

# Advent

An invitation to *begin again*



*Sunday, December 15, 2024  
8:30 a.m. Worship Celebration*

All Are Welcome

The story of Christmas would not have been possible if Joseph and Mary had not entered into the drama with God. Each in their own ways, give us examples of hope in action. They have a lot they could lose. Yet, they choose radical acts of hope, and the world is better for it. Drawing encouragement from their stories, may you find the courage to choose hope and join God in continuing this beautiful narrative of love and redemption.

*Whether you are a guest or member, we invite you to scan the QR code to register your attendance so we know you're here and we can get to know you better.*



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# Welcome to St. John's United Methodist Church

## GUEST INFORMATION

We are glad you've joined us and hope you feel at home here. Whoever you are, wherever you are on your faith journey, you are welcome. Our ushers are happy to assist you in anyway. Restrooms are in the Narthex, located in the back of the Sanctuary.

Please take home a copy of our Welcome Brochure located in the Narthex or view it online at: [stjohnsbr.org/welcome-brochure](http://stjohnsbr.org/welcome-brochure).

## HELPFUL HINTS FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

We fully welcome and love engaging children in worship! We include a special Children's Moment each Sunday.

- **The St. John's Prayground** is located in the front of the sanctuary. This is a place for children and their families to worship together, allowing children to more fully participate in the service. More details about the Prayground may be found on our website.
- A staffed **nursery** for infants through preschool is open every Sunday morning and is located next door in our Education/Administration building.
- **Changing tables** are located in the restrooms in the back of the sanctuary and in our nursery.
- Children are welcome to receive **Holy Communion**, which is served weekly at 8:30 a.m. and on the first Sunday of the month at 11 a.m. Our communion elements are bread and grape juice. Gluten-free elements are also available.
- **Sunday School** is offered for children starting at age 18 months through 12th grade from 9:45-10:45 a.m.

## St. John's Clergy and Staff

Rev. Lane Cotton Winn  
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Cheryl Roubique  
*Nursery Coordinator*

# The Celebration of the Gospel

*\*Please stand as you are comfortable.*

**Bold** indicates congregational response.

*Please scan the QR Code to register your attendance.*



## Prelude

## Words of Welcome

Rev. Lane Cotton Winn

## Advent Affirmation

In this weary world, we sing of joy.  
In this fragile world, we lift each other up.  
In this beautiful world, we look for God.  
In this tender world, we hold onto hope.  
This is the invitation of faith.  
So in this time of worship, may we sing, lift up,  
look for, and hold onto our with-us God.  
With hope and joy in our hearts, let us begin!

## \*Song

*The King of Glory Comes*  
The Faith We Sing Songbook 2019, vs. 1 - 3

## Lighting the Candles of Hope, Peace, & Joy

Kate and Jack Byars,  
Hannah Froehlich

In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again?  
Where do we start?

**Let us begin with trust.**

Let us begin with tenderness.  
Let us begin from a place of vulnerability and hope.  
Let us allow joy to spill over into our lives.

**Yes, let us begin with joy.**

*(The candles of hope, peace, and joy are lit.)*

Today we light the candles of hope, peace, and joy.  
May these lights remind us to dream dreams.  
May these lights fill us with hope and possibilities.  
May the warmth of these lights inspire us to action.

**And let us do it with joy!**

## Advent Wreath Song

*Sung to the tune of Breathe on Me, Breath of God*

**Kindle this flame of joy.**  
**May it burn bright and true.**  
**Lighting the way that is of God,**  
**the journey we pursue.**

## Children's Moment

Connor Dean

## Prayer

Rhonda Tucker

O God,  
As we come to your scripture this morning,  
we pray: help us begin again.  
Clear the distractions from our minds.  
Center us in this space.

**Move through the protective barriers  
we surround ourselves with  
and speak to us here and now.  
We are listening. We are hopeful. Amen.**

**\*Words of Wisdom**

Matthew 1:18-25

For the Word of God in scripture,  
for the Word of God among us,  
for the Word of God within us,  
**Thanks be to God.**

**Witness to the Word**

“Choose Hope”

Pastor Lane

**\*Hymn**

*Lift Up Your Heads Ye Mighty Gates*  
The United Methodist Hymnal 213, vs. 1 - 3

**\*Sharing the Love and Peace of Christ**

**Stewardship Moment**

Maureen Robertson

**Offering Our Tithes and Gifts to God**

*Beautiful Things*  
By Michael Gungor  
Vocalists: Connor Dean & Julian Hartman

*We appreciate your generosity.  
Each gift enables us to be a blessing in our community.  
You may give online by scanning the QR Code  
or navigate to [stjohnsbr.org/give](http://stjohnsbr.org/give).*



**\*Doxology**

*Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow*  
The United Methodist Hymnal 94

**\*The Great Thanksgiving For Advent**

Come to this Table. All are welcome here.

**We gather to catch a glimpse of God's presence among us.**

Draw near, for love is hovering close.

**God is all around us.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

*The blessings of God, our Creator, are shared, concluding with:*

So with tenderhearted faith, we join our voices with Mary and Joseph,  
with angels and shepherds, with the saints who have gone before us,  
and with all the company of heaven, singing:

**Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord,  
God of power and might,  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest. (3x)  
Blest is the one who comes  
in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest. (3x)**

*The congregation is seated as we recall the life and ministry of Jesus Christ,  
concluding with these words:*

With this bread and cup, we remember his life, his death, and his resurrection.  
And we dare to believe that change is possible.

**Let this day be a new beginning, O God.**

**Show us how to hope.**

**When the night feels long, point us to your light.**

**When fear and doubt weigh heavy, fill us with courage.**

**When despair clouds our vision, allow us to dream again.**

*A prayer of consecration is shared, concluding with the following:*

Through Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy church,  
all honor and glory are yours, almighty God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Sharing the Bread of Life & the Cup of Blessing**

*Everyone is welcome to share in Holy Communion.*

*Communion will be served using the ancient means of "intinction" with only the pastor and servers touching the elements, or, if you prefer, you may receive pre-packaged elements. Our communion elements are bread and grape juice.*

*A gluten-free option is also available.*

*You are invited to stay at the chancel for prayer as long as you desire.*

*If you are a person with limited mobility, please let the usher know and someone will bring communion to you.*

## **Prayer**

Rhonda Tucker

### **Nourishing God,**

**Sometimes we tell ourselves that too much**

**has taken place to begin again,**

**that too many mistakes have been made,**

**and that the world is too far gone.**

**We tell ourselves that we couldn't possibly begin again.**

**But then we come to your table**

**where all are welcomed, all are seen, all are fed.**

**And just like that, we have hope.**

**Just like that, we begin again.**

**Thank you for the gift of this fresh start.**

**Thank you for meeting us in ordinary bread and juice**

**to remind us that it's never too late to begin again.**

**In gratitude, we pray.**

**Amen.**

## **Call to Action**

*We joyfully welcome all those who wish to become members of St. John's and invite you to come forward during the singing of the closing hymn.*

## **\*Hymn**

*Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*  
The United Methodist Hymnal 196, vs. 1 & 2

## **\*Benediction**

## **\*Postlude**

# *Worship Notes*

The flowers on the altar are given by Pat Cobb in memory of her husband, Earl.

Ushers for the 8:30 service are Sandra Kuykendall & Amy Richardson.

Today's liturgy was adapted using words and phrases from Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed's *Liturgy for Words for the Beginning* | Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

After the 8:30 service, everyone is invited to the Family Life Center for coffee and refreshments.

# Announcements

## LIMITED OFFICE HOURS

During Christmas Week and New Year's Week we will have limited office hours. Both weeks the office will **only be open** on Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Friday from 9 a.m. to noon. The regular office week will resume on Monday, January 5 at 9 a.m.

## STAFF APPRECIATION GIFTS

An annual Christmas tradition at St. John's has always been saying thank you to our staff for all the work they do to make worship, ministries, programs, and events at St. John's possible.

If you would like to participate in thanking them, please put "Staff Appreciation" in the memo line of your check or on the offering envelope, if cash. You may also make your gift online at [www.stjohnsbr.org/give](http://www.stjohnsbr.org/give) (Select the "Staff Appreciation" Fund).

**Deadline for staff appreciation gifts is Tuesday, December 17.**

## CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH A GIFT OF LOVE AND DEDICATION

This Christmas season, St. John's is offering two special ways to celebrate and honor your loved ones:

**Poinsettia Dedications.** Dedicate a poinsettia in honor or memory of a loved one for \$35.

These beautiful plants will adorn our worship space on Christmas Eve and may be taken home after our 6 p.m. Christmas Eve worship service.

**Mission & Vision Dedications.** For those looking to give a meaningful and lasting gift, consider making a \$35 donation to the Mission & Vision of St. John's United Methodist Church in honor of someone special. With this gift, you will receive a keepsake card to present to your loved one, letting them know a donation has been made in their name.

Both Poinsettia Dedications and Mission & Vision Dedications will be listed in the Christmas Eve bulletins. Your gifts help support the work of St. John's, spreading Christ's love in our congregation and community.

To participate, you may complete the online form: [stjohnsbr.org/christmasdedications](http://stjohnsbr.org/christmasdedications) or, if you prefer, printed forms are available in the narthex and office. Deadline to order is **December 18**. You may pay with a check/cash to St. John's UMC with "Christmas Dedication" in the memo line or you may pay online at [stjohnsbr.org/give](http://stjohnsbr.org/give) (Choose the "Other" Fund and then choose "Flower Fund" for Poinsettia Dedications or "Christmas Dedication" for Mission & Vision Dedications.)

Thank you for helping make this season one of generosity and love.

## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

As of December 10, we have received 101 pledges totaling \$541,955. We celebrate 48 households have increased their pledges and we welcome 13 new first-time pledging households. If you haven't turned in a pledge for 2025, please complete your pledge online ([stjohnsbr.org/pledge-2025](http://stjohnsbr.org/pledge-2025)) or with a printed pledge card (available in the Office and Narthex) as soon as possible. Our aspirational budget for 2025 is \$687,102.

## COFFEE TIME SNACKS

If your last name begins with **S**, next Sunday, **December 22** is "your" day to bring a snack for Coffee Time. Remember, this is just a much appreciated suggestion not an obligation. **Please bring your items in a disposable container or single-use dish, and take them to the FLC by 9:30 a.m.** WE WILL NOT HAVE COFFEE TIME ON DECEMBER 29.

## ADVENT FAITH STORIES

Be checking your Inbox on Wednesdays during Advent. An **Advent Faith Story** written by one of our very own St. John's family members will be emailed to you on Wednesdays. (If you do not get our newsletters, email or call the office and Lynn will add you to the distribution list.)

## THANK YOU, ST. JOHN'S!

Neighborhood Friends. Thank you to all of the St. John's family who brought Christmas gifts for 45 children who attend Wildwood and Gardere Community Christian Schools. I know that each child will be filled with joy when they open their packages on Christmas morning. Thank you for participating in our 2024 Neighborhood Friends Program. You are truly The BEST!

The Great Turkey Giveaway. Many thanks to all of the volunteers who came out Friday and Saturday to help make this, our 14th Giveaway, happen. From the set up Friday to the last Turkey and the fixings given out on Saturday y'all were fantastic! Thank you again for being a part of our Giveaway

# Advent & Christmas Season at St. John's

## TODAY UWF CRAFT & BAKE SALE FOR LOCAL MISSIONS

Swing by the Family Life Center throughout the morning, starting at 8:30 a.m., on **Sunday, December 15** to purchase delicious holiday baked goods and take home some wonderful handcrafted Christmas gifts. All proceeds will go to local missions supported by the United Women in Faith (UWF).

## ST. JOHN'S MUSIC MINISTRIES PRESENTS "THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS"

Join us on **Sunday, December 22 at 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.** for a worship celebration of music and poetry called "The Message of Christmas." Our Praise Team, Chancel Choir, Alleluia Ringers, and Music Makers will share seasonal songs, and woven among the beautiful music will be readings of scripture and poetry.

## THE LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE

For those who have experienced loss, the holidays can be a particularly painful time, stirring up grief in acute ways. We know that many approach this season with mixed emotions. With the busyness of this season, it's hard to find time to slow down and reflect on what matters most in life. If this resonates with you, we invite you to attend our Longest Night worship service, which is designed to provide space for prayer, reflection, and remembrance. Join us **Sunday, December 22 at 5 p.m.** for this quiet, reflective service.

**For families with children who wish to attend the Longest Night Worship service,** Connor & Betsy will be leading an alternate activity upstairs in Mrs. Marilyn's classroom. We will do some crafts, play some Christmas games, and watch Christmas movies. If you feel you need designated time and space to feel the emotions that have been weighing heavy on your heart this season, please take this opportunity to do so.

## CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

Both of our Christmas Eve worship experiences will be uplifting, celebratory, and meaningful in its own unique way. Join us for one or both!

**Nativity Service at 4 p.m.** - This year, our family-oriented Christmas Eve service will feature our children creating a live nativity with scripture readings by our youth. We will also sing carols, celebrate Holy Communion, and experience the Christmas story through the eyes of our young people.

**Candlelight Service at 6 p.m.** - This later service is a traditional service featuring carols, beautiful music, a Christmas message from Pastor Lane, Holy Communion, and *Silent Night* by candlelight. Join us at 6 p.m. for a time of worship, community, and celebration of the birth of Jesus.

## ONE WORSHIP SERVICE ON DECEMBER 29

We will come together for one combined worship service on **Sunday, December 29 at 10 a.m.** to sing Christmas carols, take "hymn requests," from those in attendance, hear a brief message by Natalie Cooper, a certified lay servant, and celebrate Holy Communion. Children are invited to bring a new Christmas Toy or Gift for a special blessing during the Children's Moment. There will be no Coffee Time or Sunday School on December 29.

## EPIPHANY LESSONS & LAUGHTER SERVICES ON JANUARY 5

To close out the Christmas season and celebrate Epiphany, these services of joy and connection on **Sunday, January 5** will amplify the good news of this holy season through song and laughter! We will also receive our 2025 Star Words, a spiritual practice that provides a word for guidance and reflection for the year ahead. We will resume our regular worship times of 8:30 and 11 a.m. as well as Coffee Time and Sunday School on January 5.

# *This Week at St. John's*

## **Sunday, December 15**

- 8:00 a.m. Praise Team Warm Up, Sanctuary
- 8:30 a.m. Worship Service, Sanctuary
- 9:30 a.m. Coffee Time, FLC\*
- 9:30 a.m. Upstairs Cafe, 202 Admin Bldg.
- 9:45 a.m. Sunday School, Campus wide
- 11:00 a.m. Worship Service, Sanctuary
- 4:00 p.m. Music Makers, Choir Room
- 6:00 p.m. Alleluia Ringers, Bells Room

## **Monday, December 16**

- 7:00 a.m. Early Risers Exercisers, FLC
- 9:00 a.m. Ladies' Covenant Group, The Founders' Parlor
- 3:30 p.m. The Shepherd's Market Client Choice Food Pantry, FLC
- 4:30 p.m. Ladies' Covenant Group, The Founders' Parlor
- 6:30 p.m. AA Meeting, FLC-E

\*Family Life Center

## **Tuesday, December 17**

- 8:00 a.m. The Shepherd's Market Client Choice Food Pantry, FLC
- 5:30 p.m. Good Grief, St. John's, George's Southside
- 7:00 p.m. Pickleball, FLC
- 7:30 p.m. AA Meeting, FLC-E

## **Wednesday, December 18**

- 7:00 a.m. Early Risers Exercisers, FLC
- 6:00 p.m. Youth Wednesday Night Live, Upstairs Cafe
- 6:30 p.m. Ladies' AA Meeting, FLC-C
- 6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir, Choir Room

## **Thursday, December 19**

### **THE SHEPHERD'S MARKET CLOSED**

(will reopen Monday, January 6, 2025)

## **Friday, December 20**

- 7:00 a.m. Early Risers Exercisers, FLC

## **Saturday, December 21**

- 12:00 p.m. AA Meeting, FLC-C
- 7:00 p.m. AA Meeting, FLC

# *Advent & Christmas at a Glance*

- 12/15 UWF Craft & Bake Sale for Missions, all morning in FLC  
Youth Christmas Party, Broadmoor UMC, 5-7 p.m.
- 12/17 Last Day the Shepherd's Market Food Pantry is open in 2024  
Last day to make a gift to the Staff Appreciation Love Offering
- 12/18 Last day to make a Christmas Dedication (of Poinsettias or a gift to the Mission & Vision)
- 12/22 The Music Ministries of St. John's Presents "The Message of Christmas", 8:30 & 11 a.m.  
The Longest Night Service, 5 p.m.
- 12/24 Family-friendly Service with Live Nativity by children and youth, 4 p.m.  
Service of Candlelight & Communion, 6 p.m.
- 12/29 Only one worship service, 10 a.m. (No coffee time, no Sunday School)

## **2025**

- 1/5 Epiphany Lessons & Laughter Service (Star Words), 8:30 & 11 a.m.  
(We resume regular Sunday morning schedule.)
- 1/6 Shepherd's Market reopens

## **ADVENT & CHRISTMAS AT ST. JOHN'S FLYER**

Flyers are available in the narthex and office with information inviting you to join us for special programs, mission opportunities, and worship services during the Advent and Christmas season. We encourage you to take the flyer home with you today so that you can mark your calendar. We look forward to journeying through these sacred seasons with you. Additional flyers are available if you would like to pass one along to someone else.