

The Parish Voice

St. Thomas Lutheran Church — Streetsboro, Ohio

December 2022

Christmas is about one thing

Christmas is a confusing season. There are so many images that blend the secular with the spiritual that even Christians sometimes can't sort through them all. Imagine what it must be like for unbelievers.

There was a campaign that ran on some radio stations encouraging people to say "Christmas." Not a bad idea (I never stopped, but evidently some people have pushed political correctness to its usual extreme), but the ads seem to think that it's not such a good idea to focus on Father Winter and to think about Santa instead. Did I mention that these radio stations play Christian music? Not a single mention of Jesus (that I've heard).

Elves and shepherds, wise men and reindeer, wrapped packages and six-packs, shining stars and shiny jewelry, greeting cards and angel voices, lighted trees and well-lit celebrants — they all seem to blend in the American version of Christmas.

You hear things like: "Christmas is about family." "Christmas is about helping the poor." "Christmas is for dreaming." Can we ever sort through this hodgepodge of icons to reclaim what Christmas should mean? It's hard.

Christmas is about one thing — it is about a God who loves us humans so much that He could not bear the idea that we should wander away from Him into nothingness. He had sent messenger after messenger to announce to us His will and purpose, His displeasure, His hopes for us, His love for us — but we ignored them.

So He finally decided there only one thing left to do — become one of us; become, not just *like* us, but actually become one of us (being omnipotent, He could do this; we've longed for some time to do the opposite, that is: be God . . . fortunately, we cannot). But He did not become one of us in power — He did not descend in regal majesty or awesome display of glory. He came in weakness, as a child . . . a child who would have to grow up as every child does, experience all the sensations of every growing child, grow to become a man with real feelings, real physicality, real sensations, real thoughts. He lived among us as a man — not "pretend man"— everything about Him was fully and completely human.

He became one of us for a purpose: — so that He could die in our place. As one author has put it: "He lived the life that we were supposed to but could not and died the death that we deserved but now need not." (Contemplate on this for a while.) All that he came to do . . . all that He accomplished . . . all that He was (and is) . . . comes to us as a Gift.

Early Christians began to express their joy in that gift by giving gifts to one another, in that way following Christ's example (so now we have wrapped presents). A third-century follower of Jesus became well-known for his gift-giving; his name was Nicholas. He became a bishop of the church, later was named as a saint, and over the years his name got mangled in English as Santa Claus

("Saint Nicholas"). And on and on the customs were added — some of them religious, some of them actually spiritual, many of them pagan in origin. As people came to these shores with the customs of their own land, they became amalgamated into the American version.

So now we have this confusion. But it's very simple to sort through — keep your eye on the manger. Don't let the sparkly lights or the flickering candles distract you. Don't pay attention to the red-suited man or his sled and animals. Don't be caught up in tinsel and tawdry, gaudy and jingling accretions (Yes, you may look up that word).

Look at the manger and see God Himself with Us! If you keep looking there, you will find inexpressible joy this Advent and Christmas.

Our Worship This Month



December 4 — Second Sunday in Advent

Sermon: "A Voice in the Wilderness"

Texts: Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12

John the Baptist is the voice that cries out "Prepare!" Can we, do we, listen?

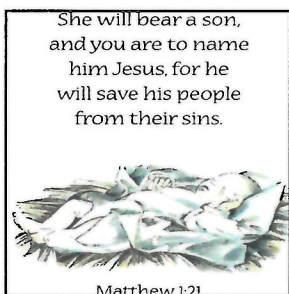


December 11 — Third Sunday in Advent

Sermon: "Patience, Children, Patience"

Texts: Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11

Advent is the season for patience, but we often do not have, nor know how to gain, this quality.



December 18 — Fourth Sunday in Advent

Sermon: "A Peek at the Promise"

Texts: Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 24; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25

As the celebration of Christ's birth draw ever so near, we listen in to what was told to Mary and Joseph so we too may go on in hope.

On December 1 we begin **Midweek Advent Services**. This season we will focus on the theme: **Be Born in Us Today**, reminded that Christ is born in us spiritually today and every day. He enters into us daily to strengthen and support us, save us, and renew us. **See the November newsletter for details for each Thursday service.** Soup suppers begin at 6:30 PM; our worship begins at 7:30 PM. Please join us. If you wish to volunteer to bring a soup, salad, bread, or dessert, a sign-up sheet will be on the narthex bulletin board.

Our Christmas Schedule of Worship Services

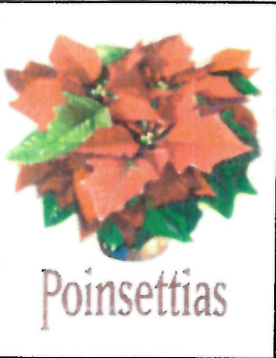


Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service — 7:30 PM

At this traditional service of lessons and carols, Pastor Just's message will be: *"What We Celebrate This Day."* There will be a candle lighting ceremony and we will celebrate Holy Communion. Bring your friends and neighbors to this memorable time of worship.

Christmas Day Festival Eucharist — 10:00 AM

As we gather on Christmas morn, we begin with an informal carol sing (so the songs you missed on Christmas Eve, you can share on Christmas morning). Our Eucharistic service follows a traditional format (maybe a slight addition?). Pastor Just's message is: *"Beyond Nostalgia and Sentiment."*



Each Christmas, we seek to adorn our chancel with as many poinsettias as we can. We have several artificial plants that came to us from Epiphany Lutheran. There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex where you can sponsor a live poinsettia. Please indicate what kind color poinsettia you desire and how many you intend to sponsor. If you want this to serve as a memorial, please write the name of the person in whose memory you are sponsoring and that person's relationship to you. See the sign-up sheet for costs.
Thank you for sharing.



On December 4, following our worship service, we will hold our **Annual Congregational Meeting** in the Fellowship Hall. All members are encouraged to attend and offer their insights and comments. On the agenda will be the budget for 2023 and election of members of the Church Council. We are seeking some new names to serve on Council, so if you are approached ahead of the meeting to serve, please give this diligent prayer. If you have other agenda items, please contact our Council President, Steve Hlava (330) 422-1959.



The Ravenna Community Choir (which involves a few of our members) will present a joint concert with the Select Choir of Southeast High School on Sunday December 4, 2022 at 3:00 p.m. Save the date and plan to attend this special event! The concert will be held at the Ravenna Assembly of God, 6401 State Route 14 in Ravenna.



After Rev. Steven Latzke returned the Call extended to him, our Call Committee, together with the Call Committee from Christ, Mantua, have met to further the process of seeking and calling a Pastor. They will continue to work with our Circuit Visitor, Rev. Jonathan McCall (as well as with the English District President and Bishop, Rev. Dr. Jamison Hardy and the Ohio District President, Rev. Kevin Wilson). Please continue to pray for both committees, that working together, they will soon be able to provide both congregations with new names to consider for a Call. Pastor Just has indicated that he is willing to continue serving us as we move through this process.



Posted on our narthex bulletin board are several copies of the latest newsletter from Rev. Dr. Jonathan and Deaconess Cheryl Naumann, missionaries serving in the Dominican Republic and throughout Latin and South America. Please take the time to pick up a copy and read about their work. St. Thomas has supported this ministry in the past, want to continue to offer support, and seek to pray for these servants of Christ.

CHURCH FINANCES

Please continue to remember your church each month. Our expenses are still here and we could use your help in keeping up with these expenses. Thank you! You can send your offering to P.O. Box 2247.

TREASURERS REPORT - Month of October 2022

	Current Month:	Current YTD	Prior YTD:
TOTAL INCOME - General Fund Only	1735.00	49429.79	46867.96
TOTAL EXPENSE - General Fund Only	3537.29	48344.77	50131.21
NET GAIN (LOSS)	(1802.29)	1085.02	(3263.25)
TOTAL INCOME - Special Funds (See Below)	17.00	3392.42	6876.25
TOTAL EXPENSE- Special Funds (See Below)	0.00	589.49	908.87
NET GAIN (LOSS)	17.00	2802.93	5967.38
Average General Fund Income Per Week	433.75	1029.79	976.42
Amount needed to meet expense budget - per week		<u>1229.52</u>	

Special Funds Include:

Special Building/Property, Pastor's Second Chance, Memorial Gifts, New Building, Lutheran Women's Group, 5th Sunday Benevolence

REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Ayers Family	Del Groff	Palagia Hlava	Nicole Johnson
Lorene Kozar	Steffen Nicely	Carol Poston	Becky Larkins & foster children
Heather Poston	Rory Wolff	Patty Abramovich	Alexa
Ally	Diane Altier	Paul Berry	Shirley Blackerby
Paul Bowers	Archie Bradshaw	Russ & Lana Carnes	Bryan Corban
Leona Corban	Carlton Dorris	Bill Earle Sr.	Dennis Fuldauer
Daniel Gump	Mary Hardesty	John Johnson	Naomi Just
Lance	Laurance Jeanblanc	Steve Mamber	Sam Mamber
Frank Manijak	Amanda Nicely	Karen Panier	Pastor Vic Myers family
Kathy Peters	Larry & Sally Powell	Sarah	Barb, Dan, Carl, Linda, Pat
Leslie Slanina	Angela Smith	John Szabo	Deacon Robert Szalai
Dave Tregoning	Tyler	Linda Valetta	Bennie Wegener
Darcy Wood	Donny Wood	James Woods family	
Ukraine refugees	COVID-19 patients	All Natural disaster victims	

We would love to have updates on our prayer list. If you have good news about someone on this list please let the church know or call Marla at 330-472-3045. Thank you!

Our shut-ins—please send them a card

Mrs. Audrey Holland
Willowood Care Room 1001
1186 Hancock Rd.
Brunswick, OH 44212-4582

Carole Poston
3096 E Pioneer
Aurora, OH 44202

Lorene Kozar
8460 Westport Dr. #225
Mentor, Oh 44060

Our College Students—Grace Rohaley, Abigail Ayers, Corey Hautmann, Thomas Ayers, Jenna Zimmerman, Jacob Zimmerman

Our Military members—Troy Roman and Ben Wolff

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays

2-Pastor Just
13-Robin Hoffman
17-Vicki Weber
21-Ben Wolff
31-Diane Pencin



DECEMBER BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

Baptism Birthdays

19-Elizabeth Ayers
19-Madelyn Ayers
27-Linda Hautmann

Happy Anniversary to Anibal & Joyce Torres on the 8th

If anyone has been left off this list or any other list, please let Marla Manijak know so she can add you. I would love birthdays and anniversaries and baptism birthdays if you know when it is. Thanks!

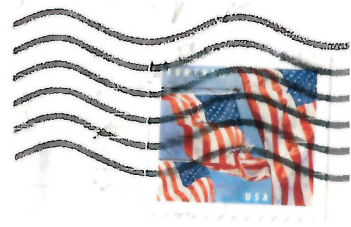
Church Council will be meeting December 18th after the worship service. If there is anything you would like the Council to discuss please let one of these members know...Steve Hlava, Jim Doerfler, Deb Wolff, Joyce Torres, Diane Lee, Del Groff, Marla Manijak or Pastor Just.

Contact Person: Please call Pastor Just at 216-789-6688 or Council President Steve Hlava at 330 422-1959 for any emergencies or questions. Pastor Just is in the office on Thursdays from 8:00-4:00. Please call ahead to make sure he is there.

St. Thomas Evangelical Lutheran Church
P.O. Box 2247
9042 State Route 43
Streetsboro, OH 44241

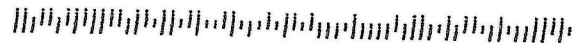
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Change Service Requested

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THE PARISH VOICE NEWSLETTER

Office: 330-626-4945

Pastor Just office hours—Thursdays 8:00-4:00

Cell Phone (216) 789-6688 Email: doctorjust@gmail.com

Web Site: www.stthomasstreetsboro.com

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE 10:00 A.M.

IN CHURCH PARKING LOT ON CHANNEL 96.9 FM

LIVE ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

OR PLEASE JOIN US INSIDE (Mask is optional)