



I was in Mexico visiting Wellspring Karitas with our team from St. John's, learning, laughing, singing, playing games, and smiling – I couldn't stop smiling, when I started reading Stephanie Speller's book, *Radical Welcoming: Embracing God, The Other and the Spirit of Transformation*. She hooked me before I had a chance to read a single word she wrote. It was in the introduction where The Rt. Rev. (Bishop) Steven Charleston of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts describes one of his congregations "as a "half-way house" because so many of our folks had either left the church and were now half-way back in, or they were half-way out of the church and were just giving church (not necessarily God) one more try before they gave up. It was a great community. A challenging and engaged community. A place full of unique and extraordinary people."

Could we be such a place? Is it possible that our second chance at a future filled with hope might just begin with embracing all people as they did? A good start is to get past the lie embedded in "All Are Welcome". We know the truth. We know ourselves. There seems to always be those each of us are unable to embrace and accept and love. We are human after all. That's where God comes in. Well, maybe. God says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." That's Come to the Table. Or is it? The offer is there. The opportunity to commune is there. And still, God says, Here I am! I'm knocking. Can you hear me? I know I'm what your heart longs for desperately. Please let go of the distractions. Let go. Let go of self. Stop grasping for that which can only bring you temporary happiness. Let go and join me. I want to come to **your** table!

A place of Radical Welcome. St. John's can be a place where we will discover together the blueprint God offers for planned growth, change, and mission. In her book Stephanie "shows us that there is a great, untapped source of strength for every congregation. It is the presence of The Other within the neighborhood - that group of persons who stand just beyond the social/cultural threshold of the congregation." If we get to know our neighbors and they get to know us, we will not only expand the vision of our congregation but revitalize it in ways that could never be realized otherwise. Think about it. If we deny those we name as Other – we deny God. For surely if we deny them, they must have come from someone other than **our** God. Radical welcome shows us how we need one another, and even more importantly, how we translate that potential into the blessings of a church renewed.

Please know this takes work, effort, and faith – trust will come later. This is not about how we should all be nice to strangers at Cookies under the Cross. "Radical welcome is not the welcome wagon. It IS the heart of evangelism: the transformation of human life from the isolated to the integrated. Radical welcome is a process. It is a process by which isolated parts of a whole community are brought together in creative and compassionate ways to generate a more integrated, balanced, and dynamic mixture. It's what creates a community that works well, prays well, and plans well together."

Deciding to step outside for the sake of the gospel will reveal to us that "there is no such place as a neutral space." "Welcome" still conjures the dynamics of inside and outside, with different groups on different sides of the threshold. To speak of "welcome" is still to center the one in power, the one who gets to decide who comes in and who does not. Yes, we are both changed, but someone owns the house and the table. Someone decides if The Other is "welcome" or not. In short, "Stephanie is calling us to a much more mature and nuanced understanding of what it means for any congregation to truly open its doors to community. It is not a matter of just accepting difference. It is a matter of creating something new. Much like the Holy Scriptures on which it is firmly grounded, radical welcome talks about new life for the people of God. The call to take on the challenges of "radical welcome" is for the growth of the community, not only in numbers, but in spirit, imagination, and strength." Our future as a congregation, grounded in the gospel, is a future that extends the love of Christ in all directions.

Be blessed!  
Pastor Bob

## WHAT'S INSIDE?

Contribution Envelope  
Update

PAGE 2

Lunch & Learn on  
Welcoming All

PAGE 3

Reflections from Mexico

PAGE 4-5

Scenes from  
Fiddler on the Roof

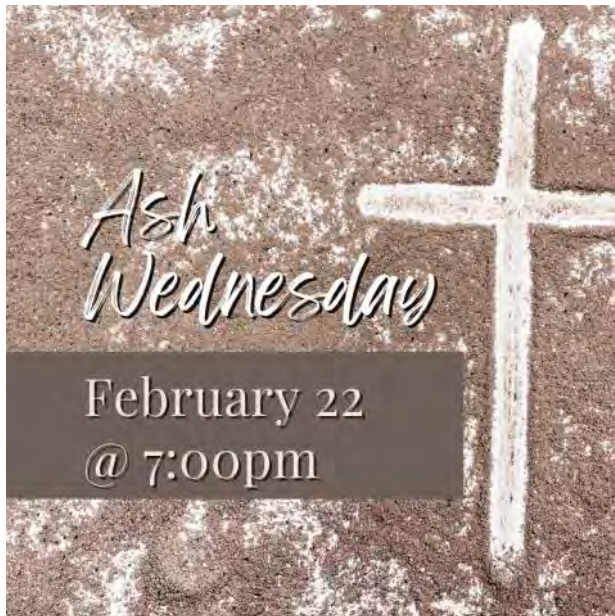
PAGE 8

## ANNUAL CONGREGATION REPORT MEETING

presentation of reports and  
vote on amendments to Constitution and Bylaws

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2023**

immediately following 9:30 am Worship  
(starting at approximately 10:30 am)



## CONTRIBUTION ENVELOPE UPDATE

Our current envelope supplier notified us on January 6 that they would not be able to supply us with contribution envelopes for the first three months of this year. We are currently looking at other options. However, until this issue is resolved you can do one of the following:

1. Set up an online contribution account through **Tithe.ly**. You can sign up on our website under the 'Give' tab. If you need help, contact the finance team and they will be glad to help you (610.369.1024 x140).
2. Use blank contribution envelopes. They will be stocked in the pews and the church office. Be sure to write your name and envelope number on it to ensure that your account gets credited for all your contributions.
3. Use any of your old envelopes that you may still have on hand. It does not matter if the date is wrong.
4. Use a blank mailing envelope. Please write your name and envelope number on the envelope to ensure that your account gets credited for all your contributions.



# THE HEART OF WHO WE ARE

By: Jen Friz

As I engaged with the partners and projects associated with Wellspring Karitas in Mexico along with other members from St. John's, I experienced inspiring people and organizations that are committed to connecting with the community, uncovering unmet needs, and loving and empowering marginalized groups. These groups included people using wheelchairs for mobility, migrants, indigenous people and children in high-risk situations. As I heard the stories of how the organizations evolved and truly love and empower people, my mind kept linking to the discussions our Welcoming All team has had with members of St. John's and the meetings our team has had with Jaime Fivecoat discussing what it means to welcome all. To be genuine in this endeavor, we need to go beyond acceptance of people, but to become allies and siblings to serve and partner together towards God's mission. When ministries in the church start to come together in this way, one can say that there is clarity of purpose.

On February 19, St. John's will be offering a Lunch & Learn on Welcoming All: What does it mean to "Be Reconciled in Christ?" This provides an opportunity for learning and discussion regarding something that should be considered more than a ministry... it's really the heart of who we are as children of God and followers of Jesus. I pray that you join us on this journey of being an authentic welcoming community and to aid in God's mission to reconcile all people to God's self.

## Lunch & Learn on Welcoming All

facilitated by Jaime Fivecoat

What does it mean to 'Be Reconciled in Christ'?

Sunday, February 19

10:45 am - 12:15 pm

Lower Level

*register on our website or call the office*

# Thank you

To my St. John's family,

My sons and I want to thank you all for the prayers, cards, phone calls, concern and love that you have extended to us during this difficult time. I especially want to thank Pastor Bob for his prayers, compassion and support. It is greatly appreciated!

Thank you again.

Missy Endy



## VALENTINE CARING TREE

A Valentine Caring Tree will be displayed in the back of the sanctuary from Sunday, January 29 to Sunday, February 5. Please take a heart off the tree and mail a note of cheer to a homebound member! Our preschool students will also be making and sending valentines to homebound members. Take a heart, send a card and let those not able to be with us know they are thought of and prayed for.

**Save the date**

**BREAD, BOWL AND BIBLE**

March 5 & 12 | 3:00 - 6:00 pm

Fellowship Hall



# OUR YOUNGEST TRAVELERS REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCE IN MEXICO

By: Ashley Gheer

It's hard to sum this trip all up into one speech mostly because there was so much to think about, learn, and do while in Mexico that the thought of having to write it all down and explain it was overwhelming. But I think what was most important for me was learning from others. Throughout this trip I learned about purpose, community, differences, and how although we have differences we still all share something in common. The groups we met started off making me feel worried. I felt extremely bad for not knowing Spanish but it was incredible how quickly we got over that barrier and began to understand each other although we could not speak the same language. We did this by playing games and remembering how to have fun. This stood out to me because, no matter where we went or who we were with, we were laughing and it happened to be our common thing among all of us, which was so meaningful to me. Quickly everyone I was with on this trip and had met began to become my community and neighbors and still are. I might even say that our group felt like family to me by our last night and debrief. This trip showed me not to fear differences or to let them hold me back from becoming friends with someone. I think the purpose of many of the groups we met was to teach us and help us to share something in common, to put aside our differences, become a community and of course to remember to play and have fun. Something I found while in Mexico that really helped me understand and realize all this was something written on the wall inside the cafe called Resilience. It said, "Capacity of a community to adapt and overcome adverse situations in a positive way." Of course this was in Spanish so I didn't understand this at first but once I got it translated I think everything we were being taught and shown made a lot more sense.



Donating games to children at education initiative.



Photo display of activities offered at La Jugarreta.



Listening to stories and learning from families at La Jugarreta.





Making new friends with ALEM workers.



Freshly-made corn tortillas for lunch.

By: Camryn Friz

I want to start off by saying that I am so grateful that I was able to go on this trip and have the opportunities that I had. Our facilitator's son Roberto, joined us while visiting the organizations. He was very involved in the nightly debriefs and on our final night, we met by a campfire to have a final debrief to think and talk about the whole trip. Roberto said many things throughout the trip that stuck with me, but when he said this, it made me think of the church. He said, "The biggest way that God shows himself being present with us is love. Every time you love, God is there. It's God's way of being God." This really resonated with me because loving God and loving all people had been our mission here at church. During this trip, I learned that no matter how different anyone is from you, it doesn't mean you should treat them any differently. Some of you also may have heard from my mom that I now wish to move there when I am older. The beauty of the country is clearly a bonus, but my main reason was the community. Everyone would say good morning to you. Everybody was so kind and proud of the things that they had even if it wasn't what we consider a lot. The beauty of the people is what made me feel at ease. Thank you so much for this opportunity and I can't wait to go back.



St. John's team joined by West Chester faculty and students, and Wellspring Karitas staff.



Partaking in communion after lunch.



Donation of tools to ALEM project.



## WHAT CONCEPTS KEPT EMERGING DURING THE TRIP TO MEXICO?



## PRESCHOOL NEWS

By: Alishia Toub, Preschool Teacher

We are now firmly into 2023. We are settling down from the holiday season and the great times we spent with our families as we celebrated the birth of our King! While we slow in all the spending from the holidays, there is much that takes place in the coming months. As we start to live the 2023 that God intends for each of us, we have many holidays that are intended to remind us of our past and help us remember everything we need to be thankful for. In February alone we have Valentine's Day, Mardi Gras (the start of Lent), and Presidents Day.

The preschool has a lot that takes place in February. First, we celebrate the life of Saint Valentine, where we begin to teach our students to be devoted to one another in love and to honor one another above ourselves. We have our students



make cards for homebound members of St. John's so they know they are not forgotten. The students also share cards amongst themselves and craft a gift for their parents. We then celebrate the life of Dr. Suess, who provided many life lessons for children in the form of stories. A story is read each day while we have activities that engage the kids in the lesson he taught.

While this year gives us a lot to be thankful for, there will be times we each find ourselves or those around us being tested. Pray when needed and remember to help and support those around you in honor of Saint Valentine.

# WHAT KIND OF GIFT WOULD YOU BRING?

By: Cathy Kruase

"...and opening their treasures, they presented to him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh." Matthew 2:11c.

We can think that these are unusual gifts for a baby or a small child. Perhaps we would bring diapers, wipes, and a casserole. They, however, are useful gifts. The child and his parents were poor and were sent to Egypt in rapid haste. They would need lodging and food. All three gifts would help with these needs.

My bag of Penderly's frankincense tells us that it is "an aromatic gum resin from a tree in the *Boswellia* family. This family of *Burseraceae* plants produce balms and resins. They are found in Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Oman, Yemen and India. They are deciduous trees, which are wounded in March and April. The resin is collected throughout summer and autumn and then dried. The volatile oils are used in perfume and incense. It was valued in Biblical times as medicine, in worship, in embalming and in fumigation.

Myrrh gum is dried aromatic sap from *commiphora myrrha*, a small bushy tree found in Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Aden and India. The grower makes a small cut in the bark; the resin leaks out and is collected. The resin is stored for 3 months or until it hardens into globules. It is used as the main ingredient in holy anointing oil, in perfume, in embalming and in fumigating. In Jesus' time it was an important trade item that had greater value than gold.

So, perhaps these gifts of the magi had particular use for the young family. Joseph and Mary were without means. Yes, Joseph was a carpenter – but that's a difficult trade to perform while travelling. God provided, through three foreigners, just what they needed to get to Egypt and then back to Nazareth.

May we recognize unusual gifts as being provided by God.

Sources consulted:

Bolinger, Hope. "Myrrh in the Bible." *Christianity*. 7 Jan 2023. 13 Nov 2019. <[christianity.com/wiki/holidays/what-is-myrrh-in-the-bible.html](http://christianity.com/wiki/holidays/what-is-myrrh-in-the-bible.html)>

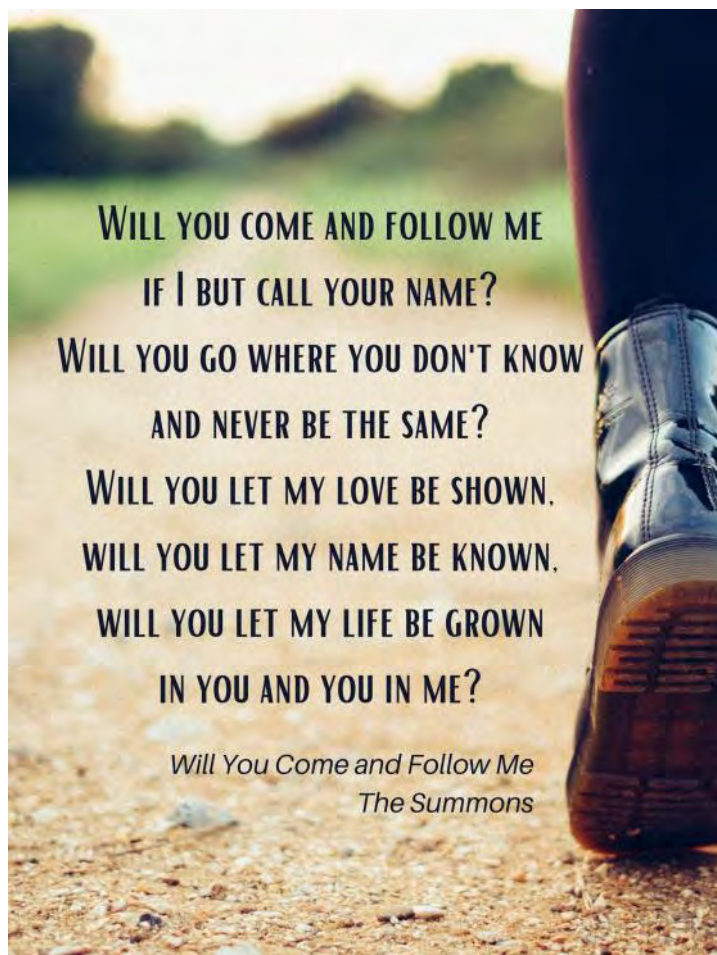
"Frankincense." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <[britannica.com/topic/frankincense#ref93113](http://britannica.com/topic/frankincense#ref93113)>

<[learnreligions.com/what-is-myrrh-700689](http://learnreligions.com/what-is-myrrh-700689)>

Penderly's Frankincense. Dallas Tx. [www.Penderys.com](http://www.Penderys.com).

Penderly's Myrrh Gum. Dallas Tx. [www.Penderys.com](http://www.Penderys.com)

<[sciencedirect.com/topics/agricultural-and-biological-sciences/Boswellia-secra](http://sciencedirect.com/topics/agricultural-and-biological-sciences/Boswellia-secra)>



## WEATHER RELATED CLOSINGS

Our 'Inclement Weather' policy at St John's states that when the Boyertown Area School District is closed, we follow their lead and cancel all meetings and events.

For weather related closings, check Channel 69 News or [www.wfmz.com](http://www.wfmz.com).



## Eagle Messenger Article Deadlines

Monday, February 13 for March issue

Monday, March 13 for April issue

Monday, April 10 for May issue





On January 18, St. John's hosted a free preview performance of Fiddler on the Roof performed by the Talisman Players, based out of Kutztown.





# WORSHIP MINISTRY

Date	Day	Time	Liturgical Day	Special Service	Lector	Media	Prayers	Sound	Ushers	Video
2/5/2023	Sunday	9:30 AM	Fifth Sunday after Epiphany		Jen Schlegel	Shannon Omlor	Tom Engle	Myles Omlor	Mary Kay & Donnie Heimbach, Bently Rick, RJ Rick	Nyla Omlor
2/12/2023	Sunday	9:30 AM	Sixth Sunday after Epiphany		Jay Herbert	Sarah Eidle	Mel Roth	Chase Sennott	Ashley Gheer, John Gheer, Mike Gilbert, Ed Schaeffer	Jason Eidle
2/19/2023	Sunday	9:30 AM	Transfiguration of Our Lord		Jill Koch	Shannon Omlor	Friz Family	Ashley Gheer	Jay Herbert, Jerry Krause, Ros & Brian Moatz	Scott Scheiry
2/22/2023	Wednesday	7:00 PM	Ash Wednesday	Imposition of Ashes	Brian Moatz	Sarah Eidle	Sue Grofe	Brianna Rohrbach	Ros & Brian Moatz	Abbe Grofe
2/26/2023	Sunday	9:30 AM	First Sunday in Lent		Lori Carnes	Shannon Omlor	Nancy Graver	Myles Omlor	Lauren Frey, Darin Moyer, Kevin Moyer, Bill Rohrbach	Sarah Eidle
3/1/2023	Wednesday	7:00 PM		Midweek Lenten	TBD	Sarah Eidle	NA	Chase Sennott	Mary Kay & Donnie Heimbach	Jason Eidle
3/5/2023	Sunday	9:30 AM	Lent 2		Tom Engle	Olivia Alderfer	Lauren Frey	Ashley Gheer	Joanne Dykie, Scott Scheiry, Susan & Andy Varzally	Scott Scheiry
3/8/2023	Wednesday	7:00 PM		Midweek Lenten	TBD	Shannon Omlor	NA	Chase Sennott	Bev & Joe Blake	Abbe Grofe
3/12/2023	Sunday	9:30 AM	Lent 3	Girl Scout Sunday	Becky Scheiry	Olivia Alderfer	Susan & Andy Varzally	Brianna Rohrbach	Martha Bentley, Charles Haddad, Phil Haddad, Barbara Houp	Shannon Omlor
3/15/2023	Wednesday	7:00 PM		Midweek Lenten	TBD	Shannon Omlor	NA	Ashley Gheer	Sandy & Terry Wade	Jason Eidle
3/19/2023	Sunday	9:30 AM	Lent 4		Sarah Eidle	Shannon Omlor	Jean Machamer	Myles Omlor	Becky & Barry Erb, Bunny & Ron Riffle	Scott Scheiry
3/22/2023	Wednesday	7:00 PM		Midweek Lenten	TBD	Sarah Eidle	NA	Brianna Rohrbach	Ashley Gheer, John Gheer	Abbe Grofe
3/26/2023	Sunday	9:30 AM	Lent 5		Nancy Graver	Olivia Alderfer	Molly Byrne	Myles Omlor	Mary Kay & Donnie Heimbach, Carol Sematis, Terry Wadsworth	Sarah Eidle
3/29/2023	Wednesday	7:00 PM		Midweek Lenten	TBD	Shannon Omlor	NA	Chase Sennott	Jay Herbert, Scott Scheiry	Jason Eidle

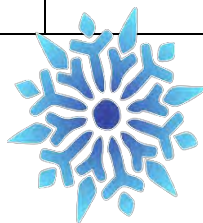
# FEBRUARY 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<b>1</b> 9:30a Preschool Chapel Time 11:30a Preschool Staff 12:45p Preschool Chapel Time 6:30p Worship Team	<b>2</b> Operation 143 Delivery 10:00a Chestnut Knoll Service 8:00p Worship Broadcast	<b>3</b> <b>Men's Retreat</b> Preschool Gym Class 7:00a Men's Small Group Bible Study	<b>4</b> <b>Men's Retreat</b> 4:30p Come to the Table
<b>5</b> <b>Men's Retreat</b> 9:30a Sunday School 9:30a Worship Celebration	<b>6</b> 6:30p Girl Scouts	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> 9:30a Connect	<b>9</b> 10:00a Chestnut Knoll Service 5:00p Admin Staff CEU 8:00p Worship Broadcast	<b>10</b> Preschool Music Class 7:00a Men's Small Group Bible Study 6:30p Preschool Sweetheart Night	<b>11</b> 8:00a Worship Team Workday 9:00a Staff CEU 4:30p Come to the Table
<b>12</b> 9:30a Sunday School 9:30a Worship Celebration	<b>13</b> 5:00p Newsletter Submission 6:30p Girl Scouts 7:30p Optimist Club of Boyertown	<b>14</b> 9:00a Admin Staff	<b>15</b> 9:30a Pottstown Soup Kitchen 6:00p Congregation Council	<b>16</b> Operation 143 Delivery 9:00a Community Leaders 10:00a Chestnut Knoll Service 8:00p Worship Broadcast	<b>17</b> Preschool Gym Class 6:30p Welcoming All Retreat 7:00a Men's Small Group Bible Study	<b>18</b> 8:00a Welcoming All Retreat 4:30p Come to the Table
<b>19</b> Transfiguration of Our Lord 9:30a Sunday School 9:30a Worship Celebration 10:45a Lunch and Learn on Welcoming All	<b>20</b> President's Day Office Closed Preschool Closed	<b>21</b> 6:30p Finance Team	<b>22</b> Ash Wednesday 9:30a Connect 7:00p Worship Celebration	<b>23</b> 10:00a Chestnut Knoll Service w/Holy Communion 8:00p Worship Broadcast	<b>24</b> Preschool Music Class 7:00a Men's Small Group Bible Study	<b>25</b> 4:30p Come to the Table
<b>26</b> Lent 1 9:30a Sunday School 9:30a Worship Celebration 10:30a Annual Congregation Report Meeting	<b>27</b> 6:30p Girl Scouts 7:30p Optimist Club of Boyertown	<b>28</b> 1:00p Joyful Sisters of Service 6:30p Building a Better Boyertown				



# FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3 Marie Adamski Dave Babb Evelyn Stark	4
5 Cody Gheer Constance Gilbert Joanne Sheidy	6	7 Krista Fretz	8 Joe Matthews Ruth Weil	9 Dave Long	10	11 Nyla Omlor
12	13	14	15 Sandy Wade	16	17	18
19 Judy Seavers	20 Jonathan Rothenberger Mark Stofflet	21 Tom Engle Susan Laubach Brianna Rohrbach Natalie Sharp	22	23 Melissa Eidle	24 Bobbie Eddinger	25 Dylan DiMarzio Robert Eschelman Kiersten Kulhamer
26 Shirley Miller Sue Schaeffer Bertha Schott	27	28 Shelly Houser				



Happy  
Birthday!



# EAGLE MESSENGER

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH | 45 North Reading Avenue | Boyertown, PA 19512  
610-369-1024 | 610-369-1463 Fax | [www.stjohnsboyertown.org](http://www.stjohnsboyertown.org)

Non-profit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
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Boyertown, PA  
Permit No. 10020

We believe God's purpose for the people of  
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church is to develop  
joy-filled children of God who love the Lord  
and share God's Word.

*We do this by:*

- Maintaining a trusting and welcoming environment.
- Praying daily.
- Reading scripture regularly.
- Sharing our faith through action-based service.
- Encouraging holy conversations.
- Feeding our faith with music.

*With a focus on:*

- Activities that build relationships.
- Worship that is relevant.
- Meeting the needs of the vulnerable in our community.

Return Service Request - Dated Material  
Mailed January 26, 2023

## WORSHIP

SUNDAY 9:30 AM

IN-PERSON & LIVESTREAM ON YOUTUBE

Office Hours (open by appointment)  
Monday-Thursday 8:30 am - 3:30 pm  
Friday 8:30 am - 12:00 pm

Pastor Bob Machamer  
Kay Christman, Finance Team  
Amanda Ehst, Worship Coordinator  
Sue Grofe, Finance Team  
Bonnie Moatz, Finance Team  
Shannon Omlor, Communications Coordinator  
Linda Rohrbach, Treasurer  
Becky Scheiry, Parish Administrator  
Amy Willson, Preschool Director

[bmachamer@stjohnsboyertown.org](mailto:bmachamer@stjohnsboyertown.org)  
[financialsecretary@stjohnsboyertown.org](mailto:financialsecretary@stjohnsboyertown.org)  
[aehst@stjohnsboyertown.org](mailto:aehst@stjohnsboyertown.org)  
[financialsecretary@stjohnsboyertown.org](mailto:financialsecretary@stjohnsboyertown.org)  
[financialsecretary@stjohnsboyertown.org](mailto:financialsecretary@stjohnsboyertown.org)  
[somlor@stjohnsboyertown.org](mailto:somlor@stjohnsboyertown.org)  
[treasurer@stjohnsboyertown.org](mailto:treasurer@stjohnsboyertown.org)  
[parishadmin@stjohnsboyertown.org](mailto:parishadmin@stjohnsboyertown.org)  
[awillson@stjohnsboyertown.org](mailto:awillson@stjohnsboyertown.org)



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.