



## Pastor's Desk

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## 'Twas Some Time Before Christmas

*Based on Luke 2:1-20*  
by Pastor Cassandra Granados

'Twas Some Time Before Christmas, when **all through the** land, a census was declared mandatory, a count of every woman and man.

Joseph had to comply with the laws of the day, which involves a trip many miles away. Now, Mary had **just settled down** into her regular routine. Preparing for her baby, who had not yet come-to-be.

She had **visions**, which **danced in her head**, anticipating motherhood and the cuteness that lay ahead. **When all of a sudden**, the census **arose such a clatter**.

Mary's restful plans were all but shattered. As Joseph's fiancé, Mary agreed to be registered with him, and it was not a trip, one makes on a whim!

According to Google maps, the destination was 93 miles away. And there was no plane or train, to make the trip in one day.

If you walked from Nazareth to Bethlehem, by foot, it would take you 31 hours, just look. Whether Mary walked by foot or rode the whole way, it was quite a stressful event, we can all say.

And, their troubles were not over, when they reach Joseph's hometown because no empty rooms could be found.



**St. John's  
United Church of Christ**  
409 North Wooster Avenue  
Dover, OH 44622

**Rev. Dr. Cassandra Granados**  
Senior Minister

**Natalie Peterman**  
Director of Christian Education

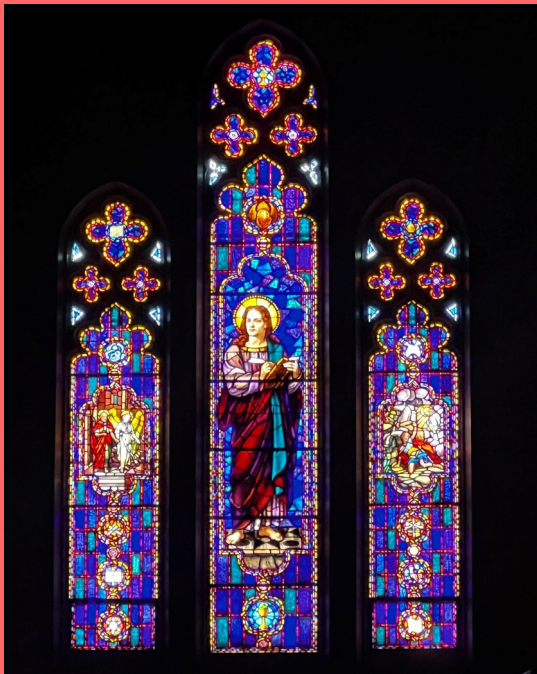
**Emaly Smallcombe**  
Administrative Assistant

**Sunday Morning Schedule**  
10:30 AM Worship

**Church Office Hours**  
Monday through Friday  
8:30 AM - 4:00 PM  
Telephone answers  
24 hours a day  
330-364-4458

Fax: 330-364-4459  
Website: <http://doverstjohns.org>

**E-mail Addresses:**  
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As the story goes,  
"There was no room in the Inn."  
No vacancy in the lodging area, where travelers would rest.  
While we do not know Mary and Joseph's plans,  
I doubt that giving birth in a manger,  
was a part of their original birth plan.

The story may have started out a nightmare.  
But, that is not how it ended.  
Christmas happened.

Christ came unto our midst, as a little baby boy.  
Despite all the adversity. Despite all the challenges.  
Despite the stress that Mary and Joseph endured.  
Emmanuel, happened.

God became flesh and dwelt among us.  
The first people to see Jesus were the Shepherds.  
Not celebrities, not kings, or political leaders.  
But, the average Shepherds, working the night shift.

This Christmas, remember God comes into the  
messiness of our lives.

A life, that is often uncertain.  
Amid a world that cannot find peace.  
Amid a nation divided.  
Amid suffering and oppression.  
Amid anxiety for the future.

We. Have. Hope.

Because Christmas is happening. Christ is in our midst.  
God loved us so much that he sent Jesus our way.  
So, no matter what happens or what others say,  
God is with us, forever and always.

So, if your hope and joy start to fall,  
Remember God is in sight.  
"Merry Christmas to all,  
And, to all a good night!"



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1  
Lori Phillips  
Charles Stuart

2  
JoAnn Lorenz  
Mark Perry  
Elizabeth Sexton  
Kim Thomson

6  
Mackenzie Immel  
Nicole West

8  
Ruth Campbell  
Scott Kinsey  
Parker McMillan  
Kathryn West

9  
Benett Wallick

10  
Heather Smith

11  
Kayla Murphy

13  
Kathy Deitrick

14  
Lincoln McIlvaine

15  
Trevor Welch

16  
Ian Sexton

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

17  
Spencer Altier  
Melissa Kapper  
Daniel Sickinger  
Keegan Whitlach  
Olivia Whitlach  
Sara Whitlach

18  
Christie Locke

19  
Ruth Kandel  
Dylan Sayre

24  
Jane Gingrich  
Holly Gonter

25  
Brenda Lahm

27  
Linda Kilgore

28  
Madelyn McIlvaine

28  
Livia Mines  
Kirsten Siegenthaler

29  
Alice Coutts  
Jonathan Mason  
Jon McIlvaine

30  
Jilliam Elton

31  
Earl Feller

## DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES



1  
Mark & Debra  
Hughes

5  
Dan & Connie  
Burrier



15  
Bryan & Robyn  
Hughes



16  
Jason & Kelly  
Wallick



17  
Edward & Vicki  
Rufener

21  
James & Linda  
Kilgore



22  
Tim & Karie  
McCrate

26  
Edward & Ginny  
Diefenbaugh



28  
Rod & Beth  
Showers



## **Dover St. John's Youth & Family Ministry**

### **Advent Hope and a Season of Joy**

As we enter the Advent season, we return to the familiar and beautiful words of Luke 2:1-20, a passage that invites us to pause and remember the night everything changed. In the quiet of a stable and under a sky filled with angels, the birth of Jesus brought light, hope and joy into a weary world. This story grounds us each December, reminding us that God chooses to meet us in ordinary places and uses the humblest beginnings to bring extraordinary love.

It also gives us a sense of excitement for the weeks ahead at St. John's. Our youth are preparing to share the story of Christ's birth in a very special way through our Live Nativity, offering a moment of beauty and reflection for our church and community. Every year, this simple and heartfelt retelling brings Luke's words to life, reminding us of the shepherds who hurried to Bethlehem with a mixture of wonder and courage, eager to witness the good news for themselves.

As we look back on this fall, we are grateful for the many ways our church family has lived out that same spirit of care and love. Together we supported first responders with gifts and prayers, joined our community in Paint Tusc Pink to raise awareness and hope, filled our sanctuary with Ribbons of Hope, and continued to support our Blessing Box, making sure our neighbors have what they need. Each act, big or small, has reflected the message of the angels: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy."

Looking ahead to the new year, we hold onto that joy and the calling it places on our hearts. Our youth will begin the year with an important outreach event, the Homeless Awareness Lockout, as they learn about needs in our community and put their faith into action. It will be a powerful reminder that the story of Jesus' birth is not just something we hear, but something we live out with compassion and purpose.

May this Advent season fill your home with peace, wonder and anticipation. Christ is born, hope is here and we are grateful to walk into this season and the coming year together.

Walking together in faith,  
Youth & Family Ministry Team

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### **Keeping In Touch with Our Young Adults**

Our Youth Group would like to stay connected with our graduates and young adults under age 25 by sending notes and small seasonal surprises. If you have a current address for your young adult, please email it to [natalie@doverstjohns.org](mailto:natalie@doverstjohns.org)



# December News

## Dover St. John's Youth & Family Ministry

natalie@doverstjohns.org

Office of Christian Education

www.doverstjohns.org/youth

### Upcoming Dates

12/7 FAMILY SUNDAY  
Youth Christmas Pageant

12/20 & 21 YOUTH LIVE NATIVITY,  
7PM/7:30PM/8PM/8:30PM

1/11 CONFIRMATION CLASS  
after worship in Fellowship Cntr

1/24 CONFIRMATION CLASS  
after worship in Fellowship Cntr

2/14-15 Homeless Awareness

### **December Theme:** **Luke 2:1-20** **Hope, Peace and Joy**

The angel said to them, 'Don't be afraid. I am bringing you good news that will be a great joy to all the people. Luke 2:10

*\*Each month, our theme & monthly bible verse will be our shared focus in both Youth Group and Follow Me sessions.*

### Dover St. John's Live Nativity



This beautiful musically narrated story of the birth of Jesus has become a beloved tradition and gift to the community from Dover St. John's. Please stop by and share in the Christmas story as portrayed by the youth of St. John's.

Saturday, December 20th  
Sunday, December 21st

7:00pm 7:30pm 8:00pm 8:30pm

## St. John's UCC Church Council Meeting November 11, 2025 at 7:30 pm

**Opening Prayer:** Dave Gingrich opened the meeting and Reverend Cassandra Granados gave the opening prayer. There were 12 members present.

**Minutes of Last Meeting:** Approved as submitted.

**Treasurer's Report:** Reported by Angie Gump

**Month of October 2025**

General fund income for the month of \$22,694 is \$914 worse than budget.

Expenses for the month of \$27,596 were under the budget by \$8,846.

Resulting shortfall for the month of \$4,903 is \$7,931 better than the budget.

**October 2025 YTD**

General fund income year-to-date of \$204,182 is **\$38,238 less than the budget.**

Compared to last year through the same month (center column) **income is lower by \$39,371.**

Expenses year-to-date of \$310,572 were less than budget by \$35,150.

Note: Budget includes \$9,000 per month for an Associate Minister beginning with July

Resulting shortfall year-to-date of \$106,430 is \$3,088 worse than the budget.

**Cash**

Beginning cash balance for the year was \$25,146 and ending cash is \$10,977.

We have transferred \$82,355 from investments to cover general fund expenses.

M/S/C by Rob Gump and Dan Hurst

**Senior Minister's Report**

Reverend Cassandra's report stated:

**PAST EVENTS:**

Jean Paddock, Natalie Peterman, Emaly Smallcombe, and she attended Women's Impact's Empowerment Day, which provides educational resources for women in leadership.

Cassandra was on vacation from October 20-26 to celebrate Diwali. It was a fun time of making memories.

She was on continuing education leave from October 27-November 2. Dave Gingrich and she attended the Living Water Association's Annual Meeting on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

Cassandra will be on vacation from November 17<sup>th</sup> through November 23<sup>rd</sup>, to celebrate her wedding anniversary and Jatin's birthday. Rev. Dr. Steven Johnson from Massillon will be leading the service on November 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Teaching the St. John's Pre-school on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

Plan for Advent and Christmas with the Elders.

**Director of CE Report**

Natalie Peterman reported:

October: Finished up the Ribbons of Hope project

November theme: Grateful Together

Bible Verse: Ruth 1:16

Story: Ruth and Naomi

Community Focus: Youth group met and we delivered treats and snacks to the fire station and police station as we focus on gratitude and those we are thankful for.

Church Focus: Veterans and service members, labeled flags and displayed them outside as we honor those who, like Ruth, faithfully go where they are needed and stand beside others with courage.

Upcoming events: Youth group Friendsgiving Sunday 11/16/25; Advent Festival, Youth Pageant, Live Nativity

Confirmation: will start 1/11/26

**Reports of the Boards**

**Elders/Dan Hurst reported:**

The Elders discussed upcoming services.



Next communion December 7<sup>th</sup>

Christmas Eve services will be held at 3:00 and 7:00.

Love offering for staff for holidays will be included in announcements on November 30<sup>th</sup>.

Bible study interest survey was discussed. No plans were made at this meeting.

### **Trustees**

Rob Gump reported:

Recaulking of the windows in the Christian Education building will begin November 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **Deacons**

Bev Smith reported:

Ushers for December are filled.

Conformation youth will be serving communion on December 7<sup>th</sup>

A training session for ushers and communion servers will be held on January 4<sup>th</sup> after church. Anyone interested in serving in these roles is welcome to attend.

### **Youth Representative on Council**

Youth are focusing on working as a team. They decorated front lawn pink for October Breast Cancer Awareness and visited First Responders to them for their service and invited them to worship with us.

### **Reports of Committees**

Constitution Review Committee:

Sue Ferbrache & Dave Gingrich reported that the proposed updates to the Constitution & Bylaws will be presented to Council in December and subsequently at the Annual Congregational meeting in January. The changes proposed is the number of council members, modification to term limits, and combining various sections to eliminate duplication.

Goodwill Committee:

The Craft Show & Bake Sales held on November 1<sup>st</sup> brought in a profit of \$1,464.53 for the benefit for the Blessing Box ministry. Next year's Craft Show is being planned for November 7, 2026

### **Congregational Activities**

Card Party at Fourth & Faith – Nov 12 (2nd Wed monthly) – benefit Cancer Bags

Family Sunday – 1st Sunday each month with season theme

All Church Advent Festival & Meal – Nov 30 following worship

Youth Christmas Pageant – Dec 7

Live Nativity on Front Lawn – Dec 20 & 21

Adult Contemporary Sunday School – Sundays at 9am

Bad Girls Book Club – 2nd Monday monthly

Chair Yoga – Mon & Thur at Fourth & Faith

**Unfinished Business** – Congregational Budget Meeting will be held November 16<sup>th</sup> following worship.

### **New Business**

Dave Gingrich discussed Usher Responsibilities/Building Security. Updated duties will include walking the buildings when the service starts and secure the perimeter by locking all doors except the Sanctuary; at least one usher is to stay in the Narthex to let people in.

Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on January 18<sup>th</sup> following worship. The primary agenda items will be election of council members and voting on proposed updated the Constitution & Bylaws.

### **Comments for the Good of St Johns**

Sue Ferbrache said a compliment was received from Dave Minor of the antique Chevrolet Club which hosted a gathering at Fourth & Faith in October. He complimented the Goodwill Committee for their hospitality for the dinner and accommodation at their events.

### **Closing with the Lord's Prayer**

#### **October Financial Report**

Actual Income      \$22,694

Actual Expenses    \$27,596

Average Worship  
Attendance 63

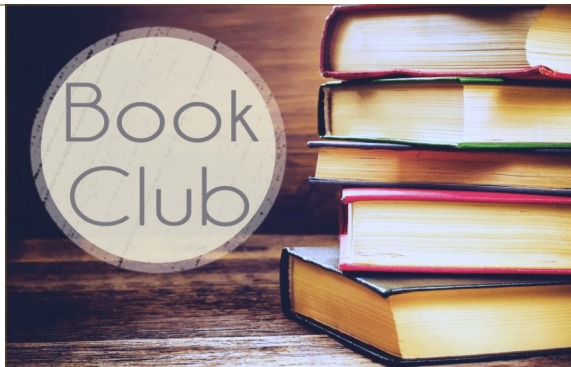
## THE CARILLON



Adults are invited to share their faith, encouragement, and presence by serving as mentors for our upcoming Confirmation Class. Mentors walk alongside a young person as they explore their faith journey—meeting together throughout the program and celebrating with them on Confirmation Sunday. It's a meaningful opportunity to build a lasting connection and help nurture the next generation of believers. All materials are provided.

If you feel called to serve or would like more information, please contact Natalie or the church office.

*Kneeling in Bethlehem* by Ann Weems is our December **Bad Girls Book Club** selection. This is our first venture into poetry, so come ready to share which poem speaks to you most—and why. You may even choose to read a line or an entire poem when we gather on December 8 at 6:30 PM in the Conference Room.



### THE COMING OF GOD

Our God is the One  
who comes to us  
In a burning bush,  
In an angel's song,  
In a newborn child.



### CHANCEL CHOIR TO SING AT LESSONS AND CAROLS SERVICE

St. John's Chancel Choir has been invited and will be participating again in this year's Lessons and Carols Service at St. Joseph's Catholic Church. This community Advent service is filled with music from area choirs in anticipation and celebration of the birth of Jesus!

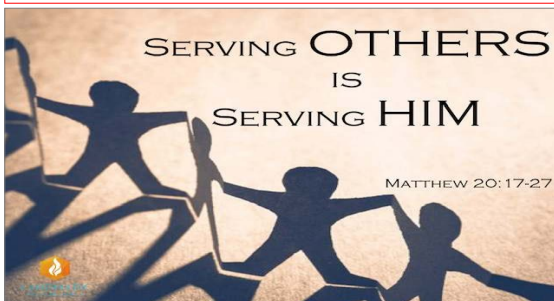
The service will be on Sunday, December 7th at 6 PM.  
(Prelude beginning at 5:30 PM)

**We invite you to celebrate this wonderful season with the music of the season!**

### Ladies' Christmas Dinner and \$10 Gift Exchange!

**When:** Friday, December 12 at 6 PM at Fourth and Faith.  
**Menu:** Swiss steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, green beans, cherry delight, and beverages (coffee, tea, water, and pop).  
**Cost:** \$25

Please RSVP to Bev at 330-827-2230 by **December 1**.  
We hope you can join us for a wonderful evening of fellowship and holiday cheer!



### **Attention all ushers and anyone interested in becoming an usher:**

There will be a training meeting on **Sunday, January 4**, immediately following worship in the Fellowship Center. We will also review the procedures for serving communion.

If you have any questions, please contact **Bev Smith**.





The Needles and Hookers group would like to THANK everyone who contributed to the Tuscarawas County Scarf Project. The group placed new donated items of hats, scarves, gloves and mittens on the clothes line on the front lawn of the church. Last year we placed 171 items, this year we placed 320 items on the clothes line! All the hats, gloves, and mittens were taken. But we do have a few scarves left. If you are interested in a scarf see any member of our group. A special thanks goes out to Dan for putting up the clothes line and taking it down. Again, thanks to anyone who donated an item(s).

We would like to say thank you to Dan, Rudy, Ruth, Jackie, Marlene, Vicki, Mary Jo, and Patty for all their help and all the bakers who brought in baked goods. Michelle Specht made 48 boxes of chocolate and drove from Columbus to bring them. Jerry Wherley made a birdhouse and two crosses (made from copper from the steeple replaced a few years ago) for our raffle table.

Thank you everyone for their cash donations and supporting the craft show.

We made \$1464.53 for the blessing box. We doubled our money from last year. Thank you so much for everyone's hard work to make this a success. The vendors were pleased and asked when the next one will be. Plan for Saturday, November 7th, 2026. Thank you again!

- Bev, Barb, Belinda, Heather, and Jen





*In winter's chill  
and candle's glow,  
We find the peace  
God longs to show.  
In manger small,  
in love so deep,  
The gift of Christ  
our hearts will keep.*

Family Members in Nursing Homes

Park Village — Linda Schilling  
Inn at Northwood — Norma Haglock  
New Dawn Assisted Living — Clara Struhar  
Park Village Independent Living — Jim Cotton  
Park Village New Phila — Don Page  
Park Village New Phila — Carol Sue Keener  
Canton Christian Home — Dotty Hartzell  
Hennis Care — Judy Frutig

To submit a prayer request, please refer to the options below and we'll be sure to add it to our prayer list.

Call Marge—330-343-1731  
Church—330-364-4458  
Email [office@doverstjohns.org](mailto:office@doverstjohns.org)

## Prayer Chain



**We're here to support you!**

To better serve our congregation, we now provide the contact information for the **Elder of the Month.**

This gives you an extra person to reach out to, alongside Rev. Cassandra, if you ever have a personal or family emergency.

Jon McIlvaine  
330-204-2123  
100 Calico Drive  
Dover, OH 44622



December 10th 1-4 @ Fourth & Faith  
Contact Bev for questions — 330-827-2230  
Benefit for cancer care bags!

**2026**

Altar Flower and Bulletin sign ups are available in the office.

## Handbell Choir

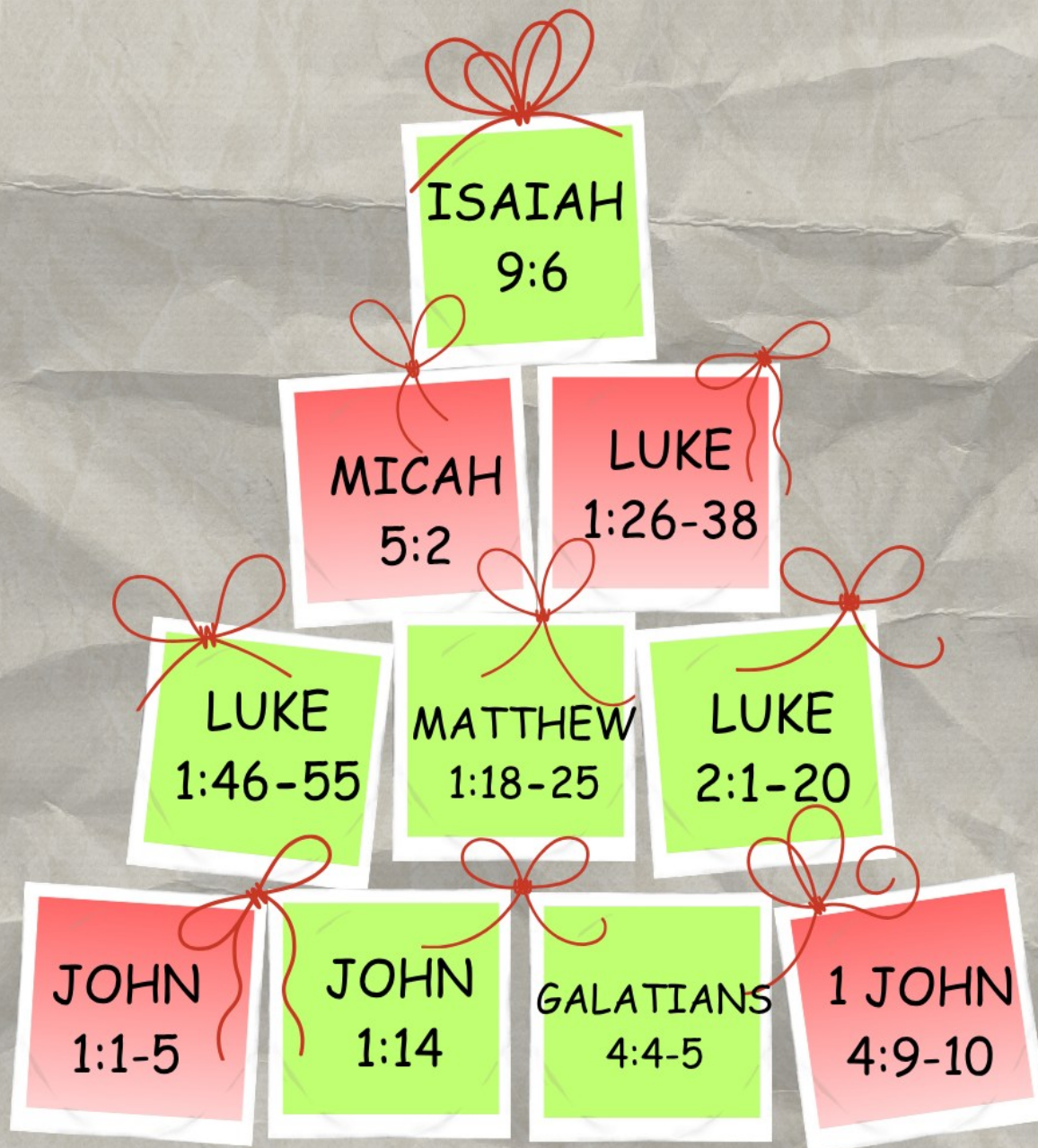
**Sundays at 11:30 AM**

All past ringers and new friends in grade 6+ welcome!  
No music experience? No problem!  
Our songs are numbered & color-coded.  
Questions? Contact Nancy Smith at 330-364-2195.





# 12 DAYS OF SCRIPTURE CHALLENGE



**MERRY CHRISTMAS**

*and Happy New Year*

# DECEMBER

<u>Sun</u>	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tue</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thu</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>
<b>30</b> All Church Advent Luncheon	<b>1</b> 10 AM Chair Yoga @ F&F  Office hours 9-1	<b>2</b> 6:30 PM Cub Scouts/Webelos	<b>3</b> Choir 7 PM	<b>4</b> 10 AM Chair Yoga @ F&F	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> 
<b>7</b> 9:00 Adult Contemporary Class 10-10:15 Family Sunday School 10:30 Worship Communion Christmas Pageant Lessons & Carol Service 6 PM @ St. Josephs	<b>8</b> 10 AM Chair Yoga @ F&F 2 PM Needles & Hookers Bad Girls Book Club 6:30 PM 7 PM Boy Scouts 7 PM Al-Anon & Alateen	<b>9</b> 6:30 PM Cub Scouts/Webelos 6:30 PM Elders / Trustees / Deacons 7:30 PM Council Mtg  Office closes at 2	<b>10</b> Card Party 1-4 @ F&F  Choir 7 PM	<b>11</b> 10 AM Chair Yoga @ F&F	<b>12</b> Ladies' Christmas Dinner and \$10 Gift Exchange @ F&F 6 PM  Office closes at 1	<b>13</b> 
<b>14</b> 9:00 Adult Contemporary Class 10:30 Worship Hand Bells 11:30	<b>15</b> 10 AM Chair Yoga @ F&F 2 PM Needles & Hookers 7 PM Boy Scouts 7 PM Al-Anon & Alateen  Office closes at 2:30	<b>16</b> 6:30 PM Cub Scouts/Webelos	<b>17</b> Choir 7 PM	<b>18</b> 10 AM Chair Yoga @ F&F	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Live Nativity on the front lawn 7, 7:30, 8, 8:30 PM  
<b>21</b> 9:00 Adult Contemporary Class 10:30 Worship Hand Bells 11:30 Live Nativity on the front lawn 7, 7:30, 8, 8:30 PM	<b>22</b> 10 AM Chair Yoga @ F&F 7 PM Boy Scouts 7 PM Al-Anon & Alateen	<b>23</b> 6:30 PM Cub Scouts/Webelos	<b>24</b> <i>Office Closed</i>  Christmas Eve Service @ 3 PM & 7 PM	<b>25</b> <i>Office closed</i>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> 9:00 Adult Contemporary Class 10:30 Worship Hand Bells 11:30	<b>29</b> 10 AM Chair Yoga @ F&F 7 PM Boy Scouts 7 PM Al-Anon & Alateen Office closes at 2:30	<b>30</b> 6:30 PM Cub Scouts/Webelos	<b>31</b> <i>Office closed</i>			