



## PASTORS' SERMONS

Please extend an invitation to your unchurched family members and friends to attend services with you. Many people say that they did not attend a church service "Because nobody invited me". So invite your friends to hear God's Word and to become a member of God's

Family. Your pastor's sermons are designed to be contemporary and aimed for bringing God's Word to bear on our most significant struggles and challenges of life. Because of Jesus we have hope for tomorrow, confidence in the future, light in our darkness, victory in each trial, rest when we are weary and love for a life time — for Jesus is the Light of the world. Our worship services focus on God's story and how it can still impact lives with stronger faith today and with hope for tomorrow. Bring a friend.

## PASTOR LUHRING'S SERMON THEMES

Sat/Sun Nov 25/26	"Top Ten Marriage Killers" I Peter 3:8-9
Sat/Sun Dec 2/3	#1 "Come Home For Christmas" Psalm 90
Sat/Sun Dec 9/10	#2 "Come Home For Christmas" Luke 15
Sat/Sun Dec 16/17	#3 "Come Home For Christmas" Jeremiah 23
Wed Dec 20, 7:30 p.m.	Senior Choir Candlelight "Time of Salvation"
Sat/Sun Dec 23/24	
6:30 p.m., 9:30 a.m.	"Christmas Time for Celebration" John 3:16
Sun Dec 24	
5:00 p.m., 6:30 p.m.	Family Candlelight with Pastor Matt
Sun Dec 24, 10:30 p.m.	Senior Choir Christmas Eve "Time of Salvation"
Mon Dec 25, 10:00 a.m.	Pastor Matt
Sat/Sun Dec 30 & 31	
6:30 p.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m.	"Christmas In Disguise" Matthew 1:18

## THE FRIDAYS IRON MEN BIBLE STUDY

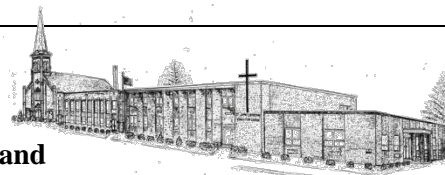
Iron Men's Bible Study meets every Friday morning from 6:30AM to 7:30AM in Adult Ed Room A. Topic for a couple weeks: By Chris Snyder "Running the Race". Just as athletes train to stay in shape, so do Christians pursue principles of excellence in their service to the Savior. Chris Snyder shares career insights he has gained from NFL sports legends and Hall of Famers - mirroring some of Scriptures greatest teachings like pressing on toward the goal and fighting the good fight. Come join this Friday morning. Iron Men's Bible study with Pastor Luhring, Rick Baldwin, Bob Heyman, Walt Smith, Jim Schatz, Jim Sunderman, Tom Koppenhofer, Steve Zachrich, Charlie Koch. Dr. VanVlerah.

# The Epistle

December, 2017 Vol. 70 #12

St. John Lutheran Church and  
Christian Day School

655 Wayne Avenue, Defiance, OH 43512



### PURPOSE STATEMENT

Worshipping God's Name...  
Teaching God's Word...  
Living with Christian Values...  
Caring with God's Love

Rev. Donald L. Luhring

Rev. Matthew P. Schiemann

419-782-5766 Fax: 419-782-0954

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www.facebook.com/stjohnlutherandefiance

### FROM PASTOR LUHRING

**The Advent Season** begins December 3<sup>rd</sup>. We will prepare the church for the coming of Christmas with decorations and the placing of the tree in front of the church. The paraments will be blue and the Advent wreath will mark the four Sundays of Advent. At St. John we also hold mid-week Advent services at 1:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. each Wednesday.

**Our Wednesday Advent theme** is "Together in Advent", a special series to celebrate the family of God together as God's family in sending His Son for our salvation. Each week will focus on a different activity for our "to-do-list" that is centered on giving and sharing instead of on materialism.

**Week 1** (December 6, 1:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.) "Be Present". Read Malachi 3:1-7. Instead of spending all our time in Advent buying presents, we in God's family set aside space to be present for others as Christ is coming to be present with us.

**Week 2** (December 13, 1:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.) "Send Peace". Read Micah 5:2-5. Beyond sending cards to loved ones this Advent season, we do all we can as the family of God to send peace to one another because the Prince of Peace is on His way.

**Week 3** (December 20, 1:00 p.m. only) "Share Joy". Read Zephaniah 3:14-20. In this time when we share cookies and other treats with one another, we share joy with those around us that they might taste and see that the Lord is good to us through the birth of His Son.

**Join us in mid-week Advent worship** with the Day School children present at 1:00 p.m. and the CrossTraining children present at the 7:30 p.m. service.



**Stephen Leaders  
and  
Ministers**

**STEPHEN LEADERS**

Pastor Donald Luhring  
419-782-5766

Penny Mueller - 419-784-3299

Dr. Jeff Pruitt - 419-395-1875

Kristina Phipps - 419-266-1672

**STEPHEN MINISTERS**

Dolena Bergman

Brenda Gary

Karen Haaser

Linda Hageman

Deb Hastedt

Sharon Lynn

Kathy Reynolds

Mary Ann Hurst



**St. John  
Staff Directory**

*Pastor*

*Rev. Donald Luhring*  
419-782-5766

*Pastor*

*Rev. Matthew Schiemann*  
419-782-5766

**Christian Day School**

*Principal*

*Shellie Kosmerchock*  
419-782-1751

**Youth Leader**

*Angie Morris*  
419-782-5766

**Senior Choir Director**

*Darci Van Vlerah*  
419-395-2460



**Scouting News**

Scouts from Cub Pack 75 (ages 6-11) and Boy Scout Troop 75 (ages 12-18) continue to look forward to new opportunities and challenges each month.

Cub Scouts recently participated in a “Turkey Shoot” at Camp Lakota where they shot nerf guns at paper turkeys. The Cub who shot the highest score from each Den (Dens are based on age groups.) received a 12-13 pound frozen turkey for his family to enjoy at Thanksgiving.

A Christmas Celebration is on the agenda for December, with games and a cookie exchange being enjoyed by Cubs and their families. Because a Scout is reverent, Cubs will also begin working on their Duty to God achievement. Opportunities also exist for them to go further and earn the religious award for their faith.

This month, members of the Boy Scout Troop are preparing for a Polar Bear as well as the Klondike Derby. Both are winter-time activities and therefore require proper preparation to enjoy and be comfortable in cold-weather conditions.

Service to others is an important part of Scouting and, as such, Boy Scouts recently collected approximately 4,000 food items in conjunction with the Crescent-News Recipe Contest for the St. John Food Pantry.

Both the Pack and Troop would like to thank everyone who purchased popcorn during the recent sale. This annual sale helps provide funds for various expenses that both units incur to provide a quality program.

The Boy Scout Troop has for many years recycled newspapers as a conservation project. Anyone wishing to recycle newspapers can place them in the garage on the east side of the south parking lot. Money made from their sale is used to help pay for Scouts to attend summer camp.

Youth and adults are always welcome to attend pack and troop events to learn more about the program. Questions at any time can be addressed to Mike Saxton, Chartered Organization Representative, at 419-439-2079.

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## CONGREGATION CHRISTMAS PARTY

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Congregational Christmas Dinner will be held on Sunday December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. in St. John Lutheran Lunchroom. Menu includes: Pork Tenderloin, Mashed Potatoes and Gravy, Corn, Rolls, Cottage Cheese, Applesauce, Coleslaw with cookies at dessert. Please let the church office know if you are planning to attend. Thank you.

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## THANK YOU

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Thank you to everyone that contributed monies and items to the food pantry for the Thanksgiving Bags and Christmas Bags that were distributed to the Food Pantry Clients in November and December. The families that we serve are very thankful for the generous amount of food that they receive from our Food Pantry.

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## INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

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If you would like to know what is happening at any given moment at our church, you can go to our church web page at [www.stjohndefiance.com](http://www.stjohndefiance.com) and see what is scheduled. We are going to have more detailed information on the calendar so you can make use of this valuable tool to keep you informed. The address is <http://www.stjohndefiance.com/calendar>. If you have any questions you may call the church office at 419-782-5766 or email [sjl@defnet.com](mailto:sjl@defnet.com).

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## 2018 OFFERING ENVELOPES

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If you have an offering envelope higher than 425, you will receive a new offering number in 2018. We are trying to conserve and minimize the waste of unused envelopes. Thank you. If you have any questions please contact the church office or you can email: [sjl@defnet.com](mailto:sjl@defnet.com). Thank you to everyone that turned in their "Commitment Cards", ommitting to your offering helps us with budgeting for the next year and continues the ministries at St. John.

### *FROM PASTOR MATT*

#### **What Is Advent All About?**

Advent is somewhat of a lost season in our culture. It seems as if Christmas preparations, decorations, and advertisements begins right after Thanksgiving, though this year I saw the first Christmas advertisement the day after Halloween. We are pushed from one marketing season and campaign to the next. We move from one big holiday to the next.

This is a problem. Why? Because it never gives us time to slow down and focus on what is coming, to reflect on what has passed and to get our bearings. If we continue from one big moment right into the next we're taking away our chance to reflect and to slow down in our daily lives.

If you asked people today what advent is you might get a blank stare. Perhaps you'd hear something about a countdown to Christmas or about the chocolate in the calendars. But surely there must be more to this season than just that. People don't really know what Advent is all about. This is true in many ways outside the church as it is inside the church.

Even if you've been in church your whole life, you know that Advent is about preparing for the coming of Christ, but you may not understand why the readings we use each week are what they are. We're getting ready for Christmas so why is the first Sunday's reading either the Triumphal entry which we'd expect on Palm Sunday or Jesus speaking of the end times? We just finished the end of the church year where we reflect on the end of days. After the first week the gospel lessons are focused on John the Baptists ministry which makes some sense; "preparing the way for the Christ" was his mission. Yet, the message John has for us is somewhat haunting, "Repent for the kingdom of Heaven has come near." I don't often hear that message in the Christmas carols we are singing; it is in the Advent hymns, but those aren't as well known and cheery.

When we functionally drop the season of Advent we are short changing our experience of God's story and of the gospel story. Advent is the time where we prepare for Christ's first coming and await and anticipate His second coming. >>>

This is why we have readings from the Old Testament that anticipate the Messiah, the long-awaited Savior. >>>

It's also why our gospel readings call on us to be prepared for God's return to His people. The word advent literally means "coming". We are anticipating the coming of our King. This anticipation looks back to Christ's first coming and anticipates His second coming. The central prayer of Advent is the one word, the concluding prayer of the bible, *maranatha*, come, Lord Jesus. This is why the theme of the first Sunday of Advent teaches us this season is a time of expectation, hope and waiting, joined with a confidence that we will not be disappointed by God, who is attentive to his people's needs. The second Sunday of advent teaches us the contrast between the things we experience, including the long delay in waiting for God just like Israel waited for their messiah for centuries, and the hope we nonetheless maintain. The third Sunday of advent teaches and sounds the note of anticipatory Joy: Rejoice for the messianic age is here-- God has come.

Advent isn't simply an early extension of Christmas and the joy of Jesus' birth. The theme of advent is the anticipation of the answer that will ultimately be given to our continued prayers; God will come and redeem His people. The visions of the prophets will be fulfilled, which will prove that they have been faithful in declaring God's Word. The Spirit of the season is confidence brimming with expectation and hope, while we wait in uncertainty about the time and places when all these promises will finally see their fulfillment in Christ's second coming (as it says, no one but the Father knows the hour - Matthew 24:36). Advent is preparation for Jesus's return and begs the question, "is your heart ready?"



However, caring ministry is one area of ministry that pastors can delegate to or share with laypeople who have the right gifts, training, and commitment. Pastors who let Stephen Ministers help shoulder the caregiving load find they have more time to spend on the key duties or specific caregiving situations that only pastors are uniquely equipped or called to perform.

#### **4. Multiplies Ministry**

Pastors can only be in one place at a time, but they can multiply their reach through a team of well-trained and organized lay caregivers. The pastor at one smaller congregation with Stephen Ministry kept careful records and reported that for every hour of time he invested in Stephen Ministry, seven hours of caregiving resulted. He considered his involvement in Stephen Ministry to be one of the best and most highly leveraged uses of his time.

#### **5. Reassurance That People Are Receiving Quality Care**

Pastors know of many more people with needs for care than they can minister to by themselves. Sometimes pastors feel guilty that they aren't providing more care, or they burn themselves out trying to meet the overwhelming needs. Stephen Ministry provides pastors the reassurance that people who need care are receiving it. As one Stephen Series pastor put it, "Since we began Stephen Ministry 15 years ago, I sleep better at night. Right now, for example, I know there are 23 people receiving care—very high-quality care—on a weekly basis from our Stephen Ministers. As a pastor, I simply don't have another 23 hours a week to provide that care myself. So it's a joy and comfort to know that people in need are receiving that care from our Stephen Ministers."

If you need a Stephen Minister, please call the church office at 419-782-5766.

#### **REACH OUT AND TELL SOMEONE YOU CARE!**

The Tele-Care Committee meets the first Monday of the month at St. John. The committee "reaches out" and calls congregation members who need an encouraging word and someone to listen. There are several people who currently volunteer. Our group would welcome more volunteers. There are so many people needing calls that we do not get through the whole list. There is training available for those who would like additional support. If you can participate for two and half hours on the first Monday of the month from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m., please email or call the church office. 419-782-5766 or [sjl@defnet.com](mailto:sjl@defnet.com). Thank you.

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## SCHIEMANN'S CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

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Pastor Matt and Mary Rose invite you to their Christmas Open House on Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Everyone is welcome at 414 Arabella.

**BLESSED CHRISTMAS!**

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## STEPHEN MINISTRY

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### How Stephen Ministry Benefits Pastors

#### 1. Shared Ministry

Pastors no longer bear alone the responsibility for providing care to the entire congregation. They have a team of caregivers—well organized, well trained, highly motivated and committed, and well supervised—to assist with providing pastoral care. One pastor said, “For the first time in 37 years I am surrounded by a team of people who are as committed to pastoral care of the congregation as I am.”



#### 2. High-Quality Lay Leadership

Pastors can rely on well-trained laypeople to carry out many of the day-to-day operations of Stephen Ministry. The Leader's Training Course (LTC) equips laypeople to function at a very high level of leadership (as Stephen Leaders) so the main workload for this ministry doesn't end up on the pastor's shoulders. Lay Stephen Leaders do a high-quality job because they are well trained, have extensive resources (in their Leader's Manual), receive ongoing support (from the consultation staff at Stephen Ministries and a special section of our website), and are highly motivated, knowing they can make a significant contribution to their church's ministry.

#### 3. Frees the Pastor to Focus on What Only the Pastor Can Do

Stephen Ministers will never replace the ordained clergy because there are certain tasks, duties, and responsibilities that an ordained clergyperson is uniquely trained, qualified, and called to perform. >>>

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## MEET THE NEW CHURCH SECRETARY

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Linda Heffelfinger is our new church secretary. Linda will be working on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. She was born and raised just over the Ohio border in Michigan. After graduating from Business College in Toledo she settled in the Defiance County area. She has worked at RE/Max Realty, Howard Painting and also at Duerk

Construction for 17 years until its closing. She then ended up back at Howard Painting. Her family consists of her husband Kevin Heffelfinger of 21 years, son Paul Walters and his wife Misty and 3 grandchildren, two 2 step-daughters, Heidi Lang and Brittany Heffelfinger along with four grandchildren. She enjoys traveling, hiking, photography and she also is an avid scrapbooker. She is a member at Mark Center UMC and lives in Hicksville, Ohio. Please extend a hand of welcome to Linda.

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## BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

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Sunday: 9:30 a.m.	Lunchroom—Phil Rohlf Lunchroom—Faye Luhring Fellowship Room—Jeff Rohlf Fellowship Room—Sandy Gyurnek
Wednesday: 9:00 a.m.	Moms in Touch—Tim Hortons (2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Wed. of the month)
Wednesday: 6:30 p.m.	Adult A—Phil Rohlf Lunchroom—Shellie Kosmerchok

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## RING THE BELL FOR RAVENS

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We need volunteers to help “Ring the Bell” at the Mall. The money raised helps raise money for Ravens Cares, a ministry started by churches and supported by churches. Here are a couple days and times that are available. Please call the church office if you are interested.

Friday, Dec. 15 from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.  
Saturday, Dec. 23 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

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## WAYS TO HELP

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1. December 11 from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. we will sort fresh produce.
2. Help with shoveling snow from our sidewalks.
3. Help with PowerPoints.

*Please call the church office if you would like to help.*

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## THANK YOU GOD!

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- Thank you, God, for the freedom to worship You.
- Thank you, God, for all the children that are learning about Jesus here at St. John.
- Thank you, God, for all the volunteers that help at St. John.
- Thank you, God, for blessing Your church.

If you have something that you want to have published that you are thankful for, please send your message to: [sjl@defnet.com](mailto:sjl@defnet.com).

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## THANK YOU

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Thank you for all the generous donations for the volleyball tournament! We had a great turnout and will be able to put the income towards new uniforms. Kate Webb, Athletic Dept.

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## NOVEMBER FOOD PANTRY STATS

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**Through Nov. 30, 2017**

104 families served; 364 people served

535 bags of food given

Approximately \$5,350 worth of food given

*“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,*

*I was a stranger and you invited me in.” Matthew 25:35*

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## YOU'RE INVITED

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The congregation is invited to attend the school's weekly Chapel service each Thursday morning at 8:55 a.m.

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## ANGEL TREE PROJECT

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Angels are placed on the “Angel Tree” in the reception area for people to remove and shop for gifts on November 22. The gift requests are on the Angels. Each gift should be an approximate \$20.00 value. This is a Prison Fellowship Ministry Angel Tree Program which helps children of incarcerated parents have a Merry Christmas. These gifts are presented to the children on behalf of the incarcerated parent. Please return gifts to the church office by Wednesday, December 13, 2017.

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## PASTORAL ACTS

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### **Baptisms:**

**Elizabeth Rose Dietz on Nov. 12, 2017**

Parents: Zachary and Sarah Dietz

### **Deaths:**

**Betty Schlotterback (NM)**

died on Oct. 28, 2017. Funeral was held on Wed. Nov. 1

### **Gains:**

**Amy Weaver** and children, Emmalee and Charlotte from Concordia Lutheran Church, LCMS, Ft. Wayne, IN

### **Released:**

**Amanda Bowen** and children, Zac Olson and Zara Bowen.

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## CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICES

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December 10	2:00 p.m. Preschool Christmas Program 3:30 p.m. St. John K-8 Christmas Program
December 20	7:30 p.m. Senior Choir Christmas Concern
December 24	9:30 a.m. Traditional Worship Service 5:00 p.m. Family Candlelight Christmas Eve Service 6:30 p.m. Family Candlelight Christmas Eve Services 10:30 p.m. Senior Choir Christmas Concert
December 25	10:00 a.m. Christmas Day Service with Holy Communion
December 30	6:30 p.m. New Year's Service with Holy Communion
December 31	9:30 a.m. Traditional Service with Holy Communion 11:00 a.m. Contemporary Service with Holy Communion

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## A CHRISTMAS CONCERT

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A Christmas concert by the Toledo Symphony Orchestra, Wednesday, December 13, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 16976 County Road Q1, Napoleon Ohio. Join us for a special night of Christmas music, performed by the Toledo Symphony Orchestra. Ticket prices are \$20.00 for Adults, \$10.00 for Students, children 5 and under are free. Ticket sales will begin Monday, November 13. For questions or to reserve tickets, call 419-758-3522. Tickets can be picked up and paid for the night of the concert or purchase tickets at the St. Paul's church office Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Doors will open at 6:45 p.m. There is no reserved seating. Seats are available on a first come, first serve basis.

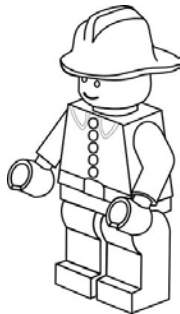
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## CHALKGUY LEGO DRIVE SERVICE PROJECT

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### How you can help and support the Ohio District Junior High Youth Gathering at the same time?

Ben Glenn, the Chalkguy, will once again be welcomed as the keynote presenter at the Ohio District Jr. High Youth Gathering, March 9-11, 2018. Ben is a phenomenal presenter who speaks directly to young people about some issues with which they or someone they know may be coping. He connects the Gospel of Jesus Christ to his chalk art in a most unique way. What we get are well thought out, strong messages of God's love and grace to our young people and their chaperons.



Since 2013, Ben has been collecting LEGO—both new and clean used to share with schools, churches, hospitals, outreach programs and more. Why? As he states, “Research shows that play is a powerful activity in the life of a child, helping to develop social, communication, determination, empathy, patience, and teamwork skills. Then, playing with LEGOs in particular adds another entire layer of benefit. LEGO play develops creativity, fine motor skills, confidence and problem solving skills” >>>>

**WHERE DO WE, THE OHIO DISTRICT COME IN?** Along with Ben and his presentations, come for the costs for having him with us for the Jr. High Gathering in March. He is willing to deduct \$50.00 from his fees for every 10 pounds of LEGO that we donate to his CHALKGUY LEGO Drive Service Project. Start collecting now! Stop at those yard sales, clean out your basements and attics!

In the end, this will help the youth of Ohio attend the Gathering by helping to keep their registration costs for the Gathering down.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT BEN GLENN AND HIS PROJECT** by going to Chalkguy LEGO drive at [giveourbricks.com](http://giveourbricks.com). You can learn and see more about Ben, his presentations and chalk art by going to [simplybenglenn.com](http://simplybenglenn.com) **Only LEGOs! (Mega Bloks, Playmobil, K'NEX and other knock-offs are not acceptable)**

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## CHILDREN IN CHURCH

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We are glad that you and your child are with us in worship today! We understand it can be a challenge to manage children. To help you we have activity bags and children's bulletins and crayons available. They are at the main entrance; please ask an usher for assistance if needed. We will also be having a children's message at the 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. service.

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## LADIES AID

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The Ladies Aid will be having their annual Cookie Exchange at GlennPark on December 14, 2:00 p.m. Members are asked to bring two dozen cookies to exchange. After the exchange members will be Christmas caroling for the residence. Join us for the festivities and fun.

