be most important to me should also be most important to me now. That is when I started to say no a little more often.

Everyone has a lot to do during December, but we probably don't have to do it all. Before your calendar gets too full, it's good to consider this year's holiday with a 2035* perspective. [Ten] years from now, what will you and your kids talk about and laugh about when remembering Christmas? That answer should impact your Christmas planning this year. You have an entire month to celebrate. There is plenty of time to make sure this Christmas creates some great memories for the future.

Here are a couple of calendar hints:

- Have a full view of your December calendar. (I suggest an old-fashioned paper calendar page for this!) If you live with a daily or weekly view, you could end up having a chaotic Christmas. Enter your "have to attend" events in red. These are the school and/or church performances your kids are part of, the annual parties everyone attends, and the family celebrations you don't want to miss.

- Now, look at the blank spots and fill in the family times you want to protect. I suggest you put a line through the entire week between Christmas and New Year's and make it mostly about family fun. (Jim started taking off the Sunday after Christmas and it changed our lives!) Plan a trip or just plan to stay local and enjoy spending time together. But prepare your kids, especially the older ones, and inform them that week belongs mostly to your family. It's good to be flexible, but it's also important to tell them that you are hoping they will value the family time too.



What do you love most about the Christmas holiday? Christmas is a season when the world seems willing to share our values, or at least consider their importance. Christians value faith, family, generosity, kindness, joy, peace, and caring about others. The world is watching our celebrations, our priorities, and our values. Your Christmas celebration may be the best witness opportunity of the entire year! What will your family do together this year that will share your witness with others?

The kids are excited, and every day you will teach them how to celebrate the season. Younger kids might center the holiday around what's under the tree. It's good to remind them at some point, "It's not your birthday."

Article continues on page 7

Upcoming Events

Children's Christmas Services

You are invited to two separate Children's Christmas Services at St. John this year! First up will be our Early Childhood classes (Mrs. Otto, Mrs. Mata Perez, and Miss Buss's classes) on Friday, December 12th. The service will begin at 6:00 in the gym. Then, our regular Sunday service for December 14th will be replaced by the K-8th Grade Christmas Service, also held in the gym. If you have not already done so, please be sure to speak with a staff member about which service(s) you intend to join us at so that we know an approximate number of chairs needed. There will be a cookie social following each service. Families of the students who are leading the service are asked to bring a dozen cookies to share.



Adult Ornament Exchange Party

Adults from St. John invited to join in the annual Ornament Exchange gathering, being held this year at the Schisels' house. Those participating are asked to bring a dish to pass as well as a wrapped ornament worth no more than \$10 to exchange. The event begins at 5:00 pm and wraps up at 8:00 pm on Saturday, December 13th. Please RSVP by signing up on the sheet on the credenza behind the worship area.

Amanda Schultz Benefit

Amanda Schultz, Pastor Wilke's daughter, has recently undergone chemotherapy treatments. St. John would like to show support for their family by way of a benefit. Adults are asked to join us for a "Warm Hearts, Winter Days" gathering as we take a tractor ride to local wineries for wine tastings, then make our way back to St. John for a bonfire and homemade chili. The event will run from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm. Please see the poster around campus for a link to RSVP. The posters also have links to read more about Amanda's journey on Caring Bridge or to donate directly to her via Venmo. You may also donate to her by placing money in the box in St. John's reception area. Also be sure to keep her and her family in your prayers as she continues her healing journey. See Ben Evenson or Brittany Vickman for more details.

FVL Choirs Christmas Concert

Join us as the FVL Choirs fill the season with music that celebrates the true meaning of Christmas—the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Come and be uplifted by Scripture, song, and the warmth of Christian fellowship. The annual Christmas Concert will be held on Sunday, December 14th at 2:00 pm in the FVL Auditorium. If you can't make it in person, watch it via livestream at www.youtube.com/@FVLFoxes. All are welcome to

Mark Your Calendars!

December 2- Martha's Circle
Board of Education Meeting
December 3- Breakfast and Bible Study
Pastor and Teacher Call Meeting
Choir Practice
December 6- Wrightstown Christmas Parade
December 8- Elder's Meeting
Church Council Meeting
December 9- Fellowship Meal
December 10- 3rd-5th Grade Field Trip to FVL
Choir Practice
December 12- Early Childhood Christmas Service
Cookie Social
December 13- Adult Gathering & Ornament Exchange

December 14- K-8th Grade Christmas Service
No JAM Children's Ministry
Cookie and Cocoa Social
FVL Christmas Concert
December 15-19- School Christmas Spirit Week
December 17- Choir Practice
December 19- Classroom Christmas Parties
Pastor Play Day
December 20- Amanda Schultz Benefit
December 21- St. John Choir Sings
December 22-January 4th- Christmas Break
December 24- Christmas Eve Service
December 25- Christmas Day Service
Merry Christmas!
December 28- No JAM Children's Ministry

Church Highlights

Pastor and Teacher Call Meeting- Wednesday, December 3rd

We ask all voting members to plan to attend a very important meeting this Wednesday as we look to call a full-time Pastor as well as an upper grade teacher. Pastor Wilke has been graciously filling in for us as an interim Pastor, but has always planned to fill in on a temporary basis before returning to retirement. The upper grade teacher would fill in Mr. Raddatz's spot as he moves into full-time administrative duties to better help our growing school. These are two major positions to fill, so everyone's input is requested. The call meeting begins at 6:00 pm on December 3.



Special Christmas Services

In addition to the children's services mentioned on the previous page, St. John will have two additional services to celebrate Christmas. First is the Christmas Eve service at 5:30 pm on Wednesday, December 24th. Then, join us Christmas Day at a 9:00 am worship service to start the celebration off on the right foot and keep the focus on Christ's coming this Christmas.



JAM Schedule Changes

JAM Children's Ministry will be pausing for 2 upcoming Sundays: December 14th and December 28th. On December 14th, JAM invites participants to join them at the K-8th grade children's service to celebrate with St. John students. On December 28th, JAM will take a brief break during the middle of St. John's Christmas break as many families have travel plans. JAM will still run on December 21st and will return to a weekly schedule on January 4th.



Christmas Break Office Hours

With St. John Lutheran School having a full two weeks off for Christmas vacation, Dierdra Stary, our administrative assistant, will be limiting her hours. She plans to be in the office weekdays from 7:00 am until 12:00 noon. She will take Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day off completely, and will return to her regular schedule on January 5th.

December Church Birthdays

Happy birthday to our church members celebrating in December!

Dec 4 Lincoln Cisler
Dec 5 Danielle Bruecker
Dec 6 Mason Kussow
Dec 6 Benjamin Platkowski
Dec 7 Diane Bowers
Dec 7 Carol Just
Dec 7 Eric Kraus
Dec 7 Adelaide Vande Hey
Dec 10 Ellery Olp
Dec 11 Lynn Zirbel



Dec 13 Joshua Vickman
Dec 15 Brian Gardner
Dec 18 Paige Schisel
Dec 21 Noah Denor
Dec 25 Jules Cappelle
Dec 25 Holly Schmidt
Dec 27 Leah Uitenbroek
Dec 28 Janet Wierschke
Dec 30 Jonathan Van Schyndel
Dec 30 Judith Wicker

School Highlights



Hot Lunch Helpers

We are now looking for hot lunch helpers to sign up to serve lunch each day. Parents and/or grandparents are asked to consider signing up for slots from 11:15 until 12:30. There will already be a primary hot lunch volunteer there each day to help give direction; you are simply needed to assist. The students love to see their family members at school helping out, and this time can count towards your family's required volunteer hours for the year. If you are interested, please see the weekly e-mail for a link to sign up for as many or as few days as you like.



Giving Tree

There will soon be a giving tree available in the reception area of school with tags on it. These tags will list items to be donated towards families within our school that could benefit from these acts of kindness. Individuals who take tags can purchase and drop off the gifts in the conference room. You may wrap them yourself or leave them to be wrapped by volunteers at the school. Your kindness is appreciated to help make the season joyful for everyone!

Weather Reminders

For the really bad days—whether snow, ice, or extreme cold, please check WBAY for school closings or delays. We will also follow up through our school app: REMIND, our Facebook page, and/or through direct email.

For all of the days that we are in school, students are expected to have appropriate outdoor gear including warm gloves or mittens, winter hats and coats, and boots and snowpants for anyone who wants to enjoy the snow. Please be sure to label your child's outdoor gear as many items look the same—especially gloves and snowpants.

Spirit Week/Christmas Celebrations

The week before Christmas break will be full of celebrations! Please watch for news from our Student Council to let us know what type of Christmas Dress-Up days we will have all week. For now, we have Friday planned for Christmas PJ day as well as Pastor Play Day and classroom Christmas party days.

Each classroom plans their own celebrations, so watch for news from your children's teachers regarding snacks, exchange gifts, and more. We are thrilled to be celebrating the birth of Christ by sharing love and joy with our classmates!



Parents may want to plan to pick up students from their classrooms on the day before break. It is a good day to check for clean cubbies, lockers, and desks and to bring home any outdoor wear, rest time materials, water bottles, and anything else that would benefit from a good wash. There is usually a lot to haul out between those items and all of the Christmas goodies we accumulate, so extra hands are appreciated.

December School Birthdays

Iyla F. – December 1st
Kalvin A. – December 2nd
Lincoln C. – December 4th
Dayle S. – December 8th
Collins C. – December 9th
Da'Mir D. – December 9th
Finnegan A. – December 13th
Zolaina R. – December 13th
Carter L. – December 15th
Daxton S. – December 19th
Noah D. – December 21st
Dawson M. – December 21st



Christmas with a 2035* Perspective

(Christian Parenting Article Continued from Page 3)

All kids get that concept! It is good to give to one another, but it is really fun to give away what we can to others. How do you help your kids learn the value and joy of generosity?

An older lady told me something one year that made me sad at the time. I had just given birth to our first son, and she said, “Enjoy these coming Christmas seasons. They are the best you will ever have.” I remember feeling sorry for her that she felt that way. Now, I am that older woman, and I would echo her words to all of you.

I love Christmas and I always have. I’m excited to spend time with everyone around the Christmas holiday. But, when I think of those sweet Christmas mornings with my excited little boys, I imagine those memories will always be my favorites. They should be. Christmas is mostly for our kids.

I want to encourage all of you to protect your holiday season and schedule out some of the crazy so you can create a better Christmas for yourselves and your families. Looking back, I wish I had focused more time on my boys and less on everyone else. At the same time, create a better Christmas for yourselves and your families. Looking back, I wish I had focused more time on my boys and less on everyone else. At the same time,

I’m grateful for the times we did say no and stayed home to enjoy Christmas evenings as a family.

How old will your kids be in 2035*? What will you do this year that they will still be talking about then? You are raising an important generation of children who will live with the Christmas values they are learning from you. What are your favorite family memories and Christmas traditions each year?

The shepherds were going about their normal lives when the night sky was suddenly bright. The angel said, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10–11). Our normal lives are interrupted by Christmas as well. But aren’t we glad? Christmas is good news and great joy. I wish you a “shepherd’s Christmas” this year. Don’t hesitate to step away from your “normal” so that you can find Jesus. Trust me, Christmas 2035* is right around the corner, and your family will be glad you did!

**This article was originally written in 2018, with the suggestion to look ahead to 2030. Dates were changed to better reflect the meaning.*

View the article in its original form at www.christianparenting.org/articles/christmas-2030-perspective/

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