

St. John's Lutheran Church  
NEWSLETTER

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“NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD”

In the month of November, in the United States, the fourth Thursday has been designated as a Day of National Thanksgiving. On Thanksgiving Eve, we at St. John's will attend the worship service. During the Divine Service, one of the hymns we will sing is “Now Thank We All Our God” composed by Martin Rinckart. But do you know the backstory of this joyful hymn of thanks and praise?

Martin was born in 1586 in Eilenburg, Germany — a small city near Leipzig. He was the son of a poor coppersmith. He was admitted to the University of Leipzig through sheer hard work and by taking advantage of his brilliant musical gifts.

Rinckart studied for the Lutheran ministry, and, at the age of 31, was called to serve as pastor of the church at Eilenburg, his hometown. He arrived there just before the beginning of the Thirty Years War, a war that devastated Germany in general and Eilenburg in particular. The town was soon inundated with fugitives from the country districts where the Swedes had been spreading devastation. Being a walled city, Eilenburg became a place of refuge and quickly became overcrowded, making it susceptible to disease. The plague of 1637 decimated the town, killing 8,000 people, including Rev. Rinckart's wife. Martin Rinckart often conducted forty or fifty funerals a day (!) for plague victims. Of course he had to endure the involuntary housing of soldiers in his home and frequent plundering of his small stockpile of grain and household goods.

Throughout these thirty-one years of devoted service Rev. Rinckart stood by his flock and helped them endure every kind of distress. He served courageously at the beds of

the sick and dying. He buried thousands of people, yet through all his efforts he himself remained perfectly well. The terrible pestilence was followed by a famine so extreme that thirty or forty persons might be seen fighting in the streets for a dead cat or bird. Rev. Rinckart, with the burgomaster (the city mayor) and one other citizen, did what they could to organize assistance. He personally gave away everything except the smallest rations for his own family; as a result, his door was always surrounded by a crowd of poor starving townspeople.

After all this horrific suffering the Swedes returned and imposed upon the sick and suffering town a tribute of 30,000 florins. Martin Rinckart ventured to the camp to plead with the general for mercy. When it was refused, he turned to the citizens who followed him, saying, “Come, my children, we can find no hearing, no mercy with men, let us take refuge with God.” Then Rev. Rinckart fell on his knees, and prayed with such touching sincerity that the Swedish general relented, and lowered his demand to 2,000 florins. Martin Rinckart's own losses were so great that he had difficulty in finding bread and clothes for his own children, and was forced to mortgage his future income for several years.

How little his spirit was broken by all these calamities is shown by his best known hymn and many others that he wrote. Some hymns did speak of his country's sorrows, but all of them contained the same spirit of unbounded trust and readiness to give thanks. This hymn was published in *Jesu-Hertz-Büchlein in geistlichen Oden* in 1636, and set to music by Johann Cruger around 1647.

It was out of these terrible circumstances that this beautiful hymn of thanksgiving would come. Martin Rinckart wrote the first two stanzas, not as a hymn for public worship, but as a table prayer for his family. At the end of the conflict, his hymn was sung to celebrate the signing of the Peace of Westphalia — the treaty that ended the Thirty Years War.

*Now thank we all our God  
With hearts and hands and voices,  
Who wondrous things has done  
In Whom His world rejoices;  
Who from our mothers' arms has  
blest us on our way  
With countless gifts of love,  
and still is ours today.  
Oh, may this bounteous God  
Through all our life be near us,  
With ever joyful hearts  
And blessed peace to cheer us,  
And keep us in His grace,  
and guide us when perplexed,  
And free us from all ills in this  
world and in the next.*

Thanks be to God, Pastor Riley

On Wednesday,  
November 21,  
we will observe  
Thanksgiving with  
Holy Communion  
worship beginning at 7:00 p.m.  
Join us and give thanks to God  
for His many blessings to all of  
us, to our church and to our  
nation.



Thanksgiving  
Service

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS or  
PHONE NUMBER:**

If you have moved or will be moving or have changed your phone number, please notify the church by calling 568-1417, emailing the church [info@stjohnswestfield.org](mailto:info@stjohnswestfield.org) or send a letter so our records can be updated. The United States Post Office charges us for each piece of mail returned due to a change in address.

**The “Just-in-Time Project”**

Work to restore our foyer area from the water damage is well underway. Roof repairs have been completed and we have seen no evidence of any leaks to date (even with several rain storms).

The remediation work of removing the damaged asbestos floor tiles in the foyer and in the lower level near the fellowship hall and storage room is all done!

Next steps are to: remove the existing steel framing (this is required to be done because the new drywall cannot attach to the old steel framing), insulate the ceiling in the foyer, frame the ceiling, install drywall, paint the ceiling, and finally install new flooring.

This project has been named the “just-in-time” project because the containment in the fellowship hall was removed only a few hours before the German Fall Feast was to begin. Thankfully, everyone enjoyed a very tasty dinner without any impedance or worries about health hazards. Next on the church calendar was the Vespers Service. The day before that, the sealed plastic containment in the foyer came down, so folks could enjoy regular access to the sanctuary. So, everything is happening right before it needs to.

There remains much work ahead, but we are working with a great general contractor in ACE Fire and Water Restoration and all the sub-contractors have been terrific. Please direct any questions or concerns to Bill Schneeloch.

Once this project is done, we will have a wonderful foyer area that we can enjoy for fellowship.

**ELDERS**

Each month there is an Elder of the month. The Elder of the month will be assigning lectors for the upcoming month. If you are interested in reading, please see the Elder of the month or contact Paul Brose. For November, it is Bill Schneeloch and for December, it is Gary Wolfe.

**ADVENT by  
CANDLELIGHT  
December 2nd at 5:00 p.m.  
“Candles on Advent Wreath”**

Christians around the world will be observing the liturgical season of Advent. From the Latin word for “coming”, Advent is a time of preparation and anticipation for the coming of Christ both in the past in His incarnation as the baby Jesus, but also in the future with His promised second coming as Christ Triumphant. Join us as we learn about the Advent wreath and the symbolism of each candle as we prepare for the “Real Reason for the Season”.

Sign-up sheets will be posted at the church for hosting and/or attending beginning November 18. You can also call the church.

This special supper has been well attended in the past, so sign up early and invite your friends and neighbors as well.

**Thrivent News:**

If you are a Thrivent member, and you have not taken advantage of applying for an action team grant, you still have time to submit before the end of the year. You can submit an application for various projects for the church or the community to receive a \$250 card to buy materials for that project. Each Thrivent member is eligible for two teams a year, total of \$500 per year. There is potentially a lot of projects that could be funded by Action Team money. If you are looking for some suggestions on how you could help St. John’s or have any questions, please see Jane McClure for more information.

**SAVE THE DATE:**

**"CANDLELIGHT  
CHRISTMAS VESPERS IN  
THE TRADITION OF  
J.S. BACH"**

**Presented By The 'Soli Deo  
Gloria' Concert Series At St.  
John's**

**December 9th  
6:00 p.m.**

October was a very busy month for the WINGS group. Thank you to everyone who helped to make the Tag Sale a huge success. Special thanks to Ali Talmadge for being our fearless leader. Also thank you to anyone who helped in anyway with our fourth October Fall Feast which was a huge success. The wonderful night was filled with great food and fellowship. Special thanks to our chef, Mark Baldyga.



Anyone writing Christmas cards for the soldiers are asked to bring them to the church by Sunday, November 13th. These cards are being sent to our military troops in Japan and Korea.

The WINGS will be meeting on November 17 at **11:00 a.m.** (The time is changed from that listed on the calendar). This time change is to allow for a meeting, Christmas card writing for LCMS chaplains and a presentation by Dress for Success. If you are unable to attend the meeting but would like to help in any of the activities listed, please contact Linda Slozak.



**DRESS for SUCCESS  
FALL CLEANING???**

Ladies—Are you are switching out your summer clothes to winter? Why not donate your professional apparel that you are no longer using and bring them down to the church to donate to the Dress for Success organization. This organization helps furnish women who need assistance in having appropriate clothing for an interview or to go to work. The WINGS group will be collecting donations until November 25th. If you have any questions, see Susan Owen or Jane McClure.

**MASTERING THE LUTHERAN HYMNODY IN OUR HOMES AND WORSHIP SERVICES**

It is Sunday morning, the announcements have been made and Pastor Riley announces the opening hymn. As the introduction is completed and the hymn begins you look at the hymnal wondering, "Have we sung this before? Do I know this hymn?" The Lutheran church has long been known as the 'singing church' for its rich hymnody and singing in both the home and church. Every Sunday evening Director of Music, Jeff Windoloski, emails those who have expressed an interest one verse of the upcoming Sunday hymns to look over at home with a hymnal handy. This not only is a wonderful way to prepare our hearts and minds for Sunday's service, but also serves as a personal or family devotion in our homes. If you do not already have a Lutheran Service Book hymnal in your home, be sure to let Jeff know so he can get you one. Following Sunday services please talk with Jeff or email him at [jeffrey.windoloski@gmail.com](mailto:jeffrey.windoloski@gmail.com) if you are interested in joining this ministry as a way to prepare for Sunday mornings Divine Service!

The following have signed up for flowers for the months of November & December:



- November 4– Fisher (2)
- November 11 - Riley (1)
- November 18 - Sienkiewicz (1)
- November 25 - Ferst (1)
- December 2 - Sienkiewicz (1)
- December 9 - Riley (1) & Klinkowski (1)
- December 16 - Ferst (1)
- December 23– Riley (1)
- December 30 - Ferriter (1)

If you would like to sign up in the 2018 FLOWER BOOK located on the round table in the church foyer or contact Jane McClure. The cost per bouquet is \$21.00. Please make checks payable to St. John's Flower Fund.



Please help in the continuing outreach mission project of our Radio Broadcast of Sunday morning Worship. Broadcasts can be heard each Sunday at 7:30 a.m. on WHYN (560 AM). The cost for the program is \$125 per week. If you are interested in sponsoring a broadcast (or a part of a broadcast) in memory of or in honor of a loved one, please call the church or sign up on the sheet outside the office door. Donations of any amount are welcome. Additionally, we have posted previous weeks' broadcasts on our website along with the associated bulletin. Log onto <http://stjohnswestfield.org>; links to the broadcasts and the weekly bulletins are on the main page. Please call Bill Schneeloch (413-568-4906 or 860-604-5264) with any questions.

Now that the cold weather is here and the leaves are falling, our thoughts are turning to winter.



Please use the Improvement Fund envelope found in your offering envelope box for your donations to go towards the church utilities. Any amount that you can give will be most gratefully appreciated.

**2019 SCRIPTURE CALENDARS**

The new scripture calendars have arrived. These calendars remain the same price as last year. The wall calendars are \$8.00 each. The pocket calendars are \$5.00 each. These beautiful calendars make wonderful hostess or Christmas gifts. If you are interested, please see Jane McClure

**STOCKINGS for SOLDIERS**



Please bring any items you have purchased to donate for this WINGS project by Sunday, November 11th. These items are being brought to Westover for the USO to fill the stockings.



**Orphan Grain Train New England Branch**

Do you go to the grocery store and look for "BOGO's" – that's buy one get one free. That's what Orphan Grain Train is doing to help out victims of Michael and Florence. Your New England Branch of Orphan Grain Train is matching donations up to \$3,000.00 to help folks affected by the recent hurricanes in Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas.

Now is the time to offer help. The storms have passed and now we know what is needed most to aid these folks. Financial donations will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$3,000.00. Please send your gifts to: Orphan Grain Train c/o LCMS 400 Wilbraham Rd Springfield, MA 01109 Checks should be made payable to OGT-New England Branch.

Our meetings are open and welcome to all. Please contact Bill Schneeloch if you would like to carpool. He will be leaving St John's parking lot at 8:30 a.m. Our next quarterly meeting is November 10 at the LCMS office in Springfield.

Please keep OGT in your prayers.

**Stephen Ministry:**



There is still time to speak with one of the Stephen Leaders if you are interested in becoming a Stephen Minister. Classes will begin in January 2019.

Please continue to pray for all who are involved with this ministry.

Spiritual Gifts Appropriate for Stephen Ministry are: Faith, Mercy, Teaching the faith, and Encouragement.

The Stephen Leaders are Dan Provost, Pastor Riley, Paul and Patti Brose.

## **In Giving, We Express the Love of Christ**

Christian giving comes from the heart, not just from the pocketbook. It is an expression of love, care, and trust. It springs from the recognition that the blessings of our lives are from God. It is a heart that says, "Thank you, thank you, dear God. What can I do with the blessings You give me that would be blessing to You?" It is to recognize that God is the ultimate giver! He gave us His only Son. It is to recognize that God does not bless us so

that we may simply enjoy our blessings, but rather that God blesses that we may share our blessings.

In writing to the Corinthians about their giving, Paul used the Macedonians as an example. He clearly defined the motive of their giving. "...*They gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us*" (2 Corinthians 8:5).

In their giving, they were led by the "*will of God.*" This indicates their recognition of the Lordship of Christ. They were open to God's

direction. They were so thankful to God for all the blessings He had given them that they gave "*beyond their means.*"

May all of us daily celebrate the grace and goodness of God in our lives, and may we express our thanks and worship to the Lord through our giving.

