

“The Year Under the Cross”

“Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” - *Philippians 2:9-11*

The apostle Paul wanted the Church at Philippi to know the significance of the name Jesus for her day-by-day life of faith. What was troubling Paul was that this congregation was having a hard time. It was very small; it was very poor; and, most important, it was suffering persecution at the hands of both the Romans and the Jews. So the apostle tells them of the name Jesus, which includes everything that Christ is, has done, and will do for them.

How can the twenty-first-century Church persevere in troubled times? The answer is the same. Not only will the Church endure hard times, but we will also find true glory in those times. We can even rejoice in those times with a joy that will not fade away no matter how hard these times may become. Such joy is found in the name Jesus and what it signifies. The answer is to be found in that precise moment when Jesus is truly being Jesus in the fullest sense of the name. The answer is to be found in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To the Lord Jesus Himself the cross always was and always will be His most glorious moment. It was His “hour,” His moment of truth, His hour of glory that no one could rob Him of. When He was lifted up on the cross, He was “lifted up,” that is, exalted above

every other name in heaven and earth and under the earth. The cross marked His victory over sin, death, hell, and Satan. The glory of Jesus is the moment when the work of redemption and eternal salvation is complete, and He shouts, “It is finished!” It was on the cross that Jesus, whose name means “the Lord saves,” lived up to His wonderful name as He drew all people to Himself.

As people who bear the name of Jesus, as people who have received through the cross all the blessings we could ever possibly need and desire for time and eternity, as people who have been baptized into His death and resurrection, we have become new people. As we take up our cross and follow Him, the cross is our glory too. In the cross of Christ we glory as we live lives of service and sacrifice in the name of Jesus. We count it all as joy when we face various trials. Through the blood of the cross, we have already stepped outside of our old selves as lost and condemned sinners, and we have become a new forgiven people with the mindset and purpose of Jesus in our hearts.

What then shall we say about the new year of 2018? As baptized children of God, we already see emblazoned over the entire year to come the name above all names, the name of Jesus, our Savior. In the new year of 2018 we may not have to face times that were as tough as the Philippians faced. Then again, maybe we will. But regardless of what happens, since you have been crucified and raised to new life with Christ, each and every day will be an occasion for joy. That is a promise from the very One Who bears the name

Jesus to those who bear the same name.

In this new year of 2018 things will happen that will lead our weak flesh to worry. Indeed, events will cause us to tremble with fear, but, by God’s grace, we will make it through all of them. Even when we suffer for righteousness’ sake, we will count it all joy. In all our sufferings we are only being true to our new selves re-created in the image of the Lord Jesus. Every pain we experience is nothing less than a participation in the cross of Jesus. Every pain we endure is a reminder of all the blessings Jesus has won for us. In short, life under the cross is a wonderful, glorious thing.

We will return regularly to the foot of the cross as we remain steadfast to the Word of life. Every time we return to that Word in 2018 we will be reminded of our true glory: His cross and our life under His cross. Every time we turn to that Word with fear and trembling, we will receive true peace in knowing that God is working out His good pleasure in us. And we will be directly linked to that cross as we receive the true body and blood of our Lord and Savior in His Supper.

The new year of 2018 will be for us the “year of the cross.” For us at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Westfield, Massachusetts, it will be a rejoicing in death—the death of Jesus, our Savior. Just as we participate in Jesus’ death, we shall also participate in His resurrection. In tears and in laughter the joy never ends. In Jesus, our joy is *lasting as His glory*.

Living in the Year of the Cross,
Pastor Riley

Welcome to Jeff Windoloski as our New Music Director

Jeff began serving as the music director at St. John's Lutheran Church on December 3, 2017. In addition to his role here as music director, Jeff will also continue to direct the 'Soli Deo Gloria' early music concert series which he founded in the summer of 2016.

Jeff began to study music at the age of 8 under the direction of his grandfather, Lutheran organist Donald Hennemann. By the time he was a young adult, he was serving as a substitute organist for various Lutheran churches throughout New England. During his college years, he studied organ improvisation with first prize winner of the Leipzig International J. S. Bach Competition and former organist of First Lutheran Church of Boston, Balint Karosi. Following graduation with his Bachelor's degree, Jeff served as organist at First Lutheran Church of Holyoke MA from 2014 until his appointment at St. John's. He particularly enjoys performing music drawn from the rich musical heritage of the Lutheran Church and the German Baroque era, and also has great enthusiasm for improvising in the Baroque style based on the church's hymnody. In addition to his church and concert commitments, Jeff remains active as a member of both the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM) and the American Guild of Organists (AGO)."



VOLUNTEERS are needed to help take down our Christmas decorations on Saturday, January 13th, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Many hands make for light work!

DOUBLE TRUMPET, ORGAN AND VOCAL CONCERT

Presented by:
'SOLI DEO GLORIA'
CONCERT SERIES

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28
2:00PM
ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Join us for the first concert in our second season of the 'Soli Deo Gloria' Concert Series! This concert will feature professional trumpet soloists Brooks & Jeff Holmes, vocalist Dawning Holmes and organist Jeff Windoloski. Selections will be presented for trumpet and organ, voice and piano, and a combination of the three. We hope to see you there!

A Reception will follow the concert and a free will offering will follow the performance. Your generosity makes it possible to continue to host musicians for our upcoming concerts.

2018 CHURCH COUNCIL & ELDERS

- President—Bill Schneeloch
- Vice-President—Tom McClure
- Secretary—Jane McClure
- Treasurer—Iva Duval
- Financial Secretary— Doris Love
- Trustees—Mark Baldyga, Rudy Musteraid and Gary Wolfe
- Elders—Paul Brose, Bill Schneeloch, Bill Wigham, Gary Wolfe, Rich Conroy, & Dan Provost

All Council Members and Elders will be installed during the worship service on January 14th.



Thank you to everyone in the congregation whose hard work and talents made the Christmas Season here at St. John's wonderful.

Special thanks to Jeff Windoloski, who spent hours practicing, planning and coordinating music for the services, and working with the choir. Also thank you to the hand chime choir, senior choir, and Soloists for their gifts of sharing the beautiful music for the Savior's Birth.

Also, we, the staff members of St. John's wish to express our personal thanks to the congregation for their Christmas Gifts which were presented to each of us on Christmas Day. Your thoughtfulness and kindness is greatly appreciated.

Have a Blessed New Year!
Pastor Riley, Jane McClure, & Lisa K. Sinkowski

A Note of Thanks

We are truly humbled by the cards, gifts, delicious food and



personal greetings that we have received during this Christmas season. We are very appreciative of the generous Christmas financial gift. Most of all, we are thankful for the greatest gift we have been given – your fellowship and love.

" We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. " -

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

Love in Christ,
Pastor, Vicki, and Shannon Riley

VENISON DINNER

January 27
5:00 p.m.

Chef Mark Baldyga

For tickets call the church at 568-1417. 100 tickets are available.

The following have signed up for flowers for the months of January & February:



January 7— open
 January 14— Sienkiewicz (1)
 January 21 - Sienkiewicz (1)
 January 28— open
 February 4 - Kousch Fund (2)
 February 11— McClure (1)
 February 18 - Sienkiewicz (1)
 February 25 - Sienkiewicz (1)

If you would like to sign up in the 2018 FLOWER BOOK

located on the round table in the church foyer. We can do up to three bouquets per Sunday. The cost per bouquet is \$21.00.

Checks are to be made payable to St. John's Flower Fund.

Volunteers are needed to care for the altar during the upcoming months in



2018. This past year, we were short of help. Please consider offering your time to help our church with this activity. Men, women, and teens are welcome. Training will be provided for those who are interested. For questions, contact Jane (562-0492).

Super Bowl Grinders

It is that time of year again when the fans will have the Super Bowl on Sunday, February 4th. What a great day to have a grinder and/or purchase one for a lunch during the week. Please support the youth group. We will be taking grinder orders from January 14-28 at church or you may call Jane at 562-0492 to place an order. Each grinder is \$6.00, same as last year, with choices of meatball, roast beef, ham, turkey, or Italian.

The **PRAYER List** at St. John's will now be taking care of by Dan & Irene Provost. If you have a special prayer request, email Dan at soxdad1957@gmail.com or Irene at wadam846@gmail.com. If you would like to be added to the prayer list warriors to receive prayer request and pray for them, see Jane McClure

"It's Time ... to Prepare for Circuit Forums" Lay Delegate needed from St. John's

A circuit forum is planned on January 20, a district convention on June 14 thru 16, and the LCMS National Convention in Tampa, Florida from July 20-25, 2019.

We as a church need to have a lay person attend the Circuit Four forum on January 20 with Pastor Riley. This is where we decide on any issues we want to bring to the district convention in June. Also, during the circuit forum, the lay delegate and pastoral delegate will be chosen to attend the Tri-Atlantic district convention. If anyone is interested in serving as a delegate, please see Pastor, or Bill Schneeloch or Paul Brose.

WinGS: Women in God's Service

The women have been very busy the last month. A Martin Luther's Christmas Advent Candlelight Dinner was beautiful and a meaningful way to begin the Advent season as we waited for the Celebration of the Birth of Our Savior. Thank you to all who made the Advent dinner such a success with the decorating, cooking, narrating the story, and cleaning up afterwards.

A Christmas tree with all the decorations was donated and delivered to the Domus Shelter for teens. This donation was greatly appreciated by the residents.

Thank you to all of the ladies who spent the time to help clean and decorate the church for Christmas. The church looked beautiful.

We will be taking down the decorations on Saturday, January 13, starting at 10:00 a.m. A WING's meeting at noon will follow with a luncheon in Room 8. Remember, any woman who is a member of St. John's is also a member of WinGS.



A NEW SIGN-UP SHEET HAS BEEN POSTED OUTSIDE THE CHURCH OFFICE

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 anyone 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.

Let us know if there is a shut-in or someone who missed a week, and we will email a link so they can hear the whole service. Just log onto <http://stjohnswestfield.org>; links to the broadcasts and the weekly bulletins are on the main page.

Please see/call Bill Schneeloch (860-604-5264) or e-mail at radio@stjohnswestfield.org with any questions.

COFFEE HOUR HOSTS

are needed throughout the 2018 year. If you would like to host, all that one needs to do is bake, bring in juice, serve and clean-up. There is a sign-up sheet located in the church foyer or speak to Erika or Linda Slozak if you are willing to volunteer. A sign-up sheet is located on the Coffee hour table.

JANUARY LAY READERS

January 7—Bill Schneeloch
 January 14—Vicki Riley
 January 21—Tom McClure
 January 28—Susan Owen

Bill Schneeloch is elder of the month.

“She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

What's the Good News?

What a tender time Christmas is! Everyone adores the Baby in the manger. Families gather together to sing "Away in the Manger" and wish each other peace on earth. Too often, however, after the season has passed, many go back to empty lives. They rush from one task to another, from one activity to another. They try to do good things, and, when doubts nag at them, they comfort themselves by arguing that they are "good people," after all. As Christians, all of us must know someone who measures himself by the yardstick of good deeds. When we hear that sentiment expressed, we cannot stand silent. We must proclaim the real message of Christmas.

Yes, the Baby was born in a manger, but He didn't remain a helpless creature. Yes, we should adore the newborn Christ Child, but we should also worship Him as our Redeemer, the One Who did for us what our good deeds could not. "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). The helpless Baby grew up, suffered in our places, took the sin of the whole world in His body on the Cross, and brought us salvation. "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). This is the freeing message of Christmas. Without Christ, there is no peace on earth. Without Christ, there is no goodness in us. Without Christ, there is no purpose in life. Without Christ, there is no life at all.

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, what a joy it is to sing "Joy to the world, the Lord is come." How great is Your love that would cause You to send Your only Son to earth to bring us joy. Your beloved Son has come and is still with us today to bring us abundant joy. Forgive us when we don't express our joy. Help us to keep in our hearts the joy of Christmas. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.