

THE CHIMES

St. John's Lutheran Church, ELCA

Mission: EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, WE JOYFULLY INVITE ALL TO LOVE, SERVE, AND GROW IN CHRIST WHILE EMBRACING A CHANGING WORLD.

Office Hours: M–Th 8:30am-1:30pm; F 8:30am-1pm

Phone: (864) 638-6363

Email: stjohnsluther@gmail.com

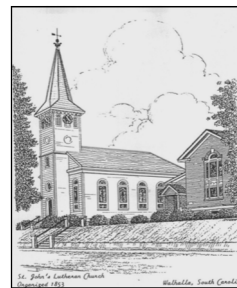
Biggerstaff Christian Retreat: 864-280-6067

St. John's Pre-School: (864) 638-8099

Website: www.stjohnswalhalla.org

biggerstaffretreat@gmail.com

Email: stjohnspreschoolwalhalla@gmail.com



“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign.” Isaiah 7:14

IT'S A SIGN!

Dear Friends:

Recently I was watching one of my favorite “feel-good” movies, *Sleepless in Seattle*, starring two well-known actors, Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. In this romantic comedy, a series of unexpected incidents lead the unlikely pair to their happy destiny. Throughout the movie there are numerous not-so-subtle references to stars and signs that are seen all around them—often with one of the actors saying, “it’s a sign”. The most endearing part about the movie is the compelling force that leads the two-destined persons to their fated meeting on the top of the Empire State building on Valentine’s day. And even then, there is no dramatic embrace or kiss, they just hold hands to supplement the longing-feeling that the audience feels by this point. It is a complete love story, mind you, but we sense or feel the love, we don’t necessarily see it in plain sight.

In the church calendar, we are now entering into the Epiphany season. This light-filled season begins on the day of Epiphany, January 6, and lasts until Ash Wednesday—which this year is March 2. The Epiphany season is made up of Scripture readings that show forth a series of revelations and signs of God’s presence among all people. This is the seasons of lights, the season of signs, the season of epiphanies. After the star which was high in the heavens leads the wise men to baby Jesus in the manger, the second Epiphany light we see in our lessons is still above but much closer, shining upon Jesus the man and splashing him with a name ‘my son the beloved’ as he stands wet and revealed in his Jordan baptism. Each of the Sunday gospel readings during our eight weeks of Epiphany give us signs that provoke some kind of searching or struggle and God’s call to discipleship and the discerned destiny for God’s people.

The new year of 2022 is a good time to celebrate this marvelous Epiphany and the manifestation of Christ’s light to the world. In the midst of the dark and bleak mid-winter, with the surge of Covid-19 cases caused by the Omicron variant and the concerns that come with that, along with other worries, most of us can use a dose of bright light and hope. Epiphany also mirrors a great romance, but it is not a chance meeting. It reminds us of God’s divine light that came with the fullness of time and was given to a world in great need.

I encourage you to be open and aware of those “signs” of Gods love and actions around you. Welcome the “aha” moments when God suddenly appears on your radar and in your daily life. Embrace the gifts given that help lighten our loads, dispel the darkest of our worries, shine light on our sadness, or in the hum-drum of another day, calls forth the glory of the Lord. As we are more aware of these signs of God’s gracious love, may we also heed the baptismal call of discipleship, to carry the light to the dark places of our world and our communities—making Christ known.

In Christ’s Peace and Light,

Pastor Rachel Connelly

P.S. On a personal note, Mike and I want to share a heart-felt thanks to you all for your many expressions of love shared through prayers, cards, gifts, and home-baked goods. I am also grateful for the Christmas bonus given by the congregation through the council. It is a privilege to continue to serve St. John’s as pastor.

From the
Vicar



I recently had a conversation with someone who mentioned they like to choose a word to help guide their year. This reminded me of a practice some congregations now take part in where on or around Epiphany where each person receives a “star word.” These words are either chosen at random chosen for you by someone to give you a word or phrase to think about or pray about for the year. Sometimes it helps to have a small thing like this to help guide and focus our thoughts, which can so often feel thrown about, especially in times which seem uncertain. The words are chosen at Epiphany specifically as a reminder of the Star which led the magi (or wise men) to find baby Jesus. Sometimes the words don’t seem to fit at all; those can be the most surprising when they suddenly do fit!

It certainly seems as though we are in a time of surprises around every corner, and as though guidance is in short supply. Even if just for fun, I invite you to choose a star word or star phrase if you are feeling the need for a bit more direction to begin your year.

With the hope for a wonderful year,

Vicar Laura Beall

I also want to express my sincere thanks for the many cards and well-wishes which found their way to me this Christmas season. I have learned so much with you all these past few months and can’t wait to see what still lies ahead.



- * To Diane Rawlins for the Advent and Christmas decorating and her Altar Guild members for their weekly care of the altar.
- * To Joan Lewis, Barbara Wilson, Lynn Pode, Barb Bowman for the Advent wreath making project.
- * To Tina Barrett, Jane Harris, Joan Lewis, Barbara Wilson, and Cathy Plowden who helped make our Tour of Churches event a success!
- * To all who contributed to the poinsettia garden during Christmas.
- * To Lynn Pode for adding her special decorations to the gathering spaces for our Christmas services.
- * To Ray Burroughs, Brad Davis and friends, for setting up the Chrismon tree and putting the lights on it and to everyone that decorated our Chrismon Tree.
- * To all of our 9am Praise ensemble, Vicar Laura Beall, Ray Burroughs, Dave Devoe, Grace Lichtenwald, Marcia Lyle, and Tom Ward who provided special music during our Advent and Christmas seasons.
- * To Catie E Fisher and Jamie Gibson for providing special Christmas Eve music
- * To Grace Lichtenwald for her many hours of practice and playing during Advent and Christmas.
- * To Patty Shepard, Dave Lewis, Dean Fogel, Mike Goyne, and Tiffany and Raeyanna Chapman for setting up our Outside Nativity. And to Patty, Raeyanna, and Alec for putting batteries in the LED candles.
- * To Keith and Risse Snelgrove, Allen Harding, Vicar Laura, and others who helped make our 1st Christmas in the Barn a wonderful experience!
- * To Alicia Rannou, Vicar Laura, and Janice Spain for all the extra work given for our bulletins at Christmas.

St. John’s Lutheran Church Advent Ministry 2021

Thank you to all for donating to our Advent Giving Tree. Your generous donations will be divided and sent to the appropriate organizations. To date we have raised \$756 for these 2 ministries:

- ◇ Hospice of the Foothills \$436
- ◇ Lutheran Services of the Carolinas- Refugee support \$320

Christmas Eve Meal Delivery 2021

Another successful outreach in 2021- Christmas Eve meals were delivered to 309 people in Oconee County. This year we were able to deliver 100 meals (and several trays of food) to Our Daily Bread soup kitchen in Seneca, 31 meals to the Detention Center, Walhalla Fire and Police, Salem Fire, 13 meals to St. John’s shut-ins and those in need, 34 meals to Sloan Street apartments and 135 meals to those needy in Walhalla, West Union, Mountain Rest and Seneca. We were able to send trays of food to Lakeview Assisted Living for the 30 residents there to enjoy Christmas dinner. All this was accomplished with 40 volunteers and following COVID guidelines. Thank you to the many people who made brownies, cooked, served, boxed, bagged, taped, delivered, cleaned, and helped organize. St. John’s is blessed with all of you!



Congregation Council Meeting—December 13, 2021 —Abbreviated Minutes

Members Present: All members present including Vicar Laura and newly elected members, Lynn Pode, Allen Harding and John Hewell.

Meeting called to order at 6:05pm. Dwelling in the Word led by Sandra Pruitt.

November Council Minutes: Motion to approve as presented, Tom Ward. Second, Dean Fogel. Passed.

Pastor's Report: Pastor preparing application to the Synod for a Seminarian beginning in August, 2022. Some stewardship letters have been mailed.

Vicar's Report: Advent wreath workshop well attended. Vicar teaching the children's Sunday School class due to the temporary absence of Tiffany Chapman.

Treasurer's Report: Total income for November \$1379 greater than forecasted. YTD total income \$9165 greater than forecasted. Total expenses for the month \$4926 less than forecasted. YTD total expenses \$28,111 less than forecasted. The balance in the General Fund is \$63,772. The Executive Committee, after a recommendation from the Finance Committee decided to pay out a year-end bonus to the Pastor, Vicar and all Staff members.

Worshipping and Operating Protocols: Continue to monitor.

Property Report: The roof leak in the fellowship hall has been repaired.

Worship and Music: December meeting held to review the Christmas Eve services and protocols.

Biggerstaff: Approximately \$10,000 in the checking account. Winterization of facilities has been done.

Preschool: Staffing has been a challenge.

Parish Life: Christmas Eve meals being planned. Issaquena's Bike Ride planned for April 30th.

Congregation Care: Chef's routes continue to do well.

Faith Formation: Confirmation Class discussing the book of Genesis.

2022 Council Leadership Elections: President: Jan Long. Vice Pres: Greg Harris. Secretary: Lynn Pode.

2022 Council Ministry Assignments: Preference sheet distributed. Members are to consider their talents and spiritual gifts.

Outgoing Council Members: Prayers and laying on of hands for Dean Fogel, Bill Brackett and Gary Bowman.

Next Meeting, January 17 at 6:00pm. Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm with praying the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted: *Bill Brackett*, Congregation Council Secretary

Gloria Shealy Circle will be meeting on January 18 at 6:00pm in the Fellowship Hall.



The Gloria Shealy Circle for many years has honored our "Senior Saints" members (80 years and older) of our congregation. We have made a donation to Lutheridge Outdoor Ministries to provide scholarships to campers in need of financial assistance. We are blessed to have these Seniors among us as examples of their faithfulness, leadership and mentoring as they serve and worship our Lord Jesus Christ. We will officially recognize these Seniors during the 9:00am & 11:00am services on Sunday, January 16.

The Survivors group is looking forward to a great 2022. We are closely monitoring the Covid-19 and variants but hope to meet at least once a month for a meal, discussion and fellowship. The planning team has your safety as our number one priority and will keep you posted to our scheduled dates and times. Keep your eyes open for our next event.

Memory Café for January will be held on January 18, 2022. We will meet at 2:00pm in the office building of Saint Luke United Methodist Church. The address is 607 E Main Street, Walhalla, South Carolina 29691.

The special event for the day is a sing-along with wonderful songs we enjoyed in our youth, as well as we remember and enjoy today. Come join us and make Memory Cafe a place where you and your loved one with memory loss can get together in a safe, supportive, and engaging environment. It is a place where you can interact, laugh, cry, find support, share concerns, celebrate, and encourage friendship and acceptance. There is no cost. All meetings are free. Please come join us. Call Bonnie Holmes at (864-539-6069) for more information



Youth Sunday School meets on Sundays at 10am in the preschool building.



St. John's Staff

The Reverend Dr. Rachel Connelly, Pastor
Laura Beall, Vicar

Alicia Rannou, Administrative Assistant

Joan Lewis, Spiritual Gifts Coordinator

Ray Burroughs, Sexton/Technology Support

Judi Matalik, SJ Preschool Director

Patty Shepard, Youth Director

Tiffany Chapman, Children's Ministry Coordinator

Jan Long, Congregational President

Chuck Rawlins, Congregational Treasurer

Mark McLean, Financial Secretary

Greg Harris, Cemetery Coordinator

Check out St. John's Website for more information on ministries at: stjohnswalhalla.org

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SUNDAYS



St. John's Lutheran Church, Walhalla



Congratulations to our newly elected 2022 council leaders

President: Jan Long

Vice President: Greg Harris

Secretary: Lynn Pode

Pastor Rachel's contact information:
Email: stjohnspastorrachel@gmail.com
Cell # (910) 515-0897

Vicar Laura's contact information:
Email: stjohnsvicarlaura@gmail.com
Cell # (605) 464-5941

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