

# Vine Street Journal

Johnstown, PA

First Lutheran Church

January 2025

## A message from Vicar Christy...

*"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem."* *Matthew 2:1*

Happy New Year!! As we say goodbye to 2024 and look forward to this new year of 2025 – I would like to say, "Thank You!" Thank you to each of you for a wonderful 2024!!

As we begin 2025, many of us do so by making "New Year's resolutions." We evaluate the past year and maybe think of things we would have done differently or improved.

When we look back on 2024, here are some things that have changed. We began Sunday School and now have 8 young children attending. What a great new addition!! We are slowly growing Tower Moments Monthly Worship Services and are knee deep into By Heart – Conversations with Martin Luther. We are having some wonderful conversations and learning and growing.

As we begin 2025, we do so celebrating Epiphany. We remember this day and the story of the Magi (those Wisemen three) as they followed that star to the Christ-child. The word "epiphany" has Greek origins and means "manifestation or to show."

So, as we travel through this bright new year, we too have a star to follow, although sometimes we just don't see it. Remember, God is with us as we journey, the Holy Spirit guides us and leads us exactly where we are to be. We never walk alone.

Thank you for your continued unwavering support and I am looking forward to sharing this new year with all of you!!

May you share that love of God with all those you meet and may his grace fill you with peace.

Yours in Christ,  
*Vicar Christy*



“. . . they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup> On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

### ***Lord, may we be like the Wise Men***

*Lord, may we be like the Wise Men who were guided to you by a star. Give us the wisdom to seek you, light to guide us to you, courage to search until we find you, graciousness to worship you and generosity to lay our gifts before you, who are our King and our God for ever and ever. Amen.*



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VICAR INTERN

*Christy Harford*

MINISTER OF MUSIC

*Kim Rauch*

LEARNING MINISTRY ASSOCIATE

*Barbara J. Pingatore, R.N.*

OFFICE MANAGER

*Deneillia (Danny) Mitchell*

CLEANER

*Paul Eisenhuth*

CHURCH COUNCIL

*Barry Critchfield (Treasurer), Rob Abele (Vice-President), Bill Price (President), James Hargreaves, Karen Hargreaves,, Heidi Piurkowsky, Joel Hoshaw, Jody Kirk (Secretary), Rick Blackford, Josh Rinaman, Janice Hill, Dick Schrott, Fawn Slonka, Shirley Waclo.*

### Next Journal Deadline

Tuesday, January 21  
 Share your news with us!



~ PASTORAL ACTS ~  
 Vicar Intern Christy Harford

~ CONTRIBUTIONS ~



In memory of Patricia Huntsinger  
 gifted by Elizabeth A. Richards

In memory of Patricia Huntsinger  
 gifted by Wiedeman & Douty, P.C.

In memory of Catherine Hack  
 gifted by Ann Furlong

In memory of Catherine Hack  
 gifted by Elaine D. McCauliff

In memory of Catherine Hack  
 gifted by Debbie Chuba

In memory of Catherine Hack  
 gifted by Denise Szelzek

In memory of Catherine Hack  
 gifted by Jean and Cindy Bennett

In memory of First Lutheran Members  
 gifted by Vicar Christy

### TUESDAY NOON RECITALS

In memory of Dorothy Anderson  
 gifted by Nancy Gay

In memory of Dorothy Anderson  
 gifted by Bill and Becky Gay Gregory



Coming in Winter and Spring of 2025 will be outreach ministry opportunities. Super Bowl party on Souper Bowl Sunday, Shrove Tuesday Pancake supper, Movie Matinee, Walk of Hope and a possible repeat of this year's strawberry festival. Continue to check the Vine Street Journal and the bulletin for these and other pending events. Watch for signs and posters announcing ministry events.

**In our prayers**



In the life of our congregation, there are often important events which touch the lives of the First Lutheran family. We commend them to you and encourage you to share news with us.

- + **Sympathy and prayers** to family and friends of Catherine Hack who died on November 29.
- + **Sympathy and prayers** to family and friends of Laura Miltenberger who died December 1.

**Income and Expense Summary  
as of November 30 2024**

	Current YTD Actual Jan. 1 thru Nov. 30,2024	Current YTD Budget Jan. 1 thru Nov. 30,2024	Difference over+/under- Budget
Regular Offering Income	\$147,684.13	\$139,942.36	\$7,741.77
Trust Fund Income	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other Income	\$2,628.50	\$3,895.87	-\$1,267.37
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$150,312.63</b>	<b>\$143,838.23</b>	<b>\$6,474.40</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$160,407.07</b>	<b>\$156,116.51</b>	<b>\$4,290.56</b>

Thank you for your continued generosity and faithfulness to First Lutheran Church. God bless.

Thought for the month. . .

*When they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.*

*Matthew 2:10*



Council met on December 11 at 7:00 pm to review reports and conduct new business. Treasurer Barry Critchfield presented the 2025 budget to council for approval. The anticipated total income for 2025 is \$181,825 with total expenses predicted to be \$181,426. Council approved the spending plan, which will be presented to the congregation the weekend of December 14-15 for approval.

Council approved the transfer of \$15,000 from the Trust Fund into the General Fund to balance the anticipated shortfall in the 2024 budget. Council also approved the distribution of \$2200 in benevolence to the following: Synod Mission Support (\$1500), UPJ Ministry (\$200), United (Gettysburg) Lutheran Seminary (\$200), Camp Sequanota (\$200), West End Food Pantry (\$100). A total of \$1025 was given to LWR World Hunger and \$255 was given to Christmas/Easter charities through the generosity of our congregation. An additional \$774 that was raised through FUNdraising efforts will be distributed by the committee to other beneficiaries to be determined.

Council approved a recommendation from the Property committee to use money from the Trust Fund to repair and repaint the sanctuary. A tentative bid from Elias Painting is \$119,000. We will get at least one more bid and then move forward. Ideally, the work could be done starting in May while the organ console is being repaired and we worship in the social hall.

The next regular council meeting will be held January 15, 2025 at 7:00 pm.

**Congregational Meeting**

There was a congregational meeting before worship on December 14, and after worship on November 15. The purpose of the meeting was for congregational approval of the 2025 FLC budget. Treasurer Barry Critchfield summarized the spending plan and entertained questions. The motion to approve the plan carried.

### January Readings and Psalm

#### January 5 – Epiphany

- Isaiah 60:1-6  
*Nations come to the light*
- Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14  
*All kings shall bow down before him.*
- Ephesians 3:1-12  
*The gospel's promise extends to all*
- Matthew 2:1-12  
*Revelation of Christ to the nations of the earth*

#### January 12 – Baptism of Our Lord

- Isaiah 43:1-7  
*When you pass through the waters, do not fear, for I am with you*
- Psalm 29  
*The voice of the LORD is upon the waters.*
- Acts 8:14-17  
*Prayer and laying on of hands for the Holy Spirit*
- Luke 3:15-17, 21-22  
*The baptism of Jesus with the descent of the Holy Spirit*

#### January 19 – Second Sunday after Epiphany

- Isaiah 62:1-5  
*As bridegroom and bride rejoice, so shall God rejoice over you*
- Psalm 36:5-10  
*We feast upon the abundance of your house, O LORD.*
- 1 Corinthians 12:1-11  
*There are a variety of gifts but the same Spirit*
- John 2:1-11  
*The wedding at Cana*

#### January 26 – Third Sunday after Epiphany

- Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10  
*Ezra reads the law of Moses before the people*
- Psalm 19  
*The teaching of the LORD revives the soul.*

- 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a  
*You are the body of Christ*
- Luke 4:14-21  
*Jesus reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah*



Once again we held our annual Thanksgiving Dinner and it was a nice

evening. We made 160 dinners. Thanks to all that contributed cranberry sauce, pies, cool whip, and tea to compliment the dinner.

We received compliments from just about everyone as they were leaving on how tasty and filling it was.

I want to say a special thank you to the following volunteers for helping to make, serve, and clean-up:  
*Christy Brinkly, Jody Kirk, Ann Furlong, Rick Blackford, Bill & Poly Grubb, Dolores Bennett, Heidi & Chuck Staib, Tyna Kaltenbaugh, Jerry Watson, Marilyn Piple, Vicor Christy, Heidi Purikowsky, Donna Loyalchek, Bill Weible, & Fawn Slonka.*

As always, New Day and I will be in talks for the next years dinner. When this started with them a little more than 18 years ago, there were 6 different locations. It is now down to just 3, and we are the largest one. This speaks a lot about what we do here at First!

I am happy to lead this each year for us and look forward to many more!  
Thank you all!  
*Howard Bennett*



**Pledged offering  
nears projection**



Half of First Lutheran's operating income for 2025 has been pledged.

The congregation has adopted a budget of \$182,000 in income and spending.

As of mid-December \$92,000 had been pledged. The Stewardship Committee anticipates an additional \$5,000 from five or six members.

Other income comes from unpledged gifts and the trust fund.

The preservation fund has received 26 pledges of \$8,000, which is just short of a typical response.

*George Fattman,*  
Campaign Chair

**This Little Light of Mine**



January 6 is Epiphany in the Sundays following we celebrate the in-breaking of God's light. The readings help us understand that the manifestation of God is for all people everywhere.

This is a message of radical inclusivity. The magi are drawn from the east to come to pay homage to the Christ child. They who were once far off are now embraced by the one true God, who has sent a Savior into the world. Likewise, Paul reports in Ephesians that he has been given grace to "bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ". Just as Isaiah had foretold, nations shall come to God's light.

In this inclusive reality, everyone is welcome, and so are their gifts. Just as the magi showed their respect for Christ with gold, frankincense, and myrrh, we can offer our gifts and talents to further the brightness of God's dawn. Whatever we bring—no matter how simple—is accepted and used for a mighty purpose.

There is also a sense of joy at this Epiphany. When the magi saw that the star they were following had stopped over the place where the Christ child lay, they were overwhelmed with joy. The angel had declared to the shepherds that the newborn child would bring good news of great joy for all the people. Now again, Christ brings joy to all. Christianity is a truly joyful religion.

Through word and sacrament we too are invited to rise and shine, for our light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon us. Fed and nourished in worship, we are sent forth to bear witness, to let our little lights shine.



**Flower sign-up ALTAR/ORGAN FLOWERS**

Sign-up boards are available in the Lounge for reserving altar and organ flower requests. If you had requests in 2024 they would have been transferred to the new boards. Contact the church office if you have changes, additions or questions about your reservations.

Once the 2025 requests are organized, open reservation dates will be listed in the monthly Vine Street Journal.

One board is for Altar Flowers - \$40. (If there are 2 listings on the same day, the flowers are only \$20) the other is for Organ Flowers - \$30. Payment will be due on or before the date you have chosen. Thank you!



The generosity of First Lutherans reaches beyond our church walls, into the community, the church at large and globally. We receive notes of thanks and acknowledgements for many of the gifts given. Acknowledgements received are noted each month in the VSJ and posted on a bulletin board located in the Lounge.

**Outreach Ministry Team writes...**

A special shout out and blessing to all who participated in the December pre-Christmas events. Those who attended the St. Nicholas Day celebration enjoyed a good luncheon, good fellowship and the opportunity to create a good Christmas for the Adopt-a-Family recipients. It was a lovely event.

The Christmas carolers brought joy to innumerable folks: not just our own members but many residents of local senior living complexes. We raised our voices in praise and joy ranging from Silent Night to Jingle Bells. If you have never gone caroling do plan on joining in the fun next year. Of course there is a gathering to eat and enjoy one another after the singing.

The decorating of the church after worship on the Fourth Sunday of Advent is an enterprise which needs many hands. Thanks to all who stayed and helped to make First Lutheran a beautiful place in which to welcome the newborn Christ.

Wishing you all blessed New Year in 2025.

**Christmas Cookie Sale**



As George Strait sings, "I sure do like those Christmas cookies!" This year's Christmas Cookie

Sale was a wonderful success. We sold 50 trays, each filled with two dozen delicious homemade treats.

The Outreach Team would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all the talented bakers who contributed to this effort. Our selection featured an array of delightful goodies, including Peanut Butter Cookies, Sprinkle Cookies, Oatmeal Raisin Cookies, Snickerdoodles, Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Cookies, Chocolate Chocolate Chip Cookies, Classic Chocolate Chip Cookies, Peanut Butter and Chocolate No-Bakes, Thumbprints, Pizzelles, and many more tempting treats.

In addition to selling cookies, we also shared trays with those we visited during our Christmas caroling, spreading sweetness and joy throughout the community.

Thank you, First Lutheran bakers, for your incredible support and exceptional baking. Your efforts truly made a difference, and we appreciate you!

**Hindman Funeral Home Writes...**



We are so proud when we can provide our troops with Holiday Cheer! Thanks to everyone who participated in this year's Christmas Stockings for Soldiers. First Lutheran completed 10 stockings for soldiers. This ministry brings so many blessings to those who serve our country.





THANK YOU

### Thank you Christmas Volunteers. . .

A special thank you to all of our volunteers who helped to prepare our building for Christmas. Those who did the outdoor decorating, sanctuary decorating, and hanging wreathes, setting of the crèche, hanging banners, and placing the poinsettias.

Our worship volunteers supported our Advent Services and the two Christmas Eve services. Thanks to our worship leaders, the choir and cantors, our special musicians, those who shared musical gifts on Christmas Eve, Advent readers and candle lighters, acolytes, ushers, Altar Guild, communion assistants, lectors, sound and video techs and others working behind the scenes.

The office staff was supported by the volunteers who helped with the extra office tasks, bulletins, newsletters, extra mailings, etc.

The church is God's people at work! And we are very grateful for the many good folks we have in our church family! THANK YOU and GOD BLESS YOU!

### Special Thanks. . .

Thanks to the special ladies who organized and distributed the beautiful 2025 First Lutheran calendar to our homebound members. A special thank you to Kristin Swanson Davenport for designing the calendar.



**Souper Bowl Weekend**  
**Saturday, February 10**  
**Sunday, February 11**

*"Longing for food, many are hungry. Longing for water, many still thirst. Make us your bread, broken for others, shared until all are fed."*

*"Christ Be Our Light" (ELW 715)*

### SOUPER BOWL OF CARING 2025

Join us for an exciting opportunity to raise funds and support local food charities—all while celebrating the thrill of the Big Game! Let's team up to make a powerful impact in the fight against hunger.

The campaign kicks off on **January 12th, 2025**, and runs through February 9th, 2025. Together, we can make a difference!

JOIN US FOR THE 35th ANNUAL SOUPER BOWL  
 OF CARING!  
 HEALTHY MEALS HAPPY HEARTS

We take the energy of sports to help food charities win! Close to \$200M so far.

**From January 12<sup>th</sup> thru February 9<sup>th</sup>**

- ❖ Donations of soup any kind any size will be gathered in support of the West End Food Pantry.
- ❖ Support a noisy offering on Souper Bowl Weekend. Save your loose change until that weekend and then bring it to church and make noise while dropping it in the bucket. All money collected will support ELCA World Hunger.

The annual Souper Bowl of caring event will create 18 million meals for those in need this year. \$1 makes 3 meals. Join us to TACKLE HUNGER NOW!!

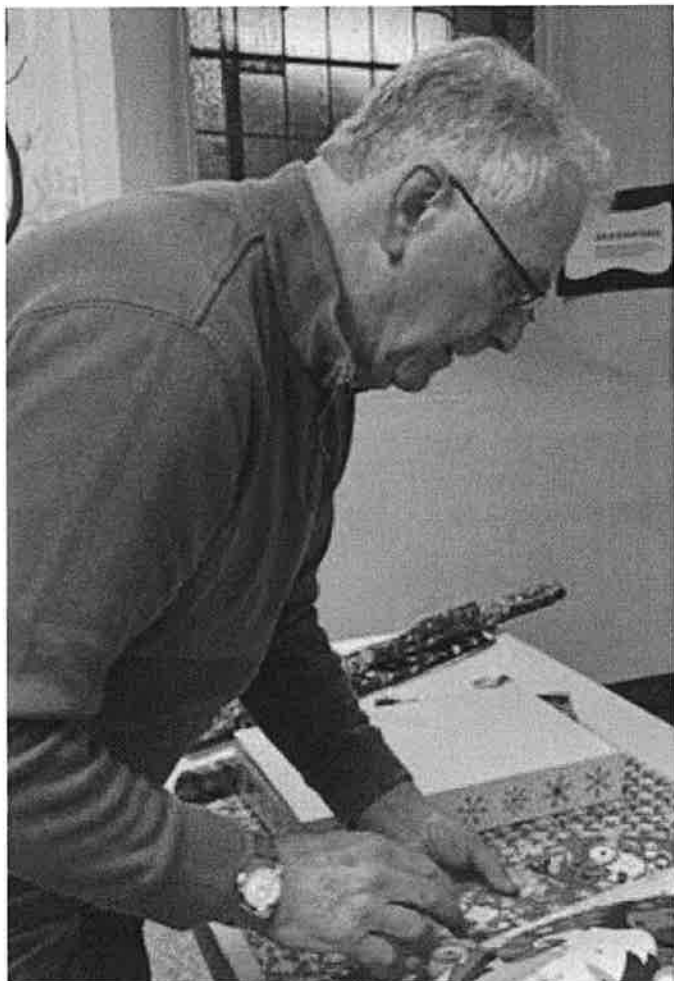
**TACKLE  
 HUNGER**

HERE AT FIRST – a bit of Thanksgiving, some St. Nick, & Caroling – what fun!!



Serving up Thanksgiving Dinner

Fa La La Caroling 🎵 🎵



Saint Nick Celebration  
Santa's Helper gift wrapping for  
Adopt-a-Family





Volunteer Page - Month of January

**ALTAR GUILD**

Fawn Slonka and Donna Kovalchek – *Saturday*  
 January 4 and 18  
 Annie Hayes and Carol Massingill – *Saturday*,  
 January 11 and 25  
 Vicki Price, Carol Allison, Donna Caprous  
*Sunday*  
 January 5, 12, 19, 26

**COUNCIL GREETERS** – Bill Price and Jody Blackford

**FLOWER DELIVERY**–Bill Price

**ACOLYTES**

**5 Epiphany**  
 Acolytes-Josie Hill and James Hill  
**Crucifer** James Hill  
**12 Baptism of Our Lord**  
 Acolytes-Josie Hill and James Hill  
**Crucifer** Josie Hill  
 19 Ushers  
 26 Ushers

**COMMUNION ASSISTANT**

5 Josh Rinaman  
 12 Barry Critchfield  
 19 Jody Kirk  
 26 Barry Critchfield

**LECTORS**

4\* Fawn Slonka  
 5 Josh Rinaman  
 11\* George Fattman  
 12 Tom Dixon  
 18\* Heidi Staib  
 19 Jody Kirk  
 25\* Vicki Price  
 26 Ann Furlong

**SATURDAY PIANISTS**

4 Luis Gonzalez  
 11 George Fattman  
 18 Heidi Staib  
 25 Vicki Price

**SOUND**

5 Bill Grubb  
 12 Rob Abele  
 19 Chuck Staib  
 26 Harry Bennett

**VIDEO**

5 Bill Hargreaves  
 12 Bill Price  
 19 Bill Weible  
 26 Rob Abele

**TOWER BELLS**

Kim Rauch	Friday 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
Vicki Price	Sunday 5, 9
Harriett Miller	Monday 6, 13, 20, 27
George Fattman	Tuesday 7, 14, 21, 28
Anne Fattman	Wednesday 8, 15, 22, 29
Vicki Price	Thursday 9, 16, 23, 30
Pam Rizzi	Sunday 12, 26



# January 2025

**First Evangelical Lutheran Church – Johnstown, Pennsylvania**  
**814-536-7521 email: [firstlutheran@wpia.net](mailto:firstlutheran@wpia.net)**  
**Office Hours: Mon. thru Fri. 9 am – 2:00 pm**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Happy New Year</b>						
<b>5 Epiphany</b> 10:45-Sunday School <b>11:00-Of Land and Seasons</b> Word and Sacrament Vicar Intern Harford <b>Noon-Hospitality</b>	<b>6 Day of Epiphany</b> 11:00-Staff Meeting 11:45-Communion 12-Prayer Meeting.	<b>7</b> 6:30-Bellchoir	<b>1</b> <b>NEW YEAR BLESSINGS</b>	<b>2</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 7-By the Heart Bible Study-First	<b>3</b>	<b>4 Eve of Epiphany</b> 5:00-Of Land and Seasons Word and Sacrament Vicar Intern Harford
<b>12 Baptism of Our Lord</b> 10:45- Sunday School <b>11:00- Word and Sacrament</b> Vicar Intern Harford <b>Noon-Hospitality</b>	<b>13</b> 11:00-Staff Meeting 11:45-Communion 12-Prayer Meeting.	<b>14</b> 6:30-Bellchoir 6:30-Bible Study	<b>15</b> 11:00 Tower Moments 7:00 Council	<b>16</b> 7-By the Heart Bible Study-BLC	<b>17</b>	<b>18 Eve of Second Sunday after Epiphany</b> <b>5:00- Word and Sacrament</b> Vicar Intern Harford
<b>19 Second Sunday after Epiphany</b> 10:45-Sunday School <b>11:00- Word and Sacrament</b> Vicar Intern Harford <b>Noon-Hospitality</b>	<b>20</b> 11:00-Staff Meeting 11:45-Communion 12-Prayer Meeting	<b>21</b> <b>VSJ Deadline</b> 6:30-Bellchoir	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> 6:30-Worship and Music	<b>24</b>	<b>25 Eve of Third Sunday after Epiphany</b> <b>5:00- Word and Sacrament</b> Vicar Intern Harford
<b>26 Third Sunday after Epiphany</b> 10:45- Sunday School <b>11:00- Word and Sacrament</b> Vicar Intern Harford Church Council Installation <b>Noon-Hospitality</b>	<b>27</b> 11:00-Staff Meeting 11:45-Communion 12-Prayer Meeting.	<b>28</b> 6:30-Bellchoir 6:30-Bible Study	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> 7-By the Heart Bible Study-First	<b>31</b>	And now we welcome the new year. Full of things that have never been.