Giving: an Obligation or Opportunity?

As the Apostle Paul traveled to churches, he collected offerings for the Christians in Jerusalem who were experiencing hard economic times. When Paul was speaking to the Corinthians, he used the Macedonian believers as an example of people who, in spite of their own economic troubles, gave joyfully to the people in Jerusalem. The Macedonians’ love for Christ and their concern for their fellow believers moved them to give beyond their ability. They excelled in the grace of giving. The Macedonians gave themselves first to the Lord, and then, Paul said, they “urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints” (2 Corinthians 8:4). In Christ, they saw their giving as an opportunity to help other believers in need.

Does someone who views giving as an obligation plead for the opportunity to give? Probably not. When giving is an obligation, we will give, but giving as an obligation will not give us the joy or the attitude of pleading for the privilege to give as the Macedonians had. As God’s people, we have both an obligation and an opportunity. Scripture is clear that we are called to give. Paul said, “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made” (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Giving is an obligation, but, just as God changed the hearts and minds of the Macedonian people, he changes us so we view our giving as an opportunity rather than an obligation. As renewed and transformed people, our attitudes toward giving change from a “got to” to a “get to” attitude. We stop giving grudgingly, and we start to excel in the grace of giving by giving willingly and cheerfully. We want to give, because giving is an expression of our love and gratitude to God for who he is and what he does for us. The more we give of ourselves and our gifts the closer our relationship with Christ becomes and the more we want to give, and the more God blesses us, enabling our continued giving. “You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God” (2 Corinthians 9:11). We thank God that he fills us daily with his love so that we as members of his Body here at our church see giving as a privilege and an opportunity to praise and thank him.

Lord, help us all, with You, to yield
Whatever love demands
And freely give, as You have giv’n,
With open hearts and hands. (LSB # 787, st. 5)

~ Pastor Noack
Many thanks: Thanks to all who helped to make the sanctuary/organ dedication service and celebration lunch a big success! It was a wonderful day to celebrate the work of the Lord in our midst. Special thanks goes to Cindy and all the musicians and voices who helped to enhance the service; to the ushers and service assistants for helping things run smoothly; to Donna Meier and Honey Pabst for organizing and pulling off the brunch; and to John Martin for getting everything set up and ready for the busy day. It was a great celebration and will be a wonderful memory for all present, even as this project will be a blessing for the future generations of St. John’s. If you missed the service, be sure to check it out on our website under Video Ministry.

Excel in the Grace of Giving: This month, part of our focus will turn toward the subject of Biblical stewardship. During the weekends of November 4, 11, & 18, portions of the service will discuss various aspects of this, and there will be supplemental materials in the bulletin and sent via email. Then on Sunday, November 18 (and Saturday, November 17), there will be an opportunity to bring your commitment form and lay it before the Lord at the altar as a pledge of your faithful stewardship in the year ahead. Please pay attention to everything coming your way about this, and give some serious reflection upon what is given. Talk about it with your family. Study God’s Word as it is shared. And then, please participate in Commitment Sunday on the weekend of the 18th. I would love to see 100% participation in this program, that we may grow together and Excel in the Grace of Giving. A brief introduction, and the commitment form are included at the end of the newsletter.

Thanksgiving Eve: On Wednesday, November 21 at 7:30pm will be our annual Thanksgiving Eve Divine Service. As we take time as a nation to give thanks for all that we have been blessed with, let us join together in giving thanks to God for his present and future blessings of life and salvation!

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**Congregational Meeting**

On **Sunday, November 4th, after the 9:30am** service, we will hold our regular November congregational meeting. Topics for discussion will include the 2019 Budget, as well as an update on the sale of our properties. Please make every effort to attend this important meeting. Questions or concerns in advance may be directed to any member of the Church Council.

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**OFFICIAL ACTS**

September 15-October 14

**FUNERALS:**

Mark Philip Pressgrove  October 11, 2018
Music Notes

Cindy Holden, Director of Music

Tithes, Offerings and Alms – part of stewardship
Tithes, offerings and alms each involve resources of some kind moving from one to another; yet there are differences.

A Tithe, according to a Google search is: “10% of ones earnings used in support of the church”
A tithe reflects resources deliberately and willingly set apart for support of God’s work. Tithing is a commitment made in faith, with the understanding that “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof” (Ps 24:1). Everything comes from God and the first portion of what we receive is given back to God. How we handle that which is entrusted to us is our responsibility as stewards of those gifts, for which God will hold us accountable.

Offering – a “thing” (often money) offered to the church/God
An offering is a contribution reflecting the need or desire of the giver to give. Among the Jews in biblical times an offering might be made out of guilt for sins committed, for purification or as an act of thanksgiving. There were grain offerings, drink offerings, fragrant incense offerings, offerings of animals and many more through which people sought to be made right with God, ultimately something not possible for sinful human beings. In the offering of Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross for our sins, we are, by grace through faith in Christ as our Lord and Savior, restored in relationship with God, the Father, through Christ the Son. We are further blessed to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit through baptism. We are no longer “our own,” utterly absorbed in self, but are here to be servants of Christ in the world, giving our life, or perhaps better stated as surrendering our lives, to him, alluding to the battle that Christ fought against Satan on our behalf. As a result of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, our lives become an offering and thanksgiving as we share God’s love and seek the well-being of others. Giving money is just one of many ways that we offer ourselves; time, talents & abilities, relationship building, wisdom, experience and knowledge are among many additional offerings we make. I’d challenge that a particular staff member at my doctor’s office made an “offering” as she, using her love of & skills at decorating, transformed the normally sterile (in the sense of “cold”), environment into a homey “fall festival”. I asked at the desk who was responsible and 3 employees stated her name in unison. She smiled shyly and said that “the place needed personality and warmth.” I seriously doubt that providing that ambiance was part of her job description, but she had felt a need and desire to go “above and beyond” to use her abilities and perhaps also her resources, to provide it.

Alms – money, food, or other donations given to the poor or needy
Alms given are the heart's tangible response to the specific needs of others in less fortunate situations; compassion put into action.

With what shall I come before the Lord?
To quote John Ness Beck’s choral anthem, Offertory, that sets the words of Micah 6: 6-8, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” From that starting point, the gifts, intentionally committed, or spurred on as the Spirit continues to direct, will flow, and needs, as God knows them, will be joyfully met.

Putting Musical Gifts to work
- please take note of upcoming offerings:
St. John’s Eagle Eye Ringers perform carols and more at the Sayville Historical Society Barn, corner of Edwards St. & Collins Avenue, during their Open House Saturday, November 24 from 5-8 pm. Come sit for a bit and enjoy the ringing!
Strange Places, a Christmas Pageant with music by Canadian composer, Eleanor Daley, will be offered by our Sunday School, Choirs and soloists on Sunday, December 9 at the 9:30am service.

Recital - Organist, Mark Pacoe presents a recital during this Dedication Year of our new organ on Friday, March 1 at 7:30 pm. Mr. Pacoe currently serves as Director of Music and Organist for St. John Nepomucene/St. Frances Cabrini in New York City. He has performed in cathedrals and concert halls worldwide, has adjudicated organ competitions in USA and Europe, and records for the ACIS record label. Plans for an engaging, not to be missed program are underway!

Also coming to St. John’s

American Guild of Organists Children’s Choir Festival February 2 at 3 pm

SōLi’s 10th Anniversary Concert with the Long Island Brass Guild & Cindy Holden, organist May 11 at 8 pm

MAKING STRIDES AGAINST BREAST CANCER – The Mary Martha Guild thanks all who donated to our collection to help breast cancer survivors. Your donations of $730 will be helpful to the survivors and to the ongoing research being done.

God bless you for your support.
Every year Sunday School raises funds to support Social Ministries Family Basket program. Our Sunday School families are always generous with their support of our annual bake sale to gather funds to help buy food for families in our community.

This year is no exception. Our bakers and customers helped us to gather $250.00 to donate to Social Ministries. We thank all the people that made this year a success.

This teaches our children how easy it is to do something to help our community and our church.
Social Ministries

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. Psalm 100:4

Autumn has arrived and the Thanksgiving season is upon us! We remember the Pilgrims on Thanksgiving Day for the absolute faith that inspired them to give thanks in a year that saw nearly half their number die of illness yet they prayed with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving Day, 1621, did not just celebrate wild turkey and Indian corn; it celebrated the human spirit reaching out to God in gratitude for His blessings. It was a harvest celebration and a feast of thanksgiving and thankfulness to God. The art of thanksgiving is gratitude in action. We here at St. John’s are blessed with a generous congregation and it is a tremendous joy to be involved in ministry with you doing God’s work with our hands! We would love to have more people involved as witnesses to the grace and love of God in Christ Jesus as there is much to be done in His kingdom. God expects much, but He gives back infinitely more blessings that are eternal. Please help us to prepare for the Thanksgiving food boxes by donating the following food items:

**October 29 & 30:** Canned fruit, jar tomato sauce, peanut butter, jelly, soup, crackers, pork & beans, canned meat
**November 3 & 4:** Cranberry sauce, canned yams, stuffing, instant potatoes, turkey gravy, marshmallows
**November 10 & 11:** Oatmeal, cookies, hot cocoa, apple juice, frosting, mac & cheese, spaghettiios, spam

*We also need paper towels, toilet tissue, men’s and woman’s deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes & bar soap*

**We do NOT need canned corn, canned green beans and pasta**

All donations can be placed in Cloak Room off the Narthex. If you would like to donate a turkey please let us know so we can order only what is needed. If you will be donating a turkey, please bring it to church no later than Saturday, November 17th by 9AM. Also, several families have asked for Gift Certificates ($25) if you would like to donate one please let us know.

We will begin assembling of the boxes on Saturday, November 17th at 9:00 in the morning and will need help bringing the boxes upstairs. If you have some free time on Friday night the 16th around 4 PM, we would welcome your help with the set-up to prepare for the making of the boxes. We will be in the undercroft and hope to see you on Friday night and/or Saturday morning. We cannot do Jesus’ work without you so please join us in the undercroft to bring a little kindness, a little fellowship and a bit of prayer to the food boxes we are providing to those in need this Thanksgiving.

Through this Christian ministry, our congregation continues to witness to the community, displaying our commitment to support our less fortunate brothers and sisters and make a tangible difference in His name. If you know of anyone in need that would benefit from this ministry, please let us know.

May the act of preparing for and ultimately sharing a festive meal with those you hold dear warm not only your kitchen but also your hearts. Moreover, may we always praise our God – the giver of all good gifts – who sustains and blesses us in so many ways!

Thank you & Happy Thanks-Giving!
Linda & Vic Bonventre
631-273-6826

Don’t be tempted to eat that left over Halloween candy! Leave all donations in Cloak room off the Narthex and we will distribute goodie bags with the Thanksgiving food boxes!!

**The Star Tree will be ready on Saturday, November 24th. Please watch the bulletin for more details**
YOUTH EVENTS

**Half-Night Lock-In:** All youth are invited to a half-night lock-in at church from 7pm-midnight on Sunday, November 11 (there is no school the next day due to Veteran’s Day). Evening to include games, food, and lots of fun! A signup sheet is located on the Youth bulletin board, or you may contact the church office. Cost is $5 per person. Friends are welcome!

**Thanksgiving Food Boxes:** Youth are encouraged to come down and assist with the packing and distribution of the Thanksgiving Food Boxes along with the Board of Social Ministries/Human Care. The boxes will be put together starting around 9am on Saturday, November 17th in the church basement. Much help is needed!

**Save the Dates for December:**
- December 9 – Brunch Fundraiser for youth attending the National Youth Gathering
- December 15 – Assist with Christmas Food Boxes
- December 16 – Christmas Party/Gift Exchange/Open Gym

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**Excel in the Grace of Giving**

“But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us ... see that you also excel in this grace of giving” (2 Corinthians 8:7).

Dear Friends in Christ,

I am pleased to share with you that beginning on Saturday November 3rd and Sunday November 4th, we will begin a three-week stewardship program titled “Excel in the Grace of Giving.” This three-week period will be an enriching time for our congregation. As we grow in the grace of giving, we will develop an even closer relationship with our Lord. Our faith will deepen, both as individuals and as a congregation. For some of us, the lack of faithful giving continues to be an obstacle to our spiritual growth. Growing in our giving deepens our trust in God. Scripture is clear that we are called to be faithful stewards and to share generously with others. We give, not because God needs our money, but because we have a need to give. Through our giving, God blesses us. Giving is our response to God’s love and grace. We give willingly and cheerfully out of gratitude and thanksgiving to God. I pray that the Lord will truly bless this series and that he will reveal the true riches of his peace and joy when we give to him our first and best. I hope that you will be present all three weeks and that you will make an effort to work through the Bible studies as a family, which also address the theme “Excel in the Grace of Giving.” Please bring the attached commitment form to church on Saturday November 17th or Sunday November 18th, or you may return it to the church office at your convenience. May God’s blessings remain with you as you continue your faithful stewardship of the many blessings entrusted to your care.
My Commitment for the Lord

Lord, grant me faith to “Excel in the Grace of Giving.”

☐ I (we) promise to worship regularly.

☐ I (we) will commit to praying for the mission and ministry of my (our) church.

☐ I (we) will faithfully and cheerfully give the following amount:
   My (our) firstfruit offering percentage ________%.
   $________per week, totaling $________annually.

☐ I (we) will continue to serve/would like to begin serving in the following areas:
   ________________________________________________________________

NAME(S):____________________________________________________
   (please print)

Please return the top portion on Commitment Sunday, or to the Church Office.

My Commitment for the Lord

Lord, grant me faith to “Excel in the Grace of Giving.”

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☐ I (we) will continue to serve/would like to begin serving in the following areas:
   ________________________________________________________________

NAME(S):____________________________________________________
   (please print)

Please detach and keep for your records.
From the Lutheran Counseling Center:
Cultivating Gratitude
Rev. Forrest Parkinson, LMSW, LP

The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts; Psalm 28:7a

A new member of Alcoholics Anonymous was coming out of a difficult time. He had made a mess of his life in almost every area; his marriage and family relationships were strained to breaking, his job was on the line, he was facing health problems and his finances were in a bad way. He had a lot to be unhappy about. Everybody who was aware of his problems and cared for him dreaded that he would drink over his troubles as he had done for many years. Understandably, he was depressed. No surprises so far.

I was surprised by a palpable change in his mood and attitude; more hope, more energy, less shame and clearer vision for moving forward. What happened? More or less, he explained it like this: “I’m just starting the Twelve Steps, but I do believe God is saving me from myself. Like they say, God doesn’t save us to be miserable. My sponsor wants me to focus on the blessings in my life and he had me write a Gratitude List and pray with it when I go to bed. I’ve been getting depressed with all these problems I’ve created for myself. It was a hard list to write because part of me “wants” to focus on problems and it takes effort to be grateful instead. Making the Gratitude List is worth the effort. I still have all these problems to work out, but I keep the list folded in my pocket and I look at it when I get discouraged. Almost every night when I pray with it, I add something. I know it’s a little thing, but it has made a big difference.”

Our Lord warned us that “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” I suggest that we often “treasure” our regrets, resentments and troubles with all the time and attention we give them. When we “treasure” our misfortunes, our hearts become steeped in negative thoughts and feelings. The Gratitude List will put our focus on the good in our lives. Our AA friend above was grateful for AA, for sobriety one day at a time, for a wife who is still with him, a job he could still go to, and having a family to whom he could make amends. How about you?

While a Gratitude List is hardly a treatment for a mental health issue, it is surely a help to anyone’s psychological and spiritual tone. Could you take an hour, with your focus off your problems and list your blessings? Could you keep your list with you and look at it when negativity begins to eat at your heart? In other words, in your life, could you cultivate gratitude? Our culture would have us attend to the trouble more than the joy. So, where do you choose to steep your heart? As we approach our great national Thanksgiving Day, we will be wise to prepare our hearts with all the care that we prepare our banquets and travel. We will cultivate gratitude that we may give thanks with fulsome hearts. ...so I am helped, and my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. Psalm 28:7b

For more information or to set an appointment, please call the Lutheran Counseling Center (www.lccny.org) at 1-800-317-1173 or e-mail us at Center@lccny.org. LCC has nine counseling sites over the New York metropolitan and surrounding area.
## NOVEMBER DIVINE ASSISTANT SCHEDULE

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<th>1st Weekend 11/3 &amp; 4</th>
<th>November 3 Sat. 6:30pm</th>
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<td>Charlie Erb</td>
<td>Steve Malenczak</td>
<td>Linda Lee Sharbowicz &amp; Marilyn Jorg</td>
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<td>Ushers</td>
<td>Bob &amp; Barbara Reimels</td>
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<td>Jessica Menze</td>
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<td>Ushers</td>
<td>Bobbi Harris</td>
<td>Beth Lindfors</td>
<td>Pat Klunder</td>
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<td>Lauren Jones</td>
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<td>Patricia and Andy Harris</td>
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<td>Judy &amp; Chuck Scott</td>
<td>Dianne McPartland</td>
<td>Barbara Dahlgren</td>
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<td>Allison Abzug</td>
<td>Amanda Messina</td>
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### READINGS:
November 3 & 4: Revelation 7: 9-17, 1 John 3: 1-3
November 10 & 11: 1 Kings 17: 8-16, Hebrews 9: 24-28
November 17 & 18: Daniel 12: 1-3, Hebrews 10:11-25
November 21 Thanksgiving Eve: Deuteronomy 8:1-10, Philippians 4:6-20
November 24 & 25: Isaiah 51: 4-6, Jude 20-25

If you are unable to serve where assigned, please find someone you can switch with or someone who can take your place. Let Kathy, our Church Secretary, know of any changes you make. Thank you.
# November 2018

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**All Saints’ Day**
- 7:45am Divine Serv
- 9:30am Divine Serv
- 10:30am Congregational

**25th Sun after Pentecost**
- 7:45am Divine Serv
- 9:30am Divine Serv
- 7:00pm Half-Night

**26th Sun after Pentecost**
- 7:45am Divine Serv
- 9:30am Divine Serv
- 9:30am Bake Sale/F

**Last Sunday of the Year**
- 7:45am Divine Serv
- 9:30am Divine Serv

**Church Office Closed**
- 12:30pm NA

**Church Office Closed**
- 12:30pm NA

**Church Office Closed**
- 12:30pm NA

**December 2018**

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Saint John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church
48 Greene Avenue
Sayville, NY 11782
(631) 589-3202 – office
(631) 589-1419 – fax
www.stjohnsayville.org
Facebook: Saint John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church – Sayville NY

Rev. Brian Noack, Pastor – ext. 104
Cell Phone: (631) 806-7119
E-mail: stbnoack@aol.com

Cindy Holden, Director of Music – ext. 105
E-mail: raholden@aol.com

Saint John’s Divine Service Schedule

Saturday 6:30pm
Sunday 7:45am & 9:30am

MISSION STATEMENT
The family of Saint John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church is called, gathered and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament to confess and proclaim the gospel and love of Jesus Christ to our congregation, community and world.

A Congregation of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

The Good News is published by the church office of Saint John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church to keep its members and friends informed of church news and activities. Newsletter deadline for the December 2018/January 2019 issue will be November 15. Submissions on next month’s theme “Christmas” are welcomed.