



St John's

LUTHERAN CHURCH

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The Way of Love 2026

Memory Verse:

"We love because he first
loved us"

1 John 4:19

February 2026





From Pastor Howard...

When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazarene." -Matthew 2.19-23

Baptized into Christ, anointed with the Holy Spirit, how do you make important decisions? Not "What's for lunch?", or "What should I wear today?", but "Which of these jobs should I take?", or "Whose candidacy should I support?"

Joseph had an important decision to make, when an angel of God let him know that it was safe for him and Mary to take Jesus and go back to Israel. But where in Israel should they go?

In Matthew's telling of the story of Jesus' birth, there's no mention of Joseph and Mary's traveling anywhere before Jesus was born. If we only had Matthew, we would assume that Joseph, of the house and lineage of David, already lived in Bethlehem, "the city of David." And it would seem likely that Joseph's first thought, after the angel said "go back," would be that he would take the family back to Bethlehem.

Matthew tells us that two things prevented his deciding to go to Bethlehem. The first was learning that Herod's son Archelaus was ruling Judea, the region that included Bethlehem. Archelaus might remember his father's attempt to kill the one the Magi had said was born to be king of the Jews. Suppose someone let King Archelaus know that there was a boy the same age as those his father had killed living in Bethlehem. He might think, "Oops! The soldiers missed one!" and send a squad of soldiers to find that boy and kill him. Joseph didn't want to take that risk.

The second was that he was warned in a dream not to go to Judea. This time, Matthew does not say that it was an angel that warned him in the dream. In the three previous dreams giving him instructions, an angel of the Lord was telling him what to do. This time, it was just a dream. Did Matthew assume that the dream was from God, even though this time there was no angel in it?

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A reasonable suspicion, AND a warning in a dream that maybe came from God. Happily for Joseph, the dream agreed with what he thought when he was awake: Judea was not the place to go. He took the family, not to Judea, but to Galilee.

It isn't always that easy. Sometimes, what we think makes most sense may not line up with what we know of God's will. With a choice between jobs, say: one might suit my natural inclinations, but the other might be a better way to serve my neighbors. Which one should I take?

After posing the question, now is the place for me to supply the answer, right?

The thing is, I haven't got a one-size-fits-all answer. I only have some suggestions.

One is that important decisions should not go directly against what we are pretty sure, from the Scriptures, is God's will. Should I do something that I know will harm my neighbor? Should I seek revenge on someone who has wronged me? Is it okay for me to treat that obviously unworthy person with contempt? Nope, nope, and nope. Serving your neighbor, forgiving the one who did you dirty, and treating all people with respect will be better. See Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Matthew for details.

Another is to trust the wisdom of those around you, especially your sisters and brothers in Christ. They may be able to see factors that you don't notice. There are different points of view, and you might do well to check out someone else's. There's a reason for the saying, "Two heads are better than one."

The third is to trust your instincts, not as absolute guides, but as pretty good clues. Do not discount the wisdom God has given you. Even without the dream, I don't think Joseph would have gone from Egypt to Judea.

Finally, if you goof, if you make a bad decision, don't beat yourself up. Our brothers and sisters in Twelve Step programs are wise to say, "We preach progress, not perfection."

May all of your decisions in the new year be as easy as Joseph's! May God bless you with guidance that is easy to follow, and, if it isn't clear cut, with the assurance that God loves you just as much if you don't get it right.

- Pr. Howard



From the Council President...

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

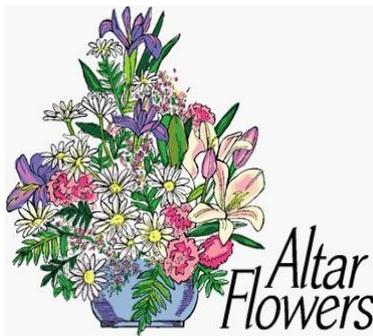
The month of February marks the annual transition to a new phase in the life of the congregation with a new congregational council for the new year. New members are elected at the annual congregational meeting, and new leadership is selected for the year. After serving on council for six

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years and the last two as president, my own time of service has come to an end. It has been a great honor to serve as the congregational president for the last two years, and I thank everyone for their trust and support during this time. On behalf of the congregation, I would also like to extend heartfelt thanks to our other outgoing council members of Kristy Williams, Mike Pustay, and Maggie Reed for their service and dedication to the congregation as well. During this time of transition, we continue to offer our thanks and support for our continuing members of council, as well as those who are elected to serve new terms, and for the continued leadership and guidance of Pastor Cindy and Pastor Howard.

Much has been accomplished at St. John's in recent years, but change, transitions, and most importantly, our mission work always continues on. The congregation has already embarked on our call process journey, and our work of reconnecting with the people of our local communities, serving those in need through our extensive social ministry programs, rebuilding the Dayschool ministry, and sharing the Gospel continues. Throughout each and every day, no matter the circumstances, we remain steadfast in our trust and hope in the Lord. Let us all continue to move forward together with open hearts and open minds to be the Light of Christ each day to all of God's children.

In Christ,
Kyle Henry
St. John's Congregational Council President



Please check the sign-up sheet in the Narthex if you are interested in placing flowers this month! The cost is \$22.50 per vase.



You can place your *2026 Altar Flower* requests online! Just go to the Home Page of our website and click on the link for 2026 Altar Flower Sign Up. You can also scan this QR code or call the church office at 419-837-5115.



SOCIAL MINISTRIES



Sunday Special...

Food Pantry ~ ♦ Jello (orange and strawberry preferred)
 ♦ Jellybeans ♦ canned fruit cocktail
 ♦ cereal (any kind)

Shared Bounty ~ ♦ dish soap ♦ laundry detergent

We are currently serving 65 families.



February Birthdays *(Those over 74 years young!)*

Myrl Bretz	2/1	28102 East Broadway, Walbridge, 43465
Mary Bath	2/6	Manor at Perrysburg, 250 Manor Drive, Room 49 Perrysburg, 43551
Kathe Umbaugh	2/9	3213 Weston Drive, Kokomo, IN 46902
Shirley Johnson	2/11	3695 River Ridge Way, Perrysburg, 43551
Marge Sheldrick	2/12	8730 Five Point Road, Perrysburg, 43551
Mel Camp	2/14	10 Heron Drive, Tavares, FL 32778
Nancy Wellman	2/16	3 Callender Ct., Perrysburg, 43551
Nancy Nycz	2/18	426 W. College Avenue, Pemberville, 43450
Linda Biniker	2/20	P.O. Box 205, 5929 Fremont Pike, Stony Ridge, 43463
Judy Seuits	2/23	20311 Pemberville Road, Oakwood Building #131 Pemberville, 43450

Attention All Congregation Members!!

Our Constitution states:

"Voting members are confirmed members. Such confirmed members, during the current or preceding calendar year, shall have communed in this congregation and shall have made a contribution of record to this congregation. Members of this congregation who have satisfied these basic standards shall have the privilege of voice and vote at every regular and special meeting of the congregation."

Please make sure that you fill out a Connection Card at least once per year so that we have a record that you have communed. This ensures that you remain an active voting member.

COOKIE FELLOWSHIP!!!

In recent years the Fellowship Committee has taken it upon themselves to set up and clean up cookies for after-worship fellowship several times each month. Our committee is now asking for help with this. Committee Council Reps are going to be coordinating twice a month cookie fellowship with their respective committees. Each committee will be responsible for set up and clean up of cookies and other treats - beverages are not necessary.

A sign-up sheet is on the Fellowship bulletin board in the Narthex. Please add your committee's name to a date or two! Thanks!

We will still be relying on our congregation members to supply us with these treats. They can be dropped off in the kitchen with a "Cookie Hour" note attached.



Thanks!!





In Loving Memory of...

Sandi Goodman

- ◆ Deb Fair ◆ Dale & Sondra Klavinger ◆ Tom & Carole Wasserman ◆ Larry Minarik
- ◆ Merl & Gail Moenter ◆ Steven Shook ◆ St. John's WELCA ◆ Julie Lauer
- ◆ Mary Marsh ◆ Phyllis Bookenberger ◆ Lisa & Casey Conine
- ◆ Linc & Maryann Christianson ◆ Marty & Paul Brauckieck ◆ Elaine Miller
- ◆ Marlene & Charles Crandall ◆ Mark & Susan Pumphrey ◆ Kim & Marv Reitzel
- ◆ Pastor Cindy and Tom Ritter

Paul Downey

Richard & Betty Bahnsen

Walter Minarik

- ◆ Doug Brough ◆ Pastor Cindy & Tom Ritter ◆ Scott Brough ◆ Larry Minarik
- ◆ Marlene Crandall ◆ Karen Campbell ◆ Steve Shook ◆ Keith & Deb Dorans
- ◆ Charles, Deborah & Riley Herman ◆ Butch & Barb Berger ◆ Mary Marsh
- ◆ Kim Nicely & Mark Kelly

Women of the ELCA

Comforters for Lutheran World Relief will be tied on Tuesday, February 10th from 12:00 to 2:30 in the Parish House. We are always looking for new volunteers. Please consider joining us for this important project. No experience necessary!

Dates to Remember:

Tuesday, February 10th-Tie Comforters 12:00-2:30 (Parish House)

Monday, February 16th-Crafting Group 1:00-3:00 (Lounge)

Donations of filler for mission comforters are always welcome, including old blankets, sheets, bedspreads, and tablecloths. These donations may be placed in the LWR box in the coatroom. Thank you in advance for your donations. If you have material you'd like to donate for the tops of comforters, donations would be greatly appreciated.



Crafting Group



The Crafting Group will meet on Monday, February 16th from 1:00 to 3:00 in the Lounge. Bring your latest project and join us for fellowship and conversation. We'd love to see some new additions to our group. Please see Lynda Lees if you have any questions.



BUILD-A-BED IS COMING BACK!!

Yes. That outstanding local mission that we accomplished last April is making a return appearance in 2026. It will be held on Saturday, April 25. Last year we were able to build 60 beds for children in northwest Ohio in a single morning. There were smiles on every face that took part in the project. We had approximately 65 volunteers who showed up, worked, fellowshiped, talked, laughed, and built beds for kids that didn't have their own beds. It was another successful mission project for St. John's



So this is a heads up! We are beginning to collecting funds to build **70 beds**, sign people up to work that day, look for donations of food to feed our workers, volunteers to serve food to our workers, to lift the spirit and comfort children in our area who are not now sleeping in their own beds.

You can donate through the offering plate by designating Build – A – Bed on your offering envelope. You can mail in a check to the office, You can donate online. You can talk to Rick Lees or Tiffany Porter. We need you to make this another successful mission event at St. John's. YOUR HELP IS APPRECIATED!!

Build a bed. Change a Life.

GENEROUS GIVING

Financial Giving through 1/18/2026

General Fund Income *(Year-to-Date)*

<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Difference</u>
\$ -	\$10,451	-

Benevolence Fund *(Year-to-Date)*

<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Difference</u>
\$ -	\$723	-

Improvement Fund *(Year-to-Date)*

Actual
\$275

(Copies of most recently approved financial reports are available in the Narthex and by request.)

Visit us online at

www.stjohnsstonyridge.net

or scan the QR code to set up electronic giving. Click on the "Give Generously" tab to enter your information and offering. Financial gifts can, of course, be sent by mail too. We are grateful for your continued support of our ministry.



Prayer for our Call Committee

Almighty God, giver of all good gifts, guide the minds of those on the Call Committee, that we may find a faithful servant to care for your people. Grant us wisdom, clarity, and discernment to hear your voice and see your will for our congregation's future

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



*Winter Weather
Reminder*

If Wood County is on a Level 2
Snow Advisory, our Sunday
worship will likely be canceled.
Watch for updates on our
Facebook page or on local news
media.



Thank You

Thank you all for the sincere thoughts and prayers as we work through this time together. Thank you Pastor Cindy for the visits and the beautiful service for our loved one. Thank you to Jacob for providing us with music. We greatly appreciate the families that provided dishes for the luncheon- everything was delicious. Thank you W.E.L.C.A. for your time and dedication in preparing, serving and cleaning up of the luncheon. And to Sandra, your preparation, service, kind words and dedication always make a comforting impact. Again thank you all for supporting our family during this time of need and making us feel so loved. May God bless each and everyone.

The Family of Sandi Goodman

It is with a thankful heart that I extend my appreciation for the many prayers and cards from my St. John's family. I am also so thankful for the visits from Pastor Cindy throughout my recovery. She has been a wonderful source of spiritual encouragement, along with her genuine kindness and positive encouragement.

In addition, I'd like to thank Donna Rolf for the handmade lap quilt and also the altar flowers that were delivered from church. A big thank you is extended to Leann Peiffer and Sandra Diefenthaler for maintaining the communion duties throughout the month of January...it is very appreciated.

In Christ's love,

Linda Bockbrader

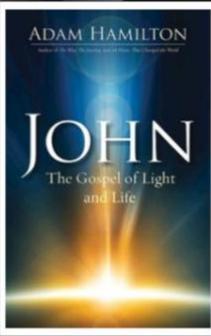
Thank-you Dear St. John's folks for the many ways you blessed me during the Christmas season. I am so grateful for your kindness, prayers, cards, cookies and more. Being your Co-Interim Pastor brings me great JOY. Serving here at St. John's in Stony Ridge is a priceless gift from God in my life.

Peace, Pr. Cindy Ritter

UPCOMING EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS

FEB 6	Men's Breakfast @ Panera on Rt. 20 @ 9 AM
FEB 7	Shared Bounty in Parish Hall @ 10 AM
FEB 10	Tie Comforters in Parish Hall @ 12 NOON
FEB 11	Lunch Bunch @ Luckies on Navarre Ave. in Oregon @ 11:30 AM
FEB 15	RESCHEDULED ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING after worship
FEB 15	Hilltop Dayschool Open House - Congregation Invited! @12:30 PM
FEB 16	Crafting Group in Lounge @ 1 PM
FEB 18	Ash Wednesday Worship @ 7 PM
FEB 25	Lenten Worship @ 7 PM

Bible/Book/DVD Study in Lent



Tuesdays

February 10, 17, 24,
March 3, 10, and 17
10:45 AM in the Lounge

Evening sessions on
ZOOM @ 5 PM



Attention St. John's Committees

We need help with Cookie Hour for March. A sheet is hanging on the bulletin board. Please sign up for a Sunday to sponsor this fellowship!

2026/2027

Fall Enrollment

for current families/church members
Starts February 2nd
For Toddlers, Preschool, Pre-K, & Grade school Eastwood/Lake




Stop in, call, or email.
Mrs. Mazza
419-837-2223
admin@stjohnshilltop.com



FEBRUARY 2026



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1</p> <p>9a Christian Ed</p> <p>10a Worship</p> <p>2:30p Dartball in PH (Make-up match)</p> <p>6:30p Scouts PH</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Practice in Sanctuary</p> <p>6:30p JJJAAM</p> <p>7:30p Stones</p> <p>7:30 Dartball (Away)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Noon Prayers via ZOOM</p> <p>7p Committee Mtg Night #1</p> <p>8p AA (PH)</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p> <p>8p AA (PH)</p>	<p>6</p> <p>9a Men's Breakfast @ Panera Rt. 20</p>	<p>7</p> <p>10a-12p Shared Bounty (PH)</p>
<p>8</p> <p>9a Christian Ed</p> <p>10a Worship</p> <p>4p Scouts (PH)</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Practice in Sanctuary</p> <p>6:30p JJJAAM</p> <p>7:30p Stones</p> <p>7:30 Dartball (Home)</p>	<p>10</p> <p>12p Tie Comforters (PH)</p> <p>Noon Prayers via ZOOM</p> <p>7p Committee Mtg Night #2</p> <p>8p AA (PH)</p>	<p>11</p> <p>11:30a Lunch Bunch @ Luckies on Navarre Ave.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>9:15a Staff Mtg (L)</p> <p>8p AA (PH)</p>	<p>13</p> <p>5p-8p PH Reserved - Dayschool</p>	<p>14</p>
<p>15</p> <p>9a Christian Ed</p> <p>10a Worship</p> <p>12:30p Public Open House for Dayschool</p> <p>4p Scouts (PH)</p>	<p>16</p> <p>1p Crafting Group (L)</p> <p>Practice in Sanctuary</p> <p>6:30p JJJAAM</p> <p>7:30p Stones</p> <p>7:30 Dartball (Home)</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Noon Prayers via ZOOM</p> <p>6:30p Exec Comm (L)</p> <p>7p Church Council (L)</p> <p>8p AA (PH)</p>	<p>18</p> <p>12 Noon Ash Wednesday Chapel Service</p> <p>7p Ash Wednesday Worship</p>	<p>19</p> <p>5:30p Dayschool Staff(L)</p> <p>6:45p Dayschool Board (L)</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p> <p>7:30a Food Pantry (PH)</p> <p>1p Scouts Set up for Pinewood Derby (PH)</p>
<p>22</p> <p>9a Christian Ed</p> <p>10a Worship</p> <p>1p Scouts Pinewood Derby (PH)</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Practice in Sanctuary</p> <p>6:30p JJJAAM</p> <p>7:30p Stones</p> <p>7:30 Dartball (Home)</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Noon Prayers via ZOOM</p> <p>8p AA (PH)</p>	<p>25</p> <p>7p Lenten Worship Service</p>	<p>26</p> <p>8p AA (PH)</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p> <p>12p – 4p PH Reserved</p>
<p>Committee Meetings: Please schedule all meetings with the office administrator so the proper room is reserved to accommodate all groups. Call 419-837-5115 or email officeadministrator@stjohnsstonynridge.net.</p>						