

The St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church Newsletter

December 2011

“The Witness”

Issue 7

Schedule of Events at a Glance

Sunday December 11

Worship 8:00 & 10:45 am

Sunday School 9:15 am

Mentoring Sunday

Wednesday, December 14

Church Decorating 9:00 am

Sunday, December 18

Celebration Sunday

Sunday School Christmas Program

10:45 Service

Wednesday, December 21

Final Church Decorating 9:00 am

Saturday, December 24

Christmas Eve Service, 7:00 and
10:30 pm

Sunday, December 25

Christmas Day

Worship 10:00 am

No Sunday school classes

Sunday, January 1, 2012

New Year's Day

Worship 10:00 am

No Sunday school classes



Pastor's Words

Dear Members and Friends of St. James;

The Thanksgiving holiday is past, and we have now set our sights on preparations for Christmas. By the time this newsletter reaches you, that celebration will be just over three weeks away. Clearly the focus of our lives in these weeks of December is upon preparing for the Christmas

holiday. Travel plans are being made, shopping for gifts is in “high gear,” and decorating our homes and baking traditional Christmas treats will soon consume every spare moment. It is a season filled with tradition and spirit.

Even so, I feel that it is important that I remind members of our parish that, in these weeks of December, a new Church Year has begun and the Advent season is upon us. Sunday, November 27 was the first of the four Sundays of the season. On these four Sundays our readings point us toward the coming of Christ, both in our celebration of his birth at Christmas, and in his ultimate return to the earth at a time that is promised, but not “scheduled.” The Gospel reading on the First Sunday in Advent comes from the 13th Chapter of the Gospel of Mark, and includes several brief parables of Jesus that speak of being ready for the coming of the Son of Man, the second coming of Christ. On the Second and Third Sundays in Advent, the central character is John the Baptist and his call to repentance in preparation for the coming of Christ. And, finally, on the Fourth Sunday in Advent, we focus on Mary, the Mother of Our Lord, as she is visited by the angel Gabriel and told that she will bear God's son.

Advent is a holy season, in some ways similar to Lent. It is

a time when we are called to reflect, to repent, and to prepare our hearts for the action of God in our lives and on our behalf. In the church, we struggle to keep Advent. The world outside has already begun in earnest its headlong, profit-driven, secular rush to a premature “celebration” of Christmas. We are besieged by advertising, decorations, music, and activities that intrude upon our need for quiet reflection as we prepare our hearts to receive the great gift of Jesus Christ. From all sides we are pressured to conform to the agenda of the commercial world and set aside our time of spiritual preparation for the sake of “getting ready” for Christmas. I encourage you to try and keep some quiet time each day to shut out the noise of the world and allow the renewing power of the Advent season to work in your spiritual life. And, I urge you to participate fully in the worship life of our congregation in the weeks between now and Christmas. Remember these words from the prophet Isaiah ... “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” (Isaiah 40:3)

With wishes for a blessed Advent and Christmas,

Pastor Paul



Church Decorating

All are welcome to hang garland, wreaths and trim the tree Wednesday, December 14 at 9:00 am. The final decorating (candles, holly & poinsettias) will be completed on, Wednesday, December 21 at 9:00 am. Join us for this wonderful holiday tradition.



Sunday School Christmas Program

The annual Sunday School Christmas program will be held on Sunday, December 18, during the 10:45 am Service. This year the children will share a play titled "A Most Memorable Night". We will have a special Celebration Sunday reception afterwards. Please encourage family, friends, and guests to join us!
Please note: As always, members of the congregation are invited to contribute a plate of special cookies or other Christmas "goodies" to make the reception that day extra special.



A Special Service of Lessons and Carols

...will be held Sunday, December 26, at 10:00 am. Be sure to come out and enjoy this opportunity to sing a wide selection of Christmas music and to share some congregational "togetherness". Reminder: there will be **only one service** that Sunday. Also, there will be only one service (also at 10:00 am) on Sunday, January 1, 2012.



Salvation Army Bell Ringers

Approximately 15 volunteers from St. James stood faithfully by the kettle at the Giant Eagle store this year on Wednesday December 7 & Thursday, December 8. Thanks to all who have given their gift of time in this busy season!

The Ligonier Valley Food Pantry Collection

For the month of December was a great success. Our members contributed 48 bags/boxes of noodles and pasta! Thank you for your ongoing support throughout the year!.

Operation Christmas Child

Members of the Sunday School brought in dolls, balls, toiletries, tablets, candy and other gifts to pack 6 shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child. Started by Franklin Graham, this program provided over 8 million shoeboxes in 2010 alone. Their mission is "To demonstrate God's love in a tangible way to needy children around the world, and together with the local church worldwide, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ." Included in each box is a portion of the gospels written in the language of the child receiving that box. This year St. James Sunday School students will be able to track on the internet the country to which "our" boxes were delivered.

Free Community Christmas Day Dinner

Sponsored by Greater Latrobe Ministerial Association Sunday, Dec. 25, doors open at 2pm, dinner served at 2:30 pm At The Way Church, 345 Main Street, Latrobe. Dinner is free, but you must have a ticket. Tickets available at Adams Memorial Library, Latrobe Senior Center, The Way Church, Dainty Pastry Shoppe Ticket deadline is Sunday, December 18. Free transportation is available, if needed. Eat-in only. No take-out orders.



Christmas Greetings to our shut-ins

Here is a current list of our St. James shut-ins members if you would like to take a moment to send a card during the holidays.

Please contact the church office for this list.



Adult Sunday School Classes

Starting January 8, the Adult Sunday School class will start a bible study on the Gospel of Luke. All are welcome to join us in the parlor at 9:15 am. If you will be participating, contact Miriam Davies or Shelli Wolfe, so that materials can be ordered.

Sign Up!

The 2012 sign up sheets for altar flowers, bulletins and Celebration Sunday cake are now posted at the back of the church. The cost of altar flowers is \$35/week, bulletins are \$10/week, and the cake is \$28.00. Volunteers are also needed to sign up for the ministries of usher, lector and altar care. If you have any questions, please call the church office.



Blanket Drive

For several years, members of St. James have been encouraged to participate in the annual blanket drive which is sponsored by Smith Oil Company. Each fall a basket is placed in the coat rack area of the sanctuary, where it remains until the end of March. During those months, the folks of our congregation faithfully and generously bring both used and new blankets for the collection. The variety of kinds and colors is always amazing, ranging from standard woolen or synthetic blankets to satin covered comforters, bed spreads to sleeping bags, throws and lap robes to hand-crocheted baby blankets. But, each one is given with loving intent, and I am certain that each one is received with gratitude, and likely becomes a treasured possession, bringing comfort and care to its new owner. Several times each season I load the back seat of my car and haul the donations to the Smith Oil offices in Bradenville. The employees there are always delighted to receive the latest delivery, and express their gratitude and amazement at the faithful support from the people of St. James. The basket is out, and already I have taken one load during November. Keep up the good work folks – it is appreciated! ~ Pastor Paul ~

Remembering Our Students & Military Personnel

In what is quickly becoming an annual tradition, church members filled the table in the back corner with treats and goodies during the Sundays of late October and the first part of November. On Monday, November 21, the members of our Evangelism and Stewardship Committee gathered and packed 19 boxes with everything from packets of hot chocolate mix and granola bars to pens and Post-It notes. These were sealed and labeled in preparation for mailing. The Postal Service picked them up from the back porch of the parsonage on November 26, and they were on their way to various locations around the country. Now, during the week since, we have gotten word that most have reached their intended destinations. They have been joyfully received as a most welcome expression of caring from our church family. Thanks to all who supported this project!

Spaghetti Dinner

Will be held to Benefit Kevin Ulery and family on Sunday, December 11, at Cook Township Community Center, from 2 pm – 7pm. The cost is \$6.00 for adults, children (ages 5-10) - \$3.00, and children 4 and under are free. Take our will be available. There will also be a Chinese auction featuring prizes from local businesses.

Fort Ligonier Days 2011

Well, as they say in the world of sports, "You win some, and you lose some!" Last year at this time we were reporting on a "best ever" year for our fund raising activities during Fort Ligonier Days. The weather had been excellent, the crowds were beyond hopes and expectations, and we had sold out of nearly everything, garnering nearly \$3,500.00 for our efforts. In 2011 however, despite our best efforts, we were not nearly as successful. Changing leadership patterns made it impossible to operate our Red Door Café on Friday. Due to all the rain, we (wisely) decided not to park any cars in the church yard the first day. Saturday, the day of the parade, the weather was dry, but windy and brisk. Sales of coffee and baked goods were also brisk in the hours before the start of the parade. Unfortunately, the usual flood of hungry customers following the parade never happened! The crowds disappeared quickly, and for the first time in years, we were left with large quantities of unsold hot dogs and pulled pork sandwiches, and many cases of pop and bottled water. (The good news is that we were able to share many of the leftovers with the CROP Walk participants the following weekend!) In the end, the income for Fort Ligonier Days 2011 was \$2, 083.45. Many thanks are due to those who donated so much of the food and baked goods for our sales, keeping costs down and maximizing profit. And, special thanks go out to those who volunteered many hours to the effort!

Welcome To Our 2011 Confirmation Class

Sunday, October 30, 2011, was day of special celebration at St. James. In addition to our traditional observance of Reformation Sunday, we also celebrated the Affirmation of Baptism, as five of our high school age youth confirmed their intent to continue to grow in grace as adult members of the church. Their Confirmation culminates two years of classes, during which they engaged in study of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the Sacraments, and Martin Luther and the Reformation. Members of the class of 2011 were Paige O., Amy W., John B., Sam M., and J.T. P. Another young person who joined in the classes was Evan M., a member of St. Paul Lutheran Evangelical Lutheran Church in Darlington. He was confirmed in his own congregation on Sunday, November 20. Congratulations to all!



Jewelry, Sun-Catchers, and Cookbooks

When the Fundraising Committee of L. Luptak, P. Benning, C. Lynn, and C. Carnahan thought about projects to raise money for the stained glass windows, there were several good ones. The committee decided upon the making of keepsakes from the pieces of original glass we retrieved and this has far surpassed what we had anticipated.

After a few stumbling blocks and realizing only certain things could be done with the century old glass, it was decided to have crosses as sun-catchers and pendants made. It took off much to our delight the articles we have sold went so well that we joked with Pastor Poerschke and said maybe we should "accidentally" break a window, especially one with a lot of different colors and keep the project going. Naturally we wouldn't do that and we sincerely hope that none of our precious windows would be damaged in the future.

We hope all who helped make the project a success are happy with their purchases. We want to thank you for helping to make this such an enjoyable and profitable fundraiser with "Gods' Glory Glass".

As most of you know, the St. James cookbooks are at the printers with over 300 of your favorite recipes. Hopefully they will be here in time for Christmas gift purchases. With your help, we will have another successful project before the end of the calendar year, helping bring the window balance down.

Again, we thank you for your interest and support of the fundraisers at St. James. God Bless, Carol, Lois, Polly and Connie Committee for Stained Glass Window Fundraising

A Word About Financial Stewardship

As the end of the year approaches, churches (including our own) often find that they are running a bit “in the red.” At St. James we have spent very carefully during 2011, with expenditures in nearly every category running under budgeted amounts. Even so, Jim Miller, who keeps our financial records, reports that as of November 30, we are slightly over \$6,000.00 short of meeting expenses in the General Fund. Members have given generously to support the stained glass window restoration fund, and that may be part of the reason that “regular” giving is down a bit. During this last month of the year, we urge our members to be mindful of their stewardship of God’s gifts. Please consider making an extra end-of-year gift in response to God’s blessings so that we can move into the New Year in a position of financial strength. Thank You!



Cookbooks Are Here!

The long-awaited St. James cookbooks were delivered to the church on December 2, and are now available for purchase. They are filled with delicious recipes from members and friends of the congregation, and might just be the answer to some of “stuck” places on your Christmas gift list. The cost is \$10.00 each, with all profit from the sales going help reduce the remaining balance in the window restoration fund. Copies will be available following Sunday services during the coming weeks. If you can’t get out to make your purchase, please call the church office and we’ll try to make alternate arrangements.

First Holy Communion

Over the years it has been the tradition here at St. James to offer classes in preparation for First Holy Communion to the youngsters of our church family during the latter weeks of the season of Lent. The time of learning concludes during Holy Week, with members of the class receiving the sacrament for the first time at the Maundy Thursday service. In 2011 there were no youth of appropriate age, so we did not have a class. During early summer, however, we realized that Kathryn had never had opportunity to participate in our “usual” program. So, along with her Mom, S. Lawson, Katie met with Pastor Paul for several evening sessions of preparation. On Sunday, December 4, she received her First Holy Communion. We welcome Katie to the Lord’s Table!