



St. John Lutheran Church

FREEDOM TOWNSHIP

16035 Co. Rd. U ♦ NAPOLEON, OH 43545

Serving Christ in Freedom

Worship • Stewardship • Mission

January 26, 2025

VOL. 91

NO. 4

Rev. Gary Bender, TIM Pastor
Miss Tracy Germann, Principal

Cell: 989-770-0005; Church: 419-598-8961
School: 419-598-8702
Church Website: www.sjl.org

The Third Sunday After Epiphany

Sermon & Text: “God’s Word Brings Joy” *Nehemiah 8:1-3/5-6/8-10*

Order of Service: Prayer and Preaching ~ LSB pg. 260

Hymns: **577 ~ 587 ~ Thy Word is a Lamp (projected)**

WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS

Welcome to St. John Church! We pray that the grace of God will heal your hurts; that the strength of God will give you courage to face the work before you; and that the peace of God will keep you secure and steady in Christ Jesus. Please introduce yourself to our pastor, and also fill out the blue Rite of Fellowship card from the pew rack in front of you and drop it in the baskets at the doors as you leave today.



SERVING IN GOD’S HOUSE THIS MORNING

- ✠ Sharon Damman *Organist* ✠ Brayden Damman, Maxton Howard *Acolytes* ✠
- ✠ Dennis Showman, Dean Badenhop, Rich Elling *Ushers* ✠
- ✠ Diane Von Deylen, Lou Ann Rosebrock *Altar Guild* ✠

CONGREGATIONAL WORKSHOP – The Transition Task Force is sponsoring three workshops to begin exploring St. John’s past, present, and future as we look forward to new ministry with a new pastor. These workshops will deal with exploring St. John’s past and will last about 1.5 hours. The dates are: Sunday, Feb. 2 (1PM); Wednesday, Feb. 5 (1PM); Monday, Feb. 10 (7PM). Please plan to attend ONE of the Workshops. Also fill out the Questionnaire (one per person; one is included in today’s bulletin, and additional copies can be found on the narthex table) ahead of time and bring it with you to the Workshop.

ADULT BIBLE CLASS – This morning we will take “A Longer Look at the Lessons.” These week-by-week studies take a more in-depth look at the Scripture readings that are read in worship that morning. Each Sunday is a study unto itself, so that if you have to miss one Sunday, you can easily pick up again the following Sunday.

Date	Time	Activities
Today	9:00 AM	Worship Service
	10:20 AM	Adult Bible Study; Sunday School; "The Lamp"
	2:30 PM	GriefShare Support Group – Topic: "Self-Care"
Mon.	5:30 PM	Bread from Heaven Food Pantry Distribution
	5:00 PM	Basketball: Gr 4-6 Girls – @ St. Pat's
	6:00 PM	Basketball: Gr 4-6 Boys – @ St. Pat's
Tues.	8:35 AM	School Chapel
Wed.	6:15 PM	Jr. High Confirmation Class
	7:00 PM	Adult Choir Practice
Thurs.	5:00 PM	Basketball: Gr 4-6 Girls – Home vs. BG Christian
	6:00 PM	Basketball: Gr 4-6 Boys – Home vs. BG Christian
Sun.	9:00 AM	Communion Service
	10:20 AM	Adult Bible Study; Sunday School; "The Lamp"
	1:00 PM	"Exploring St. John's Past" Workshop
	2:30 PM	GriefShare Support Group – Topic: "Fearful and Overwhelmed"

SAVE THE DATE: The next voters' meeting will be held after worship on Feb. 16th.

PASTORAL EMERGENCIES – In the event you require emergency pastoral care, please call Pastor Gary at 989-770-0005. NOTE ABOUT HOSPITALIZATION: If you are planning to spend time in a hospital (more than just out-patient) for surgery or other issues, please notify the Church Office or Pastor Gary, so he can arrange to visit you while you are there. He will need to know the dates involved and which hospital you will be staying at (preferably in writing). Thank you for your help and cooperation in this matter.

MATTERS FOR PRAYER – Please keep these people in your prayers:

- ❖ *Melba Elling, Norma Damman, and Rozella Gruenhagen* at Genacross
- ❖ *Lawrence Behrmann and Willie Joost* at Northcrest Nursing & Rehab
- ❖ Our Shut-Ins: *Irene Joost and Leona Durham*
- ❖ Military: *Justin Atkinson, Jason Rohrs, Emily Carmon, Jordan Lange, Cody Hoffman, and Kyle*
- ❖ *Lowell Petzoldt and Cheryl Yaw*, for health concerns related to cancer
- ❖ *William Niebergall* undergoing heart surgery
- ❖ *Marietta Damman* recuperating from hip surgery

FINANCIAL FACTS:	Home Fund	Synod & Missions	Building Fund
Weekly Need	\$11,710.59	\$500.00	\$961.54
Rec'd 1/12/2025	\$11,594.00	\$550.00	\$155.00

ATTENDANCE: 155

THE 2025 USHER (blue) SCHEDULE is available and can be picked up on the narthex table. Thanks again to all who are willing to be of service to the Lord at St. John.

PORTALS OF PRAYER booklets for January, February, and March are on the desk in the back of the church. Pick up a copy today!

A THANK YOU FROM JOYCE WIECHERS –

“I wish to thank each one of you for the overwhelming outpouring of cards (with so much meaning), well wishes, kind words, gifts and most of all, your support over the past years. I’m still amazed at all the people that came! And I would like to especially thank Dan & Deb Wachtman, Church Council, and the School Board for the wonderful meal prepared and served. It was “over the top” in my books!

I want to welcome Erica Musshel and Leah Saylor onto the staff at St. John. It has been a true pleasure training with you and passing “a lot of information” on to each one of you. You will both do a great job for the church and school! I’m so honored to have been a part of the St. John staff for as many years as I was able, and to be “Serving Christ in Freedom.” I pray that God will continue to bless St. John in so many ways, as he already has. I will miss seeing everyone, but I look forward to connecting with many of you in church on Sunday mornings!”

Signed, *Joyce Wiechers*

PREPARING OUR EARS TO HEAR – In today’s Scripture readings we hear that *The Lord Is Manifested as Our Savior through the Preaching of the Gospel.*

When Jesus opens His mouth to preach, gracious words flow from His lips. The Scriptures are, indeed, fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:21–22). For Christ was anointed by the Spirit of the Lord “to proclaim good news to the poor,” “to proclaim liberty to the captives” and “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18–19). By this proclamation, Christ releases His people from captivity and gathers them to Himself in His Church. So it was when the Lord released His people from Babylon and returned them to Jerusalem. “Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people,” sanctified the whole congregation by the reading and preaching of the Law (Neh. 8:8–9). As the people then were urged to “eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready” (Neh. 8:10), so are you anointed by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ to share in His feast and to serve the fellow members of His Body with His good gifts, “giving greater honor to the part that lacked it” (1 Cor. 12:12, 24). *“He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt. 11:15).*

2024 CHURCH ANNUAL REPORT – It’s time to start getting your reports ready for the 2024 Church Annual. The secretaries of the different organizations are asked to write up a summary of the year’s activities, and treasurers should submit their financial report for their organization. If you need your offering contribution information prior to the distribution of the Annual Report, please call Financial Trustee, *Jerry Langenhop*, at 419-966-3473. **Please turn your reports in to Leah Saylor (e-mail churchsecretary@sjl.org or drop it in her office mailbox) by Wed., Feb. 12.**

DIRECTORY UPDATES – There are addresses and phone numbers in the Annual Report directory that need updated. If you (and/or your adult children) have address changes; or **if you have eliminated your land line telephone and only have cell phone numbers**, please call the church office at 419-598-8961 or email churchsecretary@sjl.org with updated information. Thank you!

‘BREAD FROM HEAVEN’ will have its monthly food distribution on Monday at 5:30 p.m. If you as a member of St. John could use food assistance from our food pantry, please speak with Pastor Bender. We are required by the Northwestern Ohio Food Bank to keep a record with your name, but pastor will keep your record separate and absolutely confidential.

LYF SPONSOR BOARD – The LCMS National Youth Gathering is this summer, and the participants are looking for sponsors. There will be a Sponsor Board (envelope fundraiser) in the back of the church during the month of January. Sponsors can choose an envelope that suits them and contribute the corresponding amount. **Please return envelopes to Todd or Tina Wachtman by February 2nd.** Your support is greatly appreciated!

LYF SUPER BOWL SUB SALE – It's that time of year again for the LYF Super Bowl Sub Sale (pre-order only; order forms located in the back of the church). On Sunday, Feb. 9th, the subs will be available for pick up after the church service.



Orders are due February 2nd. Payment is due when you pick up your subs. Checks can be made payable to St. John LYF. Super Bowl sub sales help raise money for the youth group's expenses. Thank you for supporting our LYF group!

THANK YOU to Dan Wachtman, Dean Badenhop, Neil Badenhop, Denny VonDeylen, and Darwin Badenhop (from Vince's TV) for your work installing the new screens in the Sanctuary!

GRIEFSHARE is underway. Are you grieving the loss of a loved one? It's never too late to join— **every Sunday afternoon, 2:30 - 4:00 p.m. in the Youth & Family Center, from January 5 - March 30, 2025.** Facilitators are Rev. Gary



Bender, with a number of years of experience with this class, and Nancy Nemoyer, member of our congregation and a Deaconess and educator. Whether your loss is recent or more distant, the discussion, video presentations, and participant guide have proven valuable in the grieving process. For more information or to register, go to <https://www.griefshare.org/groups/248795> or call Nancy at 717-421-5741. Brochures with more information are also on the back table.

BAKE SALE! Join The Women of Freedom and St. John Lutheran School for a bake sale after church on Sunday, February 16th. All proceeds will go to help those affected by the California fires. Donations are welcome! ... *Lord, make me an instrument of Your Love, let me be a channel from above. Amen*

LARGE PRINT & CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY BULLETINS are always available on the table in the narthex. The Children's Bulletins are coordinated with the Bible texts for each Sunday.

THE FLOWER CALENDAR for 2025 is posted in the narthex. To sign up for a certain Sunday to place flowers on the altar or the piano, sign your name on that Sunday, and then about two weeks before that date, call *Nancy Glaser* at 419-906-0963 to let her know if you are getting your own flowers or if you want the Women of Freedom to take care of them. **The price for the flowers through the Women of Freedom is \$30.00.** It is your responsibility to contact *Nancy Glaser*. Also, please contact the church office with the information for the bulletin.

USE OF THE FELLOWSHIP HALL OR YOUTH CENTER – If you would like to use the Fellowship Hall or Youth Center for any occasion on a certain date this year, **please contact the church office at 419-598-8961 or churchsecretary@sjl.org.** In addition to calling the office, you may want to check availability on the online church calendar at www.sjl.org.



NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK – January 26– 31, 2025

As a congregation that supports a Lutheran School, we will be joining sister schools and congregations across the nation to celebrate National Lutheran Schools Week, January 26-31. “Endure” is the theme for this year’s celebration. The associated scripture verse is found in Hebrews 12:1-3, which says, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”

In celebration of National Lutheran Schools Week, St. John will be holding various activities at school that include live broadcasts on WNDH 103.1, dress up days, and a virtual mission trip to Kenya. Next Sunday, Feb. 2., the students will join our worship service to “Sing and Share”!

Lutheran Schools are driven by a commitment to the Gospel. They meet or exceed state and national academic standards, and have educators who model visionary, servant, and spiritual leadership. The LCMS has 1,800 preschools, elementary schools, and high schools with the public opportunity to proclaim and celebrate God’s work among us in Lutheran schools. We thank God for the opportunity to share Jesus’ amazing love with children and their families. NLSW gives us the chance to proclaim these blessings out in the community. Lutheran schools are an amazing incubator for faithful witnessing of God’s love for us through Christ by teachers and students alike.

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE – St. John School is helping the organization Together We Can Make a Difference, located in Napoleon. They are in need of egg cartons. We are asking for donations of empty egg cartons that hold a dozen eggs. Please make sure the egg carton is clean and not damaged. Children will also be working on a service project to help this organization in their classrooms later this month, truly showing that TOGETHER we can make a difference.

OPEN HOUSE – Mark your calendars for Feb. 23; there will be a new format for our School Open House. Invite a friend, and come check out our school! More details to follow.

SCHOOL POSITION OPENING:

- **Music Teacher** - This is an open position as of November 1st. This is a one day a week position responsible for teaching children in grades K-5 music according to the state standards. If you know of anyone for this position, please contact Miss Germann at tgermann@sjl.org.

CHURCH SECRETARY DAYS – Leah Saylor is in the church office on Wednesdays and Thursdays. She can be reached by phone at 419-598-8961 or by e-mail at: churchsecretary@sjl.org. Bulletin submissions will now need to be turned in by end-of-day *Tuesday* in order to be included in Sunday's bulletin.

BE A JAVA JOY HOST! Every second Sunday of the month after the service, we aim to have a time of fellowship with coffee, juice and snacks called **Java Joy**. We are still looking for hosts for many months of 2025. Find the sign-up sheet and hosting guidelines at the narthex table. Don't let finances stop you – you are welcome to reimburse your expenses from the kitty if you wish.



ST. JOHN WEBSITE- SJL.ORG – Did you know you can listen to *Pastor Gary's* sermons on the internet? And access the current and archived bulletins? Just click on “St. John YouTube Channel” or “Worship Service Resources” on the Home Page.

COUNCIL MINUTES – This is just a reminder that council meeting minutes are not published until they are approved a month later. If you would like to read about the most recent council meeting, an unofficial and unapproved copy of the minutes is available for viewing in the church office, usually within a week after the meeting.

WORSHIP ANEW is a weekly, 30-minute Lutheran broadcast worship service. Each service includes music, scripture readings, prayers, and a pastor delivering a message that is designed to feel one-on-one to the viewer. Broadcasts can be viewed every Sunday on: *Toledo's WTVG (CW) Channel 13 at 9:30 a.m.* or online at worshipanew.org.



IF YOU'RE EVER IN A PINCH and could use a little help, the ***Good Neighbor Fund*** is there to assist you too! Please don't be bashful about asking – everything is strictly confidential. Just give the church office a call, and we'll see what we can do!

PROJECT CONNECT – There are many free booklets in the rack in the narthex. Be sure to check for some informative reading. Some titles are: “*Alzheimer's: Facing the Loss of a Lifetime,*” “*Talking with God,*” “*Forgiveness is a Choice,*” “*Talking Openly with Kids,*” “*Setting Priorities,*” “*Your Place in God's Plan,*” “*Stressed but Connected,*” “*Beyond Divorce,*” “*For Better, For Worse,*” “*What Is Faith in Jesus?*” and many more. These booklets are furnished through the Lutheran Hour Ministries.

VENMO IS HERE! Exciting News...St. John now accepts donations via Venmo! If you need internet access, use our guest wifi **SJL Open** with the password **sjleagles##**. Then scan the QR code beside this announcement to visit our donation page.



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Thought for the Week...

Let the Written Word lead you to the Living Word.