

The Circle

March 2026



Dear Friends in Christ,

Blessings to you as we begin another season of Lent! Lent is a season of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, and of self-examination and repentance, as we work to draw closer to God in this time leading up to Easter. One of the Lenten practices that we get to share in is midweek Lenten worship.

It can be hard to make the time to gather for worship; with a million other things going on in everyone's life and in the world, it can be overwhelming trying to fit everything in. But I know that, speaking for myself, having the opportunity to be a part of a community of believers, and being able to be in worship and encounter God through worship, helps to ground me and strengthen me for the rest of the busy, overscheduled week. Even when I'm on vacation or taking time away from St. John's for continuing education, I do my best to find a church that I can worship with.

Our midweek worship this year is shared with the other churches of the Muhlenberg Parish (and honorary-Muhlenberg-Parish-church First Presbyterian). We'll be sharing in Dinner Church, which is a form of worship that harkens back to the earliest churches, which met in people's homes, around dinner. The worship service is intertwined with that community meal and begins at 6:00 p.m. It's a very different way of gathering for worship than what we usually do on Sunday morning, and I'm excited to be able to be a part of it. Here's the schedule:

February 25 th	St. Peter's Lutheran Church, 1239 Clover Mill Rd, Chester Springs
March 4 th	St. John's in Kley Hall
March 11 th	Zion Lutheran Church, 39 Bonnie Brae Rd, Spring City
March 18 th	1 st Presbyterian Church, 145 Main St, Phoenixville
March 25 th	Centennial Lutheran Church, 1330 Hares Hill Rd, Kimberton

I hope you'll take the opportunity to gather for worship not only on Saturday or Sunday, but also to gather with our friends and siblings in Christ from other Lutheran and other Christian churches this Lent. I'm looking forward to being able to be a part of these worship services, and to Lent with everyone at St. John's

In Christ,

Pastor Russ



Help Needed with Soup Supper Before Shared Lenten Service at St. John's

On Wednesday, March 4th, St. John's will host the shared Lenten service. This year's Lenten services will feature "Dinner Church," where the service and communion are incorporated with a simple meal of soup and salad. At St. John's the meal and service will all take place in Kley Hall. If you are willing to provide a soup or dessert for the dinner, please email Sue Starling at rofostarling@gmail.com.

World-Renowned Pine Forge Academy Choir In Concert Sunday, Sunday, March 1st, 4:00 p.m.

St. John's presents the world-renowned Pine Forge Academy Choir in concert. It is a group of vocally diverse, talented, and dedicated youth. The choir is noted for its full, rich, and powerful harmonious quality as heard through its spirituals, gospels, anthems, and classical repertoire.



Travel is an integral part of this talented group. During the school year, the choir is engaged in concerts, church services, extensive tours, and other community events several times a month. These engagements have placed the choir in many parts of the continental United States and around the world. The choir comes to Phoenixville following a successful tour and ministry opportunity, February 10-16, in the UK. There they created a collaborative program with Stanborough Secondary School and put on concert performances in the London Area.

Pine Forge Academy, a co-educational Seventh-day Adventist school located in nearby Boyertown, serves grades 9-12. It is committed to providing a Christ-centered curriculum in a safe, caring environment, to prepare students spiritually, intellectually, physically, and socially for service to God and man.

Director of Choral Activities Jarrett Roseborough is a native of Atlanta, Georgia. He earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Music Education with a concentration in Vocal/Choral Music from Oakwood University, a Master's Degree in Choral Conducting from Georgia State University, and had eight years of teaching music from K-12 to collegiate instruction prior to accepting the call to join the team at Pine Forge Academy in 2017. Roseborough came to Pine Forge with the hope of creating an environment of choral excellence in which students learn of their full capabilities as choral singers. His goal is that students might witness the God-filled and awe-inspiring moments that happen when they decide to give their best effort in time and talent for the glory of Christ.



Come, Sing With Us! St. John's Choir & Friends

Singers are invited to join our Adult Choir in the annual "St. John's Choir & Friends" concert on Sunday, May 3rd, at 7:00 p.m. Entitled "Psalms, Hymns, and Spirituals" the program features the many and varied music in praise to the Lord. Accompaniment will be provided by piano and organ joined by the Faculty Brass Quintet from West Chester University and percussion. It will be glorious!

2026 marks the thirty-third concert in the series. Last year's performance of John Rutter's *Requiem*, accompanied by the Providence Chamber Orchestra, singers from 25 area churches, involved nearly 100 performers. Past programs have included Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem*, W. A.

Mozart's *Requiem* and *Te Deum*, Franz Schubert's *Mass in G*, Howard Hanson's *Song of Democracy*, John Rutter's *Te Deum* and *Requiem*, a concert version of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*, *Glorias* by Antonio Vivaldi and Francis Poulenc, J. S. Bach's *Magnificat*, Johannes Brahms' *German Requiem*, Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs*, Luigi Cherubini's *Requiem*, Maurice Durufle's *Requiem*, parts II and III of G. F. Handel's *Messiah*, *Patriotic Selections*, *Broadway Selections* and *Spirituals*.

If you enjoy singing but Wednesday evenings don't work here is an opportunity to join vocalists from our community. Rehearsals are scheduled for Sunday March 22nd, 29th, April 12th, 19th, 16th, and 26th from 7 to 9 p.m. and Sunday May 3rd, from 3 to 5:30 p.m. A light supper follows the May 7th rehearsal. Music will be provided. For additional information contact Tom Snyder, Director of Music, ftsiii@gmail.com.

Dahms Scholarship applications due by April 5th

It's time to apply for the Dahms scholarship! St. John's offers scholarships each year to high school seniors seeking post-secondary education. Applications are now open! To be eligible for the scholarship, you must: be a member of St. John's or attend St. John's regularly and be accepted into an institution of higher learning (university, junior college, trade school, etc.). Applicants can only be awarded the St. John's scholarship once. If you fit this description, we encourage you to apply no later than April 5th. Applications can be found in the blue forms box in Kley Hall, in the narthex, or by emailing Sonya Sowards at office@stjohnphoenixville.org. The Scholarship Committee will review all completed applications received and announce the recipients on Graduation Sunday, June 7th.



St. Mary's
Franciscan Shelter
for Homeless Families

One of the important projects of the Social Ministry Committee is providing meal service to St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter for women and children in Phoenixville two weeks a year. The next meal service is scheduled for May 25th-29th.

Here is what is involved in organizing and leading this project:

- Set up a Signup Genius schedule for meal items, cooking times, and drivers;
- Submit articles for *The Circle* and weekly bulletins;
- Monitor signups to ensure all slots are filled; and
- Provide oversight for two cooking sessions at St. John's (Sunday after church and Wednesday morning have worked well).

We need a person to lead this effort beginning in January, 2027. The current leader of this project will provide guidance for the new leader during the May, 2026 meal service. Please contact Lynn Titus at (949) 573-2349 for more information or to volunteer for this important leadership position.

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH INVITES YOU TO

GIRL SCOUT SUNDAY

MARCH 8, 2026

St. John's is excited to honor all Girl Scouts!

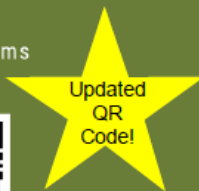
Sunday School 9:00 AM

Light Refreshments 9:45 AM

Worship 10:15 AM

Girls are encouraged to wear their uniforms

RSVP to receive a
Girl Scout Sunday
fun patch!



Girl Scout Sunday March 8th

On Girl Scout Sunday we'll be celebrating the connections between our church and the Girl Scouts who meet here. We need your help!

If you, or a member of your family, are a current or former Girl Scout or Girl Scout leader and have photos or memorabilia of your time in Girl Scouts, we'd love to be able to set up a display in Kley Hall during Fellowship Time. We're also going to be inviting members of all the Girl Scout troops that meet at St. John's, and Girl Scouts who are members of St. John's, to join us for Sunday school, Fellowship Time, and worship, and to be recognized during worship.

If you're interested in helping with Girl Scout Sunday, please contact Pastor Russ. Click this link or scan the code to RSVP:

<https://forms.gle/5BMmPqspyELY1DY29>



Easter Lillies order before March 30th

Beautiful white Easter lilies will grace our chancel for Easter Sunday. You may sponsor one or more plants for \$11.50 each and dedicate them to loved ones in Memory of, in Honor of, or to the Glory of God. Checks should be made payable to St. John's and marked "Easter Lily" on the memo line. An order sign-up form is posted in the hallway and the deadline to order is March 30th. Lilies may be picked up following the 10:15 a.m. Easter service. If planted in your home garden or landscaping areas, the lilies will usually come back up and bloom year after year!



Lent Offering please donate by April 5th

The Social Ministry Committee has chosen Alianzas de Phoenixville as the recipient of our special "Lent Offering". According to their Executive Director, Nina Guzman, "Alianzas serves the diverse neighbors in our community and surrounding area that have sought refuge among us due to forced migration. Our current focus is to provide emergency services to families torn apart by ICE such as legal resources, emergency funds, food and essentials and trauma counseling. We continue to provide programs and services such as ESL, leadership training and mediations." Our special Lenten offering will help those in our community who are going through a difficult time right now! Scan the code, click the link, mail a check or drop your gift in the offering plate. Thank you for your generosity! [Lenten Gift | St. John's Lutheran Church Phoenixville](#)



When WELCA met in February Pastor Russ guided us through preliminary funeral planning. We enjoyed singing through favorite hymns and discussing worship settings and scripture readings.

Our March program will be presented by Jack Ertell about Valley Forge General Hospital. All women of St. John's are welcome to join us on March 24th at 10:30 a.m. in the Eisenhower Room.



Crockpot Cook-off March 15, 2026

Join us for the 5th annual Crockpot cook-off! Bring an appetizer, main dish, side dish or dessert in a Crockpot OR join us to taste and vote for the winning dish. Crockpot set-up begins at 4:30 p.m. with tasting beginning at 5 p.m. Scan the code or click the link to sign up.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfGYGTfYPd5qb0QVD_CDs9fUqTcu8sEXyW5IHAuonVKOE1HcQ/viewform





Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

**WELCA Retreat
April 11, 2026**

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.*

Among the many thousands of hymns, “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus” holds a tender place in the hearts of many believers. We live in a world of distractions, disappointments, discouragements, and anxiety about the future. It is so easy to become over-

whelmed, lose our focus and take our eyes off of Jesus who promises us hope and peace amidst life’s many challenges.

Turning our eyes upon Jesus is a way of life for us, as His followers. By fixing our gaze on Him, trusting in His guidance, seeking His Kingdom first and walking in love, we can navigate life’s journey with purpose and resilience.

This year’s retreat, “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus,” will take place on Saturday, April 11, 2026. It begins with coffee and fellowship at 9 a.m. and ends at 3 p.m. The cost is \$20. We welcome back Rev. Kris Peterson as our retreat leader. To register please call Sonya Sowards at (610) 933-3947, ext. 2. Registration is not finalized until payment is received. If you have any questions please contact Linda Landis. This retreat is limited to 24 participants.

You are invited to bring an object that represents Jesus’ love for you.



Join Zion’s Youth Group at the Reading Royals March 14th

Click the link to get tickets. We have a ticket block, so we’ll all be seated together in Section 110, but you’ll be able to pick what row you’d prefer. Hope to see you at the rink! Scan the code or click here: [ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH OF SPRING CITY](#)



Adult Faith Formation

Sunday morning groups for adults include **Happy Hour**, meeting in the Eisenhower Room—friendly chats while children are in Sunday school; **Faith Life**, meeting in Room 1 by the stage—discussions about faith and recent media articles; **Bible Study**, meeting in the Fireside Room, has begun a study of the Book of Revelation; and **Sunday Morning Book Club**, meeting in Pastor Russ’s office, which will be reading & discussing “Fifty Words for Rain” by Asha Lemmie. Join any of the four groups on Sundays at 9 a.m.

Vacation Bible School Registration is Open!

Vacation Bible School 2026 will be held June 22-26 from 9 a.m.-noon. Our theme this year is Rainforest Falls. Kids will have a blast plunging into a lifelong adventure of discovering the nature of God! They'll explore what it means to be rooted in a relationship with God—their creator—a safe place in life's storms. You won't want to miss it!

Click here to sign up: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSewl0c5oIEBIUz8deRSnzLzUBynND6FxWr_EVJg_apfDeUttA/viewform

Don't delay—registration closes on June 8th!

We are also in need of adult volunteers to serve as group guides. Even if you are unavailable during the week of June 22nd for VBS week, there are still opportunities to serve. Please consider joining us on **Saturday, May 30th for our Build Day** and **Saturday, June 20th for our Set-Up Day**, from 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Click here to volunteer: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdSxOFiywbmz0MoxqxaAgY_dM-AGxKxw8q2yU2VTxPNGhfHVQ/viewform

Please email Val Kramer (valerielynnkramer@gmail.com) with any questions. Thank you!



July 12-18, 2026

Each year, volunteers from St. John's spend a week in service, faith, and fellowship helping families in need throughout Central Appalachia. The trip is open to all adults and youth who have completed 8th grade. Whether you're a first-timer or a seasoned volunteer, we'd love to have you join the team! Contact Jodi O'Neill for details or to express your interest. (oneillsinvf@comcast.net or (610) 716-6644.

ASP (Appalachia Service Project) is a Christian, non-profit home repair organization that utilizes volunteers to perform free home repair and replacement for families living in sub-standard housing or families affected by a disaster in the Appalachian region. To find out more about Appalachia Service Project, please visit www.asphome.org.



St. John's Easter Egg Hunt

355 St. John's Circle Phoenixville PA, 19460

Saturday, March 28, 2026 at 9:30am

Ages 1-10 are welcome to find eggs with their age group.

****Prior registration is required for all children to ensure there are enough eggs for their age group****

Use the link QR code to sign up for the hunt or volunteer to help. You can also email Kelly at kmgandbc@hotmail.com





Caring for Creation A Symphony in Decline:

Why Songbirds Are Vanishing—and How We Can Help

Across North America and beyond, the once-familiar chorus of songbirds is growing quieter. Recent scientific reports paint a sobering picture: many of our most cherished bird species are experiencing dramatic population losses, signaling deeper environmental challenges that affect us all.

The Alarming Decline of Songbirds

Over the past several decades, songbird populations have fallen sharply. A comprehensive assessment of bird populations revealed that North America has lost nearly three billion birds since 1970, representing a 29% decline across numerous species. The 2025 *State of the Birds* report further confirms widespread declines, with more than one-third of U.S. bird species now considered to be of high or moderate conservation concern and 112 species having lost over 50% of their population in the last 50 years.

These declines are not restricted to rare or specialized species—common backyard songbirds such as sparrows, warblers, and finches make up more than 90% of the documented losses. While some species continue to thrive, the overall downward trend signals a growing ecological crisis.

What's Driving the Decline?

Researchers point to a combination of factors placing immense pressure on songbird populations:

- **Habitat Loss and Fragmentation**

Urbanization, agricultural expansion, and changing land-use patterns have reduced or altered the natural spaces birds rely on for nesting, feeding, and shelter. The removal of hedgerows, woodlands, and other natural features further disrupts their ability to thrive.

- **Pesticides and Declining Insect Populations**

Widespread use of pesticides, including neonicotinoids, can poison birds directly or decimate insects—the primary food source for many species. Diminished insect availability during breeding season has a devastating impact on young birds' survival.

- **Climate Change**

Rising temperatures, shifting seasons, and unpredictable weather disrupt migration patterns and food availability. These environmental changes leave birds out of sync with the seasonal cues essential for survival and reproduction.

- **Human-Caused Mortality**

Collisions with windows, buildings, and other structures kill millions of birds each year. Free-roaming outdoor cats pose another significant threat, preying on billions of birds annually. Light pollution further disorients migratory species, making them more vulnerable to collision risks.

Together, these factors create a web of challenges that many species simply cannot withstand.

Why Songbirds Matter

Songbirds do far more than add music and beauty to our landscapes—they play vital roles in maintaining ecological balance.

According to environmental research, songbirds serve as:

- **Insect Regulators:** Many species consume large quantities of insects, helping prevent outbreaks that can damage forests and crops.

- **Seed Dispersers:** By spreading seeds over wide areas, birds contribute to forest regeneration and overall plant diversity.

- **Pollinators:** Some songbirds assist in pollination, especially in tropical regions.

Ecosystem Indicators: Because they are highly sensitive to environmental changes, declining songbird numbers can signal broader ecological problems, including pollution and habitat degradation. Their disappearance would reverberate through entire ecosystems—and ultimately affect human well-being, too.

Signs of Hope and What We Can Do

Despite the troubling trends, conservationists emphasize that recovery *is* possible with focused effort. Successful initiatives—including habitat restoration, conservation partnerships, and targeted species recovery programs—demonstrate that populations can rebound when given the right support.

(continued from previous page)

✓ Create Bird-Friendly Habitats

- Plant native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers.
- Provide clean water sources and natural shelter.
- Avoid using pesticides whenever possible.

✓ Support Safe Migration

- Reduce nighttime lighting during peak migration seasons.
- Use bird-safe window treatments (e.g., decals or screens) to prevent collisions.

✓ Practice Responsible Pet Ownership

- Keep domestic cats indoors to reduce predation on songbirds.

✓ Participate in Conservation Efforts

- Support organizations engaged in habitat restoration, research, and bird monitoring.
- Engage in citizen science projects like bird counts to contribute valuable data.

✓ Advocate for Policy and Land Stewardship

- Encourage local and national leaders to prioritize conservation funding and sustainable land-use practices.

A Future Worth Singing For

Songbirds are among nature’s most cherished storytellers. Their songs mark the seasons, enrich ecosystems, and offer joy to millions of people. Protecting them is not just an environmental responsibility—it’s an investment in the health of our shared world.

March 2026—Birthdays and Anniversaries

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Andrea Hart's birthday Jimmy Moreland's birthday Karen Carr's birthday Sam and Beth Fryer's anniversary	2 Diane Blattner's birthday Kevin Yonosh's birthday	3 Kinley Walters's birthday Liz Cady's birthday	4	5 Joanna Oszeyczik's birthday Livi Cady Heinbaugh's birthday	6 Ada E. Martin's birthday Beth Fryer's birthday Elise Martin's birthday Lucas Becker's birthday Nathaniel Becker's birthday	7 Jeanette Dewey's birthday Robbie Crouthame's birthday
8 Nicci Granacher's birthday Nick Platchek's birthday	9 Kimberly Hoff's birthday Scott Gelger's birthday	10 Bob and Mary Faddis's anniversary Tyler Frees's birthday	11 Barbara Sell's birthday Bobby Strunk's birthday Kyle McGoldrick's birthday	12 Hank and Patti Bell's anniversary	13 Bill Breilinger's birthday Levi Rambo's birthday Mimi Woods's birthday Paige DeMutis's birthday	14 Joan Cadigan's birthday Zachary Brown's birthday
15 Chloe Dewey's birthday Kim Themens's birthday	16 Brianna Greenwald's birthday	17	18 Carla Carr's birthday Devon Niness's birthday Jack and Janet Ertel's anniversary	19	20 Benjamin Blackledge's birthday	21
22 April Fryer's birthday Jay Borzumati's birthday	23 Gabrielle VanDerveer's birthday Will Blackledge's birthday	24 Charlotte Daywall's birthday Melissa Perrotto's birthday Nathan Stewart's birthday	25	26	27 Cheryl Speaker's birthday Erin Riley's birthday	28 Corina Gelger's birthday David Frees's birthday Emily Riley's birthday
29 David Carr's birthday Jeanette Hopkins's birthday	30 Joshua Saeger's birthday Ron Stevens's birthday	31 Malika Khan's birthday	1 Janet Reading's birthday Jeremy Unruh's birthday	2 Bob Faddis's birthday Jane Hadfield's birthday Stephen Holander's birthday	3 Judy Wolstenhorne's birthday	4 James Reading's birthday John and Bobbi Riley's anniversary

March 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 8:30am Children's Choir 9am Faith Formation 10:15am Holy Communion 11:30am Stewardship Committee 1pm Girl Scouts #41766 2pm Girl Scouts #41441 4pm Pine Forge Academy Choir Concert	2 10am Garden Club 10:15am Staff 11am Alanon Family Group 6pm Cadette Troop 42024 7pm Property 7pm Stephen Ministry	3 10:30am WELCA (w/funeral planning) 6pm Girl Scouts 6:30pm Faith Formation Committee 7:30pm Worship & Music	4 4pm Social Ministry 6pm Muhlenberg Parish Lenten Dinner Church @ St. John's 7pm Alanon 7:30pm Adult Choir Rehearsal	5 7pm Naranon 7:15pm Adult Handbells	6	7 5pm Evening Light (w/communion) 7pm Alcoholics Anonymous
8 Girl Scout Sunday 8:30am Children's Choir 9am Faith Formation 9:45am Fellowship Time 10:15am Holy Communion 2pm PCO Rehearsal 3pm Girl Scouts 4041 3pm Girl Scouts 41766	9 11am Alanon Family Group 7pm Church Council	10	11 5:15pm Daisy Girl Scouts 6pm Girl Scouts #4432 6pm Muhlenberg Parish Lenten Dinner Church @ Zion 7pm Alanon 7:30pm Adult Choir Rehearsal	12 7pm Naranon 7:15pm Adult Handbells	13	14 bread baking workshop 5pm Evening Light (w/communion) 7pm Alcoholics Anonymous
15 8:30am Children's Choir 9am Faith Formation 10:15am Holy Communion w/1st communion celebration 2pm Girl Scouts #41441 5pm Crockpot cook-off	16 11am Alanon Family Group 6pm Cadette Troop 42024 7pm Green Team 7pm Stephen Ministry	17 4pm Girl Scouts 6pm Girl Scouts	18 Circle deadline 6pm Muhlenberg Parish Lenten Dinner Church @ 1st Presbyterian 7pm Alanon 7:30pm Adult Choir Rehearsal	19 7pm Naranon 7:15pm Adult Handbells 8:15pm Naranon Support	20 St. Peter's lunch	21 5pm Evening Light (w/communion) 7pm Alcoholics Anonymous
22 8:30am Children's Choir 9am Faith Formation 10:15am Holy Communion 2pm PCO Rehearsal 3pm Girl Scouts 4041 3pm Girl Scouts 41766 7pm St. John's Choir & Friends	23 10am Garden Club 11am Alanon Family Group	24 10:30am WELCA 6:30pm Parents' Grief Group 7pm Fellowship Committee	25 5:15pm Daisy Girl Scouts 6pm Girl Scouts #4432 6pm Muhlenberg Parish Lenten Dinner Church @ Centennial 7pm Alanon 7:30pm Adult Choir Rehearsal	26 7pm Naranon 7:15pm Adult Handbells	27	28 Palm Sunday 8am GraceCrossing Retreat 9:30am Easter egg hunt 5pm Evening Light (w/communion) 7pm Alcoholics Anonymous
29 8:30am Children's Choir 9am Faith Formation 10:15am Holy Communion 2pm PCO Rehearsal 7pm St. John's Choir & Friends	30 11am Alanon Family Group 7pm Finance Committee	31 6:30pm Parents' Grief Group	1 4pm Social Ministry 7pm Alanon	2 7pm Naranon 7:30pm Adult Choir Rehearsal after service 7:30pm Maundy Thursday	3 7:30pm Good Friday	4 7pm Alcoholics Anonymous 7:30pm Easter Vigil

**St. John's Lutheran Church
Council Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2026**

Council Member Name	Pres/Exc/ or Absent	Committee Assigned	Term 1/2	Term Ends
John Dorward (President)	Present	Executive	1	2/2028
Marc Staudenmaier (VP)	Present	Stewardship, Executive	1	2/2026
Sue Starling (Secretary)	Present	Executive	2	2/2027
Janet Gerner	Excused	Social Ministry	2	2/2026
Dale Herbranson	Present	Electronics, Columbarium, Exec At-Large Member	2	2/2026
Kate Hicks	Present	Faith Formation, Welcoming	1	2/2027
Aimee Hillegas	Present	Green Team	2	2/2027
Mike Kahl	Absent	Property	2	2/2028
Kyle Oszeyczik	Present	Property	1	2/2027
Jeanne Schanzenbach	Present	Finance, Exec At-Large Member	1	2/2026
Becky Stevens	Present	Worship and Music	1	2/2028
Rachel Zimmermann	Present	Fellowship	1	2/2028
Pastor Russ	Present	n/a		
Guests:				
Sonya Sowards	Present	n/a		
Tom Snyder	Present	n/a		

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm by John.

Council devotional was led by Sue.

Prior Meeting Minutes

12/08/25 Council Minutes:

Motion by Becky, second by Dale to accept the minutes; motion carried.

Staff Reports

Motion by Sue, second by Marc to accept Staff reports; motion carried.

Committee Reports

Finance Committee meeting minutes from 01/07/26:

Motion from Finance to accept the following as counters; motion carried.

Donna Anderson	Don Bechtel	Walt & Dana Deichmann
Stephen & Jen Drewes	Jack & Janet Ertell	Kevin Gallagher
Mary Heiser	Mike & Cathy Kahl	Imtiaz and Lily Kahn
Shirley Platzer	Mitch Reading	Jeanne & Jeff Schanzenbach
Don Titus	Heather Yonish	Mark Gerner

Motion by Marc, second by Janet to accept Finance Committee report; motion carried.

Council reviewed the following Committee Reports:

- Electronics Committee – no notes received. A new hearing assist system has been installed and seems to be working well.
- Faith Formation of 12/02/25 and 01/06/26 – accepted as written.
- Property Committee of 01/05/26 – accepted as written.

- Worship and Music Committee of 01/06/26 – accepted as written.
- Social Ministry Committee of 01/07/26 – accepted as written.
- Fellowship Committee of 01/07/26 – accepted as written.
- Columbarium Committee – did not meet.
- Executive Committee – did not meet.
- Stewardship Committee of 01/05/26 – accepted as written.
- Welcome Team Committee of 12/09/25 – accepted as written.
- Green Team – did not meet.
- Endowment Committee – did not meet.

Motion by Kyle, second by Kate to accept committee reports; motion carried.

Old Business

- Lock-Up signup – covered.
- Muhlenberg Parish update – Potluck Dinner and Trivia Night is Jan 24th; joint Lenten services to be worked out.
- Council nominations for February – continue to consider potential candidates.
- RIC Update – ongoing.
- Peer Ministry Update – no update since last month.
- DCYFM Position Update – agreed to re-post if for 6 months and then re-visit the requirements and posting again.
- Ministry Fair at February 8th Coffee Hour – ‘Try Two, Pick the One that Moves You’ idea to invite members to join in a new way to be involved in St. John’s programs. Ask committees to have a ‘table’ set up to introduce their committee and encourage membership. Council will host coffee hour that week.
- Constitution Update
 - There are Synod changes from 2022 and 2025, in addition to St. John’s-specific changes
 - May need to consider a governance committee for ensuring the updates occur in a more timely/accurate fashion.
 - Revised constitution needs to be ratified by Council, then the Synod, then requires Congregational approval.
 - Mike needs some assistance – **Sue made a motion that we nominate an ad-hoc committee to address these changes to the constitution; the committee shall be disbanded after the ratification of changes, and ongoing responsibility will be turned over to the Executive Committee. Marc seconded; motion carried.**
- 2026 Budget
 - Jeanne walked through the process that Finance followed to estimate income and expenses. Lengthy discussion regarding presenting a deficit budget again this year ensued. Vote was called on the budget as Finance proposed.
 - **Vote – 9 Yeas, 2 Nays, 1 Abstention; motion carried.**

New Business

- Weather Closing Policy – Pastor distributed the new Weather Closing Policy. It addresses the parameters for when and how the decision is made and communicated. **Aimee made a motion to adopt the new Weather Closing Policy as presented with minor revisions; Kyle seconded; motion carried.**
- New Council Member Onboarding – Aimee to send what she has to Sonya.
- Kate Hicks will act as Secretary for the Annual Meeting in Sue’s absence.

John adjourned the meeting by decree at 9:04.

Next regular meeting is February 9th, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Starling, Church Council Secretary

March Worship Staff

Acolyte

- 1 Grace Supplee
- 8 Claire Gallagher
- 15 CeCe Leong
- 22 TBD
- 29 TBD

Altar Guild

- 1 Nancy Cressman & Janet Ertell
- 8 Donna Anderson & Cathy Garrett
- 15 Andrea Hart & Jean Herbranson
- 22 Betty Hans & Jean Herbranson
- 29 Jean Herbranson

Assisting Minister

- 1 Ron Stevens
- 8 Bill Starling
- 15 Mimi Woods
- 22 Bill Starling
- 29 Deb Ahola

Bread Bakers

- 28/1 Rich Latella
- 7/8 Jeanne Schanzenbach
- 14/15 TBD
- 21/22 TBD
- 28/29 Rich Latella

Communion Assistant/Lector

- 1 Mitch Reading
- 8 Walt Deichmann
- 15 Nancy Cressman
- 22 Kristin McGregor
- 29 Mimi Woods

Counters

- 1 Jack & Janet Ertell
- 8 Heather Yonosh & Jeanne Schanzenbach
- 15 Mary Heiser; Mike & Cathy Kahl
- 22 Stephen & Jen Drewes
- 29 Mary Heiser, Kevin Gallagher & Don Bechtel

Evening Light Assistant

- 2/28 Rich Latella
- 7 Toni Hadfield
- 14 Shirley Platzer
- 21 Sandy Momyer
- 28 Rich Latella

Fellowship Time

- 8 Fellowship Committee

Lock-up

- 1 Kyle Oszeyczik
- 8 Jeanne Schanzenbach
- 15 John Dorward
- 22 Kate Hicks
- 29 Rachel Zimmermann

Stream Team

- 1 Aimee Hillegas & Nils Aho
- 8 Josh Romano & Paul Miller
- 15 Dale Herbranson & Paul Miller
- 22 Nils Aho & Josh Romano
- 29 Aimee Hillegas & Dale Herbranson

Ushers

- 1 Dick Kunsch & Donna Anderson
- 8 Giovanna Brown & Donna Anderson
- 15 Jen Drewes & Nancy Cressman
- 22 Sue Starling & Barry Church
- 29 Cathy Garrett & Donna Anderson

Thanks to Linda Landis for leading the Adult Choir while I was home recovering from shoulder replacement surgery.

Tom Snyder

Holy Week and Easter at St. John's

Palm/Passion Sunday

March 28th & 29th

Saturday Evening Light, 5 p.m.

Sunday morning, 10:15 a.m.

Maundy Thursday

April 2nd, 7:30 p.m.

Good Friday

April 3rd, 7:30 p.m.

Easter Vigil

April 4th, 7:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday Worship

April 5th, 8 & 10:15 a.m.

CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS FOR YEAR-END

2025 have been emailed to all givers and mailed to those for whom we have no email address of record. If you haven't received your statement, please let Sonya know at (610) 933-3947 ext. 2 or office@stjohnphoenixville.org. Thank you for supporting St. John's!

St. John's Lutheran Church
355 St. John's Circle
Phoenixville, PA 19460
(610) 933-3947

www.stjohnluthphoenixville.org
E-mail: office@stjohnphoenixville.org

CHURCH STAFF

Lead Pastor

The Rev. K. Russell Crouthamel

Pastoral Associate:

The Rev. Thomas Kochenderfer, Jr.

Director of Music:

F. Thomas Snyder III

Organist & Pianist:

John A. Quinn III

Parish Administrator:

Sonya K. Sowards

Sexton:

Mark Yanchek, Jr.

Nursery Coordinator:

Arlene Hudak

CHURCH COUNCIL

President:

John Dorward

Vice President:

Jeanne Schanzenbach

Secretary:

Sue Starling

Treasurer:

Shirley Platzer

Assistant Treasurer:

Don Titus

Financial Recording Secretary:

Mary Heiser

Executive Committee:

Mike Kahl

Becky Stevens

Other Members of Council:

Kyle Oszeyczik

Aimee Hillegas

Kate Hicks

Rachel Zimmermann

Marc Staudenmaier

Jim Kelsh

Brian Greenwald

Stephen Ministry Leader:

Linda Landis — (610) 933-9544

COMMITTEES

Columbarium:

Bill Starling, Chair
Becky Stevens, Council Rep.

Electronics:

Bill Schoellkopf & Dale Herbranson
Co-Chairs

Endowment:

Jim Kelsch, Council Rep.

Executive:

Jeanne Schanzenbach, Chair

Faith Formation:

Danielle Reading & Val Kramer, Co-Chairs
Kate Hicks, Council Reps.

Fellowship & Welcoming:

Sandra Zimmermann, Fellowship Chair
Kate Hicks, Welcoming Chair
and Council Rep. for Welcoming & Fellowship

Finance:

Kevin Gallagher, Chair
Jeanne Schanzenbach
Council Rep.

Green Team

Aimee Hillegas, Council Rep.

Mutual Ministry:

Kyle Oszeyczik, Council Rep.

Property:

Bobbi Riley, Chair
Kyle Oszeyczik, Council Rep.

Social Ministry:

Janet Gerner, Chair
Aimee Hillegas, Council Rep.

Stewardship:

Marc Staudenmaier, Council Rep.

Worship and Music:

Jean Herbranson, Chair
Brian Greenwald, Council Rep.

Office Assistants:

Joan Carl
Pat Renninger

The Circle Editor:

Sonya K. Sowards

Pastoral Acts

Funeral

Robert Jacob Kunsch, Sr.
January 24, 2026

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St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
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ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
(610) 933-3947
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E-mail: office@stjohnphoenixville.org
office hours 9-3 M,T,Th & 9-12 W,F (with exceptions)
please call for appointments with staff members
A Caring, Sharing, Growing Congregation of the ELCA

Worship Schedule

Saturdays

5 p.m. Evening Light with Holy Communion

Sundays

10:15 a.m. Holy Communion
(fall, winter and spring)

9:00 a.m. Holy Communion
(Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day)
Handicapped Accessible

THE CIRCLE



March 2026