

Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church

9770 Keilman St.  
St. John, IN 46373  
(219) 365-3803  
hslc@sbcglobal.net  
www.holy-shepherd.org



Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we  
share God's love with all creation.

Weekly Communion Services:  
Saturday 5pm, Contemporary  
Sunday 8:30am, Traditional  
Sunday 10:00am, Contemporary

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
St. John, IN  
Permit No. 12

DECEMBER 2025

To the family of:



2025 CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES  
WITH CANDLELIGHT AND HOLY COMMUNION

**3:00PM: FAMILY SERVICE**  
FEATURING THE CHILDREN'S CHOIR & CHIMES, AND  
PRAISE TEAM  
**5:00PM: CHOIRS & SERMON**  
FEATURING THE WOMEN'S CHOIR, MEN'S CHOIR,  
ADULT CHOIR, & ADULT BELLS  
**9:00PM: CAROLS & SERMON**  
FEATURING YOUR FAVORITE CAROLS PLAYED ON  
ORGAN AND PIANO

Why Giving Blood Matters

- **There's still no substitute for blood.** Blood can't be manufactured; it can only come from donors like you.
- **Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood.** This includes cancer patients, people with chronic diseases, cardiac and organ transplant patients, babies born prematurely, and medical emergencies.
- **Blood doesn't last forever.** The shelf life of a blood donation is only 42 days.
- **Helping others could help you.** Donating blood is an incredible way to help those in need, but you also get a free mini health assessment. A Red Cross staff member will check your blood pressure, hemoglobin levels, and pulse before every donation.
- **It's easy to do.** The donation process from start to finish only lasts less than an hour.



Holy Shepherd will be hosting our final  
Red Cross Blood Drive of the year on:

**Friday, Dec 19th, from noon-5pm**

Please sign up via the website, phone number, or QR code:  
[www.RedCrossBlood.org](http://www.RedCrossBlood.org) 1-800-RED-CROSS



Make donating a  
holiday habit and invite  
those you love to join  
you! Your lifesaving gift  
could have a very big im-  
pact on someone this  
holiday season!

SHEPHERD'S STAFF


HOLY SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH

Fall Festival Highlights



Our Trunk or Treat event just  
missed last month's newsletter  
deadline, so we're sharing a  
few pictures now!

From Your Stewardship Team

Please complete your 2026 HSLC Commitment Card, via this QR code  or at: [www.tinyurl.com/CommitmentCard2026](http://www.tinyurl.com/CommitmentCard2026) or, a paper copy in church. The cards help a great deal in preparing the budget for next year. Thank you for your continued generous financial support and commitment to the ministries at HSLC!



Upcoming Dates

Nov 27, Happy Thanksgiving, church closed  
Nov 28, Black Friday, church closed  
Nov 30, First Sunday of Advent  
Dec 3, 10:30am - Decorate the sanctuary  
Dec 6, noon - Secret Pals luncheon @ Theo's  
Dec 7, Poinsettia orders due today  
Dec 7, Angel Tree gifts due today, wrapped!  
Dec 7, 11am - PrimeTimers Christmas Party  
Dec 7, 11am - Youth shop for Angel Tree gift  
& pizza party  
Dec 10, Newsletter articles due (1 week early)

Dec 13, noon, Tradewinds Party  
Dec 14, 4pm, Shepherd's Supper  
Dec 18, 8:30am, FAST Team  
Dec 18-19, 8am-4pm, cookie drop off  
Dec 19, noon-5pm - Red Cross Blood Drive  
Dec 20, 4-6pm, cookie drop off, & set up for  
Cookie Walk  
Dec 21, 8-11am - Cookie Walk!  
Dec 21, 11am-1pm - Children caroling  
Dec 24, 3pm, 5pm, 9pm - Christmas Eve Svcs.  
Dec 25, Merry Christmas, church closed  
Dec 26, Boxing Day, church closed

Dec 31, New Years Eve, church closes at noon  
Jan 1, 2026, New Years Day, church closed  
Jan 4, 11am - Growing Across Generations,  
food and fellowship  
Jan 14, 5pm - Growing with Music: Hymns of  
Martin Luther, part 1.  
Jan 18, noon - Sacred Places & Spaces: What  
Makes a Place Sacred? w/ lunch  
Jan 26, 5pm - Praying with Scripture: The Call  
of Abraham  
Jan 31, Volunteer Service: Foodbank of NWI  
Mobile Marketplace



December 2025

Advent:  
The  
Thrill of  
Hope!



MISSION STATEMENT

To fulfill our mission as  
Holy Shepherd Lutheran  
Church, we:

Trust in God for guidance  
and support,

Thank God in word and  
deed,

Teach the good news of  
Jesus, and

Tend those inside and out-  
side the flock,

Because the Holy Spirit:  
Ties us closer to God and to  
one another, and

Transforms us into devoted  
disciples of Jesus Christ.



FROM THE PASTOR

Something New for the New Church Year



Most of you know that the church year begins with Advent, the four Sundays before Christmas. As we begin a new church year, we’re also beginning a new cycle through the three year lectionary we use in worship. Each year, A, B and C, the lectionary focuses on Matthew, Mark or Luke, with John used in all three years around holidays and festivals.

Working our way through the three year cycle, we end up reading about a third of the bible in worship, which gives us a very good overview of scripture. The readings also reflect different themes for different seasons, which helps us use the church calendar as another resource for growing in faith as we emphasize different aspects of our faith throughout the year. I appreciate that the lectionary lifts up some readings I would probably not choose on my own. It also ties us together with the many churches around the world who read the same bible passages as we do week after week.

The Gospel reading is the key text for each day. Through much of the year, the epistle reading is chosen to lift up some of the same themes as the gospel. During the time after Pentecost (also called Ordinary time because we name the Sundays with ordinal numbers), we switch to reading through significant portions of the letters in the New Testament, so we will get a few weeks in a row from the same book.

As long as I’ve been a pastor, the congregations I’ve served have used the “complementary” readings from the Old Testament. This means the readings are selected based on the themes from the gospel, so all the readings complement one another. The psalm is a response to the first reading, so it picks up on the same themes as well.

This year, we’ll try something different. We’re going to use the “semicontinuous readings” for the Old Testament and the Psalm. This means during all those green Sundays after Pentecost, we’ll start in Genesis and read selections from the Old Testament in canonical order. This year, we’ll read parts of Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges - from the call of Abraham to God’s people settling in the Promised Land and their struggles to stay faithful. In Year B (2026-2027), we’ll work our way through 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, Proverbs, Job, Esther and Ruth. In Year C (2027-2028), we’ll work our way through the prophets.

I’m looking forward to refreshing ourselves on so much of the story of God and his faithful people in worship. I think we will see new connections between the Old Testament and the New Testament. I think we will discover parts of the story we may have missed along the way. I think we will enjoy hearing the ways God has been at work among his people through the generations.

It’s not a huge change or adjustment, but I think the chance to change up a bit of what we hear in worship will get us to listen a little differently. I pray that the Holy Spirit will give us eyes to see and ears to hear what God has to say in scripture in the years to come.

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Eric



C is for Cookie Walk - Sunday, Dec 21st, 8-11am

So close you can almost taste it! Leave the baking to your fellow parishioners. Choose your own varieties, \$8.00/lb. Please sign up to bake a few dozen of your proven favorites. From fancy florentines to basic sugar, to brownies, bars, and balls, to exotic baklava, potica, and kolackys--there’s something for everyone. Sign up, you guessed it, in the narthex. We sold out early last year--we need more bakers! Profits to benefit the Youth Group.



December 2025 Financials

Income	Oct-25	YTD
Operating fund	\$ 31,620.73	\$ 300,360.92
Capital Improvement	\$ 5,953.21	\$ 61,164.58
Total	\$ 37,573.94	\$ 361,525.50
Expenses	Oct-25	Expenses YTD
Operating Fund	\$ 32,422.08	\$ 343,081.72
Capital Improvement	\$ -	\$ 2,023.86
Total	\$ 32,422.08	\$ 345,105.58
Restricted Funds Income		Balances 10-30-2025
Altar Flowers Gifts		\$ 849.48
Community Garden	\$ -	\$ 946.19
Communion Wine		\$ (134.36)
Evangelism	\$ 100.00	\$ 15,362.70
Library	\$ -	\$ 100.60
Major Mission	\$ 926.60	\$ 1,065.25
Memorial	\$ -	\$ 4,415.00
Mission of the month	\$ 1,531.55	\$ 4,217.86
Nat. Youth Gathering	\$ -	\$ 9,446.25
Offsite Service Team		\$ 7,034.05
Prime Timers		\$ 646.42
Shepherd's Suppers	\$ 102.51	\$ 3,781.06
Sunday School	\$ -	\$ 1,121.07
Staff Christmas Collection		\$ 400.00
Fees, Hall Rent, other		\$ 560.00
VBS		\$ 2,009.14
Women's Service Gro	\$ -	\$ 9,043.47
Youth Fellowship	\$ -	\$ 2,199.88
Benev. quarterly	Jul-Sept 2025	YTD
Mission of the Month	\$ 6,051.00	\$ 18,864.93
Major Mission Giving	\$ 1,062.83	\$ 2,537.83
ELCA Synod Benevoler	\$ 7,596.00	\$ 26,726.00



Collection for Pastor and Staff

As the holiday season approaches, Holy Shepherd has traditionally shown our appreciation and gratitude for our church staff through a monetary Christmas gift collection. It’s a thoughtful way to recognize their hard work, commitment, and dedication throughout the year. And recognition is a powerful motivator--it lets our staff members know that their work is noticed, appreciated, and valued. Your gift is a caring way to say “thank you”.

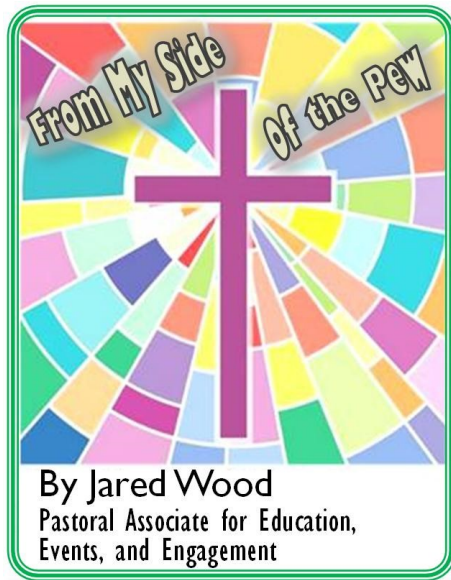
If you would like to contribute, please place your donation in the Staff Christmas Gift collection box in the narthex, or send it indicated as “Staff Christmas Gift.” As the new year is turning the page on 2025, you can extend the thrill of hope and gratitude to those who serve us so faithfully!











**By Jared Wood**  
Pastoral Associate for Education,  
Events, and Engagement

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we turn the corner toward 2026, I find myself filled with gratitude and excitement for what lies ahead in the life of our congregation. This past year has been one of growth, connection, and renewed energy, and I am so thankful for the ways each of you continues to show up for one another, with your time, your gifts, your prayers, and your presence. Holy Shepherd thrives because of the love you share, and for that, I am deeply grateful.

Looking ahead, one of my biggest hopes for the coming year is to continue strengthening the intergenerational fabric of our church. I'm planning a number of events and opportunities designed to bring our youth, families, and older members together in meaningful and joyful ways, whether that's through mentorship, shared meals, service projects, or simply moments of fellowship that remind us how much we need one another in Christ. The stories and wisdom that pass between generations are part of what make our congregation such a vibrant reflection of God's kingdom, and I can't wait to see that grow in the year to come.



Another exciting piece on the horizon is the 2027 ELCA National Youth Gathering, which will take place June 28–July 2, 2027, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This incredible event gathers tens of thousands of young Lutherans from across the country for worship, service, learning, and community. It's an experience that changes lives and one that helps our youth see the Church not just as their congregation, but as a vast and living body of Christ moving together in the world.

We're still in the early stages of planning our group's participation, and I would love to hear from families who are interested in attending. Youth who will be entering high school in the fall of 2027 through those who graduate that spring are eligible to attend. If your family is considering it, please reach out to me soon. Even a quick "we're thinking about it" helps tremendously as we plan ahead for fundraising, travel logistics, and group size.

As we move into 2026, I'm filled with hope for what God will continue to do among us. The Spirit is at work in our worship, in our ministries, and in the everyday acts of care that define our life together. Thank you for your willingness to grow, to serve, and to imagine together what it means to be Christ's hands and feet in this community. Here's to a year of deeper connection, renewed purpose, and joyful faith, across every generation.

Blessings,  
Jared Wood, Pastoral Associate for Education, Events, and Engagement

## Join Holy Shepherd's Secret Pal Ministry

Ladies, are you looking for a meaningful way to connect, encourage, and uplift other women in our church? Our Secret Pal Ministry is a wonderful opportunity to do just that! This special ministry pairs women together in a secret exchange of cards, small gifts, and prayers. By becoming part of this ministry, you'll have the chance to anonymously support and encourage another woman in our congregation. It's a beautiful way to grow spiritually, build lasting friendships, and experience the joy of giving and receiving. In December 2026 you'll discover who your secret pal has been all year at our festive Christmas luncheon.

So whether you've been part of the church family for years or are new to the community, your participation is welcome. It's simple, fulfilling, and deeply rewarding. To join us in this meaningful ministry, sign up today by filling out a form so your secret pal will know something about you and place it in the labeled box by Sunday, December 28<sup>th</sup>. You'll find both the forms and box located on the Opportunity Table. You'll receive notification of your 2026 Secret Pal through the U.S. Mail the first week in January. For more information, contact Wendy Bartlett at: [webart212@gmail.com](mailto:webart212@gmail.com) or text to: 219-789-6835.



## MUSIC NOTES

*By Will Akins, Director of  
Arts and Worship*

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
MERRY CHRISTMAS Holy Shepherd!!

This is indeed my favorite time of year. The movies and the snow; the festive parties and the music, it is a time filled with more love than any other time of year. We spend so much of our lives on the go, and missing out on what is truthfully important. The carolers sing songs of Jesus' birth and we stuff our faces with feast after feast. These things draw us closer to God and each other in our daily lives. I decided to share with you some of my favorite Christmas memories. Here was Christmas in the Akins household:

There was a week of cooking. A calendar week of cooking ham, turkey, dressing, pies, cakes, and my Tee-Tee's famous Yum-Yum desert. This was marvelous for all of the senses, not so much for the stomach, as that meant we practically fasted until Christmas. When the kitchen was reopened Christmas morning, we engaged in a feast that

### More Coming Events!



Help decorate  
the Sanctuary!

Wednesday,  
Dec 3rd  
at 10:30am

### Secret Pals Party

This year's Secret Pal Christmas Party will be held on Saturday, Dec 6<sup>th</sup> at noon at Theo's Steak & Seafood, 9144 Indianapolis Blvd, Highland. Please RSVP Wendy Bartlett [webart212@gmail.com](mailto:webart212@gmail.com) by Nov 30<sup>th</sup>. Those unable to attend, please contact Wendy to arrange for gift drop off arrangements.



HSLC will host a Christmas party for the residents of TradeWinds on

Dec 13<sup>th</sup>, from 12-2:30pm. We'll be serving lunch for 25 people, and then play games and make crafts. We need lots of volunteers! Cooks, servers, game and craft helpers, and a cleanup crew. Please sign up in the narthex to help. We are also in need of a number of small gifts for prizes, such as stuffed animals, lotions, jewelry, hats and gloves. If you have any questions, please contact Jared at [hslcjared@gmail.com](mailto:hslcjared@gmail.com)

would make kings jealous. After, we opened presents and watched "A Christmas Story" on TBS. As we got older we transitioned to Christmas Eve at my Uncle's House in Grayslake, IL (5 minutes from Six Flags) and we would have a house wide NERF war before bed.



The past few years though, I have been blessed enough to do what I love and make beautiful music for the holiday season. And especially on Christmas Eve, I have been playing or singing for multiple events and celebrations. I now look forward to spending my Christmas Eve with you, My Holy Shepherd Family, and I'm excited to spend Christmas Day with my family. Take time to be present in the moment with your families and have a very happy and safe Christmas and New Year!

As always, join us in our very fun and informative rehearsals every Wednesday night. Also be on the look out for my Talk Back series next year as we dive into hymns and all sorts of music.

Yours in Christ,  
Will Akins, Director of Music and Arts

Song of the Month: Joy to the World (The Whitney Houston Arrangement from "The Preacher's Wife")

Bible Verse of the Month: Matthew 1:21  
"She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."



### Assemble Amazing Afghans!

HANDS (Hook and Needle Discipleship) will plan to gather in early January 2026 to assemble squares into afghans or lap robes. Please continue to knit or crochet more squares until then, and place them in the basket in the Prayer Room. We look forward to meeting and assembling all the colors and patterns that you have created! Tentative date is Friday morning, January 9, 2026. In God's HANDS, Barb O.

