



St. John's Lutheran Church

Hatboro, PA

Monthly News & Updates

December 2022

A Letter from Pastor Bo

December: Excited Anticipation over Fearful Trepidation

'Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.'" – Isaiah 35.4

This is just one of the verses in Isaiah we will be exploring in Advent. I love Advent. And I love it as Advent and not just "the Christmas season." Many crotchety pastors I know like to make a very fine distinction between the two, and they prefer to do or sing nothing Christmas-y until the actual season, which runs from Christmas Eve until Epiphany (January 6). I get that, but I don't want to be crotchety. Advent is a season of anticipation for the coming (the 'Advent') of Christ, and Christmas is a season of celebrating that he has come. But Christmas-y things do tell us what we are waiting for, and they do it well, so it's all fine with me.

In looking at the texts for Advent, I wanted to focus on the Old Testament, and all the Old Testament readings this Advent are from Isaiah. Meditating on our readings from Scripture, I noticed that Isaiah keeps giving us reasons to not be afraid of stuff we are usually afraid of. He is anticipating a Messiah who will be the antidote to our fears. And these get to some of our real fears, underneath the surface, the ones we don't want to say we have, but they control us more than we think they do. Here are the statements of good news for Advent:

November 27th – We do not need to be afraid of conflict, because Christ teaching will show us how to make peace

December 4th – We do not need to be afraid of the dangers of the natural world, because Christ's wisdom will guide us to healing and harmony

December 11th – We do not need to be afraid of physical weakness and disability, because Christ's joy will give us strength for our journey

December 18th – We do not need to fear God's displeasure, because Christ reveals God's loving character

Christmas Eve – We do not need to fear being leaderless, because to us a Child has been born, and the government will rest on his shoulders

Advent is the beginning of the church year (Happy New Year!), and this Advent begins again the three-year cycle of readings that we have in our Revised Common Lectionary. In praying about how to go about using these readings in my preaching and teaching during worship, I feel drawn to lean more into the Old Testament, because it seems that we at St. John's need more grounding in that whole story of God from which Jesus springs. I will always be talking Christ and proclaiming the Gospel as well, but frankly, I think people tend to be scared of Jesus' dad and have a very thin understanding of the kingdom Jesus announced. I think this emphasis will help flesh out who Jesus of Nazareth was and how he is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

I look forward to journeying with you to the manger!

December Important Dates

December 4 – County Choraliers Concert

December 11 – Music Sunday
Youth Group Bake Sale
Youth Group Gift Exchange

December 15 – Faith Explorers

Last Month's Highlights

Youth Sunday – At the end of October, our Sunday School and Confirmation kids led worship! They did all of the readings and prayers, and did a great job! We are so proud of the work that they did, and are excited for the next Youth Sunday on January 29!

Hatboro Holiday Parade Outreach –

Every year for the Hatboro Holiday parade, St. John's opens our doors to those marching in need of warmth and good food. This year a handful of volunteers supplied over 100 people with hot dogs, popcorn, hot chocolate, and a warm place to sit while they waited for their turn to march!

Food Pantry Current Need

As we look forward to Christmas we plan to attempt the same goal as at Thanksgiving. Gift cards in the amount of \$30 from Grocery Outlet (or a store of your choice) will be collected. Special collections will be undertaken by individuals, businesses and our co-sponsoring churches. Turkey or ham certificates that you may not be using will be welcomed.

And, as always, our regular stream of donation items will need restocking.

Food Pantry Report

Use of the pantry remains strong. The number of families served in October was 355 which is only 42 families fewer than the highest October total which was in 2020. We have added another number to our tracking statistics. If a family is larger than 4 people they are allowed to fill a second bag. We saw 99 extra bags be distributed in October. So the total number of bags of grocery staples leaving the pantry was 454.

The Pantry Leadership Team continues to look for ways to fill the shelves. We are grateful for the support offered for the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. Numerous individual and several corporate collections have allowed us to prepare to help our client families observe the holiday. Our hope is to be able to offer either a turkey, turkey breast or a gift card to each family. We are planning a "fixins" table where the boxed potatoes, corn muffin mix, canned string beans, fried onion rings, cream of mushroom soup, cranberry sauce, etc will be available. This will be in addition to their regularly available grocery items.

We have already established a "Christmas Shop". Actually it is a table in the exit hallway. Donations of holiday cards, wrapping paper, stocking stuffer items are displayed there for our shoppers as they exit the building.

We have had a wonderful response to our call for new volunteers. It is just another example of the many blessings we receive in our effort to help our neighbors. Thank you!!

Next Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for the January Newsletter is **December 15th**. Please send anything you'd like to add to office@sjlch.org.

Youth News and Events

Sunday School

We offer Sunday School for ages 3 years old (and potty trained) through 12th grade. These ages are split into 4 classes (Pre-K/ Kindergarten, 1st-3rd grade, 4th-6th grade, 7th-12th grade). In order to make Sunday School a success, we need your help! Teacher signups are hanging on the bulletin board by the Sunday School office.

Lesson Schedule:

December 4:

- Pre-K-3rd grade: The Kingdom Divides
- 4th-12th grade: **No Sunday School**

December 11:

- Music Sunday - **No Sunday School**

December 18:

- Pre-K-6th grade: Christmas Lesson
- 7th-12th grade: Jesus as Immanuel

December 25:

- Christmas Day - **No Sunday School**

Youth Group Bake Sale

On Music Sunday, **December 11**, our Youth Group will hold a bake sale to raise funds for the 2024 Youth Gathering in New Orleans!

Youth Group Gift Exchange

This year's gift exchange will be on **December 11th from 5-7pm**. Our youth in grades 7th-12th are invited to meet here at the church with a wrapped gift worth up to \$10. You are welcome to bring snacks, but they will also be provided. We hope to see you there!

Pictures with Santa

Santa will visit St. John's Sunday School on **Sunday, December 18** for photos with the kids.

Coat Drive for the Homeless

Our Sunday School's winter outreach project this year is a coat drive for the homeless. Please bring in your gently used coats, any size, by **December 18** so the Sunday School kids can sort them and we can get them to those in need!

Midweek Advent Services

Join us every Wednesday in Advent (November 30, December 7, 14, & 21) at **10:00am** for midweek services!

Music Sunday

We're gearing up for Music Sunday on **December 11!** Michael Brinkworth and all of our ensembles are working hard and can't wait for the big day!

Men's Breakfast

All men are welcome at **Lancer's Diner** in Horsham on Wednesday, **December 14th**. No need to call ahead. Breakfast starts at **9:00** but you can come as early as 8:45. Everyone gets separate checks. We look forward to any new members of the church to join us. If you have any questions, call Rod Orth at 215-431-8437 or email me at rodorth@aol.com.

Christmas Eve Service Schedule

This year we will have three candlelight services on Christmas Eve, at **2pm, 5pm, and 8pm**, with the following details:

2:00pm – Candlelight service with Communion

5:00pm – Candlelight “Kidstravaganza” service, no Communion

8:00pm – Candlelight service with Communion

County Choraliers Concert

The County Choraliers' 2022 “Winter Fantasy” concert will be on **Sunday, December 4, at 4:00pm** here at St. John's. A free-will offering is appreciated. We hope to see you there!

Book Club

Come join us at book club! We meet monthly and discuss the book of the month. Each member chooses a book and we rotate through each member. Our next book for book club is "The Santa Suit" by Mary Kay Andrews. We'll meet on **Dec 11, 2022 at 1:30 pm** in the church library. Please email Sharon Grosch at luvespanol@yahoo.com with any questions.

Faith Explorers

The next Faith Explorers meeting will be **December 15th at 6pm at Mike's Bar and Grill Restaurant**. For December's meeting, please read Part Three (Thank You) of "The Four Things That Matter Most" by Ira Byock. You can sign up on the sign up sheet or write it on your yellow attendance card. Feel free to contact Linda DiMeo with any questions at lindapfaff@gmail.com.

Christmas Day Service

We will be having a simple service at our normal Sunday worship time of **10:00** on Christmas morning. There will be lessons and carols, and no communion.

A Note of Thanks

Dear St. John's Family,

Thank you ever so much for all of your cards, condolences, prayers, and support for me during my grieving time over the loss of my father. It has all meant so much to me. It is really helpful when there are people backing me up. I know that I do not grieve alone.

Love,

Jim Howat, Jr.

Help Wanted

Are you...

- a Confirmand who needs to meet your Worship Participation requirements?
- a student looking for Community Service Opportunities?
- someone interested in learning a new skill and helping out behind the scenes?

Bob Muller would love your help running the cameras, lights, and sound equipment that take our weekend and online services to the next level!

Subscribe to Our YouTube Channel!

We're trying to get to 100 Subscribers! You can find us on YouTube by searching "St. John's Lutheran Church Hatboro."

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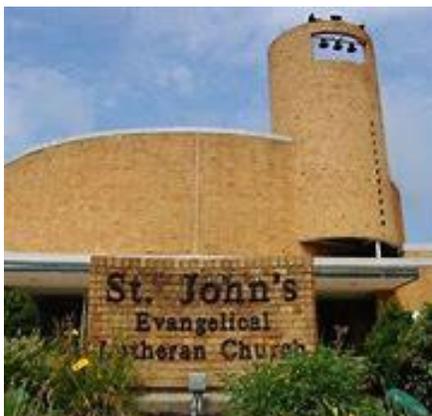


St. John's Lutheran
Church – Hatboro



@sjlch505

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