



# Epistle



S T . J O H N L U T H E R A N C H U R C H

## House Blessings and Pastoral Visitation

House blessings have been a tradition in many Catholic and some protestant congregations for centuries. Most still associate it with the visitation of the wise men on Epiphany in January. The rite, performed by the pastor, is meant to bring the presence of God into one's home by invoking His Name, prayers, Scripture readings, and singing hymns. Christian piety is not meant to be maintained solely through outward worship attendance. A life of piety includes one's home life: family interaction, devotions, and prayers. Although God's Word, our Savior Jesus Christ, comes to us from heaven, far outside ourselves; he is then cultivated by the Holy Spirit more deeply into Christian's lives, hearts, and minds. Whether you've moved into a new home recently or not, please take the opportunity to bring the blessing of God into your home through pastoral visitation, reading Scripture, and singing hymns.

Home blessings are closely related to pastors visiting their members. Although in smaller congregations members get to know their pastors and pastoral care is thus offered more specifically and personally, as congregations have grown this practice has become rare. C. F. W. Walther, our synod's first president, wrote in his *Pastoral Theology* that, "He should turn his attention to everyone and let it be known that he bears in his heart the concern of a pastor for every individual soul." This is one of the reasons why congregations have typically been smaller, not more than 1,000 members. When they have gotten this big new churches were built, in some cities, within blocks of the original.

Since the start of our visitation program this autumn, we have started to get to know the wider membership of St. John in Chester. The next step in this process is to coordinate those willing to visit with those who have been elected as elders. God has so blessed St. John that there are simply too many members for even two pastors to visit even only once a year. Thus, the ten elected elders are crucial for proper pastoral oversight and guidance here at St. John Lutheran in Chester. Please pray that God will further guide the pastors, elders, and visiting volunteers at St. John to the benefit of our whole congregation.

## Pope Francis considers changing the Lord's Prayer

Pope Francis's idea of changing the sixth petition to the Lord's Prayer, "and lead us not into temptation," sounds smart, at first. But the reason why this translation is the best is because it most directly relates to the Spirit leading Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil in Matthew 4. After His baptism and God's voice from heaven declared that Jesus was His Son, God allowed His faith and knowledge of the Scriptures to be tested. We pray that we will not be put to such a test because we are not perfect like Christ. Praise the Lord that He accomplished our salvation by His perfect life and death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.

Written by Pastor Justin Massey

## OUR 2017-2018 YEAR-TO-DATE FINANCIAL STATUS

### Cash Flow from 7/31/2017 to 12/26/2017

Year-to-date Income	\$444,383.93
Year-to-date Expense	\$ 734,784.01
Difference (Income - Expense)	(\$290,400.08)

Average 2017 Attendance per Week 229

### Money owed on Line of Credit

Beginning Balance 7/31/17	\$214,603.08
Paid on Debt year-to-date	(\$231,991.06)
Paid from Dent on Debt	(\$)
Borrowed year-to-date	\$103,522.00
LOC Renewal Fee	\$80.00
Current Balance as of 12/26/17	\$ 98,631.92

## Q U I L T T A C K I N G

You do not have to be a member of LWML or join to help with tacking quilts for World Relief. We will start January 9at 8:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. each Tuesday in January and February weather permitting. We will have a light lunch each Tuesday.

## E A S Y N E W Y E A R S ' R E S O L U T I O N

January is a great time to start sending your kids to Sunday School. Even if their schedules prevent weekly attendance, bring them when you can.

Sunday School will resume on Jan. 7. We will begin the new year with our monthly opening in the basement to honor our students and volunteers that have birthdays in January. Students with birthdays in January should bring the same number of coins as their years for the offering.

Through January, we will be collecting for Lutheran World Relief to buy special gifts for the impoverished countries they sponsor. Catalogs will be available with goats, chickens, playground and medical equipment, etc. for the students to choose what our offering will provide. Last year, we sent over \$200!

Sunday School meets from 9-9:45 every Sunday morning.

## A P P L E S F O R S T U D E N T S

Shop, Save, and Send. St. John Lutheran School is collecting Rozier's Country Mart receipts. Our school can earn free educational equipment simply by saving and turning in your Rozier's receipts. If you shop at Rozier's, please save your receipt and turn it in to the church or school office or place in the box in the back of church. Thanks so much.

## E L E C T R O N I C N E W S L E T T E R

Did you know that the church offers the monthly newsletter electronically? This is a great way to help the church save money. If you would like to sign up please email Kelly at [secretary@stjohnchester.com](mailto:secretary@stjohnchester.com).

Join us for...

**Epiphany Celebrations**  
 Saturday January 6, 6:30p.m.  
 Sunday January 7  
 7:45 a.m. & 10:00a.m.



## STEWARDSHIP CORNER

It's a new year. It's a time when we take stock of the year past in order to improve the year to come. It's a time when we sit down to plan and implement what we want to accomplish and even change. Part of that is planning our stewardship for the coming year.

Often we find this difficult and daunting and even joyless. But it doesn't have to be. In fact, it is really quite simple and full of joy. So here are some tips to make that planning less stressful. You begin by answering these three questions: Who are you? To whom do I give? And how much?

So, who are you? The Table of Duties in the Small Catechism informs us. Are you a hearer of God's Word? Are you a citizen of society? Are you a member of a family? Stewardship covers these three estates: church, society, family. We don't particularly struggle to give to society or family. Our struggles, our difficulties and our questions arise in giving to the church.

So, what is our duty as members of the church with regard to giving? The Table of Duties, again, gives us a guide. If you are a hearer, a member of the church who receives instruction, St. Paul taught: "Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor" (Gal. 6:6). This means the local congregation is primary.

Your pastor is the one called to preach the Gospel to you and administer the Lord's blessed sacraments to you. Your congregation is the place where those things happen. Thus, when God calls us to give to the church, He has the local congregation in mind. For "the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14).

How much do we give to the local congregation? Our only instructions are these: to give regularly (1 Cor. 6:1–2), proportionally (1 Cor. 16:1–2; 2 Cor. 8:12), and generously (2 Cor. 8:20) of our first fruits (Gen. 4:4; Prov. 3:9; Lev. 27:30) with a spirit of eagerness (2 Cor. 9:2), earnestness (2 Cor. 8:7), cheerfulness (2 Cor. 9:7), and love (2 Cor. 8:23).

In other words, giving to the church is not to be an afterthought, given after everything else is spent. In this way, it is deliberate. We give regularly – weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly – keeping in mind our own strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. We set it aside beforehand – before anything else is spent.

From those first fruits, we set aside a proportionate and generous amount. Ten percent was the standard for the Israelites. This was a command for the ancient Israelites. We can give as much as we want, but ask yourself: do we really want to be less generous than was commanded of the Israelites? Is the job of the New Testament Church bigger or smaller than the job given to Israel?

And how are we to give it? We give it with eagerness and earnestness. We give it cheerfully and with love, not out of compulsion. For through the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, God has made us His children, forgiven us all our sins, given us grace upon grace, promised us life everlasting with Him in His kingdom, and filled us with His own Spirit, the Holy Spirit. This makes giving a joy, as Jesus said, "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

It's that easy. And it is joyful. For in stewardship, our gracious and giving Lord invites us to take part in the work that He accomplishes here on earth, providing for the ongoing preaching of the gospel as well as those who are in need. Taking part in that makes all our work holy – work that is done in service to the Lord as priestly members of His kingdom.

## ACOLYTES



Mon Jan 1 10:00 a.m. Connor Mott  
Sat Jan 6 6:30 pm +Gavin Schroder, Jesse Heath  
Sun Jan 7 7:45 am +Max Blechle, Clayton Kothe  
10:00 am +Sydney Collins, Nick Collins  
Sat Jan 13 6:30 pm Emily Mehrer  
Sun Jan 14 7:45 am Landon Hornbostel  
10:00 am Gage Hasemeyer  
Sat Jan 20 6:30 pm Cole Joshon  
Sun Jan 21 7:45 am Nick Coffey  
10:00 am Kylie Fortner  
Sat Jan 27 6:30 pm Jordan Buskohl  
Sun Jan 28 7:45 am Noah Homan  
10:00 am Addyson Mitchell

## ALTAR GUILD



Jan 6 & 20 Wanda Dethrow, Jim and Rosemary Oetting  
Jan 7 & 21 Sherry Bohnert Melvin & Edna Neislein  
Jan 14 & 28 Pam Sheely & Larry and Imogene McDonough,  
Gary and Pam Knop

## USHER TEAMS

Mon Jan 1 10:00 am Gary Duensing  
Sat Jan 6 6:30 pm Volunteer  
Sun Jan 7 7:45 am Gary Duensing  
10:00 am Don Stallman  
Sat Jan 13 6:30 pm Volunteer  
Sun Jan 14 7:45 am Dennis Kontz  
10:00 am Gary Eggemeyer  
Sat Jan 20 6:30 pm Volunteer  
Sun Jan 21 7:45 am Ron Rathert  
10:00 am Rick Casten  
Sat Jan 27 6:30 pm Volunteer  
Sun Jan 28 7:45 am Gary Duensing  
10:00 am Don Stallman

## WORSHIP SERVICES

Saturday 6:30 p.m., Sunday 7:45 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.  
Sunday School and Bible Class at 9:00 a.m.  
Sunday Worship Broadcast on KSGM 980 AM  
online at ksgm980.com

## GREETERS

Mon Jan 1 10:00 am Kathy Sprengel  
Sat Jan 6 6:30 pm Mardell Granger  
Sun Jan 7 7:45 am Deb Caraway  
10:00 am Carla Welge  
Sat Jan 13 6:30 pm Barb Tindall  
Sun Jan 14 7:45 am Dorothy Gerberding  
10:00 am Mary Stallman  
Sat Jan 20 6:30 pm Marian Knop  
Sun Jan 21 7:45 am Barb McCormick  
10:00 am Dolores Hillerman  
Sat Jan 27 6:30 pm Ruby Schirmer  
Sun Jan 28 7:45 am Darlene Gentsch  
10:00 am

## ALUMINUM CANS

Jan 1-6 Brett Klindworth  
Jan 8-13 Steve Stallman  
Jan 15-20 Fred Fricke  
Jan 22-27 Larry McDonough  
Jan 29-Feb 3 Gary Knop



## WEEKEND JANITORS

Jan 1 Ryan Petrowske  
Jan 6/7 Ron Cushman / Chris Colvis  
Jan 13/14 Ron Hillerman / Gary Kelkhoff  
Jan 20/21 Korey Baker/ Larry McDonough

## RADIO ANNOUNCER & TECHNICIANS

Jan 1 Mardell Granger / Tony Young  
Jan 7 Tim Lochhead / Charlie Bargman  
Jan 14 Dallas Redeker / Lynn Rickenberg  
Jan 21 Amanda Middendorf / Bob Platt  
Jan 28 Mardell Granger / Tony Young



## CHURCH E-MAIL

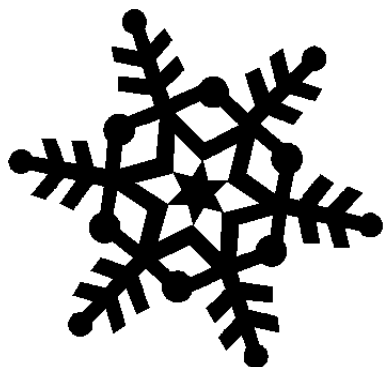
Rev. Timothy Sims- [timoteosims@hotmail.com](mailto:timoteosims@hotmail.com)  
Rev. Justin Massey- [Justin.Massey@ctsfiw.edu](mailto:Justin.Massey@ctsfiw.edu)  
Kelly Walls— [secretary@stjohnchester.com](mailto:secretary@stjohnchester.com)

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Chester, Illinois 62233

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JESUS LOVES:



*January*

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**B I B L E   T R E A S U R E   H U N T :**



**Bible Incomplete:** Fill in the missing letters to complete the passage.

Fo\_al\_th\_la\_is\_ul\_il\_ed\_no\_e\_w\_rd,\_ve\_in\_hi\_;Th\_u\_s\_al\_lo\_e\_t\_y\_n\_ig\_bo\_as  
\_hy\_el\_.

**A N S W E R   T O   L A S T   M O N T H ' S   B I B L E   T R E A S U R E  
H U N T :**

*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.  
II Peter 3:8-9*



**C A P P E R S**

CAPPERS will meet not meet in January.

**N E W   F A C I L I T Y**

Were you given some money for Christmas because the giver didn't know what to buy? Want to honor a special someone at the start of the New Year? Consider a donation to the New Facility Fund. The current total is \$546,624.94. Before any new construction takes place, contributions need to come from all ages of our members. Set aside a certain amount each month or with each paycheck. Plan to honor your child when he brings home good grades or makes all his free throws. Show your appreciation of a certain teacher with a gift to the New Facility Fund. Need ideas for memorials or someone's birthday who has everything? An acknowledgement can be sent.

