

WIND SWEEP

Monthly Newsletter

December 2025

The season upon us gathers we wilderness people into a sacred circle of light. I adore Advent. We wait. We wander. We wonder. How might we approach the days ahead with awe and curiosity? If you're looking for a reason to spend more time with Jesus, Advent is the balm you didn't know you needed for your Christian soul.

At SoJ, this year's Advent theme is: "What do you fear?" We'll be using a lovely resource called A Sanctified Art. Gauging by worship planning, get ready for the Spirit to stir you by weaving art, liturgy, poetry and song. Our whole selves will engage that internal spark to move from fear to fullness of life. A favorite verse from the Psalms that connects is: "The LORD is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" (v. 1).

Speaking on the topic, I indulge this space to say: "thank you," dear flock, for welcoming Tim, Blu (our 80-pound black lab) and I into this generous, vibrant body of Christ! Change is scary. Transitions bring grief and surprise. From moments of doubt to bursts of clarity we each find our way. In my heart, know that I have felt our Savior's presence working through our person-led, God-powered congregation.

At the end of 2024, I wasn't around when you began enthusiastic conversations about our now shared future. Becoming fully staffed was prioritized. Aligning with ministry partners was crucial. Providing opportunities, for all ages, to gather in praise to our Lord was a must. Showing radical hospitality made the top of the list. See you at the Levitt next summer!

We are weary. Creatures are weary. Our Creator's world is weary. Advent provides time to join in our weariness and navigate what lies ahead, together.

In this last month of another year, how is your belonging to this beloved church family? Can you feel the pulse of our bold service efforts? Are you ready to keep learning in faith? Sharing your time, talents and financial resources? Worshiping with passion? Being you?

I am over the moon to be your pastor and one of our many smiling shepherds. With a coffee budget, I travel. (But I'd travel anyway.) There's a favorite hymn of mine, ELW 659, entitled Will You Let Me Be Your Servant. The lyrics speak of holding for another person "the Christ light in the nighttime of your fear." It's our vocation... called to hold high the Light for our neighbors.



Christ's Light Be Yours,
Pastor Dayna

Blessings for Advent. Be well. Bask in the warmth of God's love.



As the year draws to a close, we want to thank you for your continued support of our mission and ministry. We pray that this Christmas season is a time of warmth, connection, and renewed grace. And, we acknowledge that for too many of us... it is not.

May you find in our community the glimpses of the kingdom of God that give you hope when you have none.

May you experience in our hospital for sinners unconditional love that reflects God's love for all. May you come to this house of prayer for all peoples knowing that the fullness of your being is cherished in this place. May you find at our table of grace a seat with your name on it. And, may God give you the merriest of Christmases... for unto you a child is born!

Pr. Eric Olrtman

Eric Gohl

Pr. Dayna Weltzin

Tori Rasmussen

Bella Kumagai

Marnie Dahle Backer

Miranda Stahl

Amy Cauble

Heather Wald

Kendra Namanny

Derris Kunkel

Michele Vogel

Holden Evening Prayer

Wednesdays 6:30pm - 12/3, 12/10, 12/17

Children's Christmas Program

Sunday, December 14 - 8:45am

Christmas Eve Worship

Wednesday, December 24 - 3:00 (Family), 5:00, 7:00pm

Lessons & Carols

Sunday, December 28 - 9:30am



Join us at **Spirit of Joy** this season

Whose Birthday is it, anyway?

An Advent/Christmas Parable

by Arley K. Fadness

Once upon a time in the land of Puzzling Tales there lived an eight year old boy by the name of Jason.

Now in this Land and in the neighborhood where Jason lived, the unexpected always happened. Instead of football they played kneeball; instead of the children going to school the teachers were busy going to homes and in the summer time it was not uncommon to see water freeze and in the winter time leaves grew on trees. It was a funny, strange place.

One incident in the Land of Puzzling Tales, stands out when it was time for Jason's 9th birthday. As usual, the unusual happened.

Jason's grandparents came from across the state to help celebrate, but of course, when they got to Jason's neighborhood they went immediately to the Smiths down the street and visited and stayed there.

When Jason's mother baked a birthday cake she gave it to the Letter Carrier to eat. And when the neighborhood kids heard it was Jason's birthday they exchanged gifts with one another and of course Jason got none.

There was a ton of birthday cards. The post office had to hire extra workers. They worked longer hours to handle all the cards. Of course in the Land of Puzzling Tales, all the kids, moms and dads, grandparents, even a couple of dogs and a parakeet got cards, while poor Jason got none. On Facebook

everybody wished each other greetings but not Jason.

Finally about 9 o'clock, in a fit of bewilderment and frustration Jason went out of his house, borrowed the school cheerleaders megaphone, rode up and down the street on his unicycle and shouted at the top of his lungs, ***"Whose birthday is it anyway??"***

And all night long echoes bounced off the mountain sides, ***"Whose birthday is it anyway? Whose birthday is it anyway?"***

At Christmas time ***whose birthday is it?***

Ah it's Jesus' birthday! So Jesus, like Jason, will get the gifts the cards, the songs and the love.

We give to Jesus when we give to the poor, the weak, the hungry, the homeless, refugees, the prisoners – and then we say and sing, ***"Happy birthday Jesus, after all it's your birthday!"***



SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS

GriefShare Session

Monday, December 8
7:00-9:00 pm

All are welcome
sign up online: spiritofjoy.net/signups



Find SoJ Channel on
Podpoint or where you find
your favorite podcasts



stories for your drivetime or anytime

NEW EPISODES WEEKLY



STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFO

Outreach Opportunities

Sharing the Dream in Guatemala Pop Up Shop | Sunday, Dec. 14

Sharing the Dream began with the dream of promoting sustainable fair trade, providing fair wages, and employment opportunities. Today they works with more than 20 cooperatives and small businesses that use traditional Maya techniques to create unique products. Purchase provides not only an income, but also supports community development projects in Guatemala.

Our ongoing projects include:

- Artisan development project that provides workshops and ongoing educational opportunities
- Elder center that feeds and provides medical care for over 60 Maya elders
- Educational scholarships and academic support for elementary, middle and high school



100% of our proceeds return to Guatemala to help advance our projects and mission. Sharing the Dream emphasizes creating equal relationships with Guatemalans and strives to promote education, independence and

innovation in all of our projects. We are all working together to make a difference in Guatemala. Thank you so much for being a thread in the tapestry.

Horace Mann Elementary at SoJ Sunday, Dec. 7

Learn more about our Bridges program for elementary students at Horace Mann! This unique school uses relationships and the Boys Town model to educate students on social and emotional regulation and growth with a primary focus on academics. The goal is for all students to integrate back into their home attendance school. Hear what teachers, parents, students, and support staff and partners have to say about this incredible program. Our ambassadors are Amy Dietrich Mark and Liz Lynch. Together we provide school supplies, teacher support, funding for field trips, and classroom volunteers.

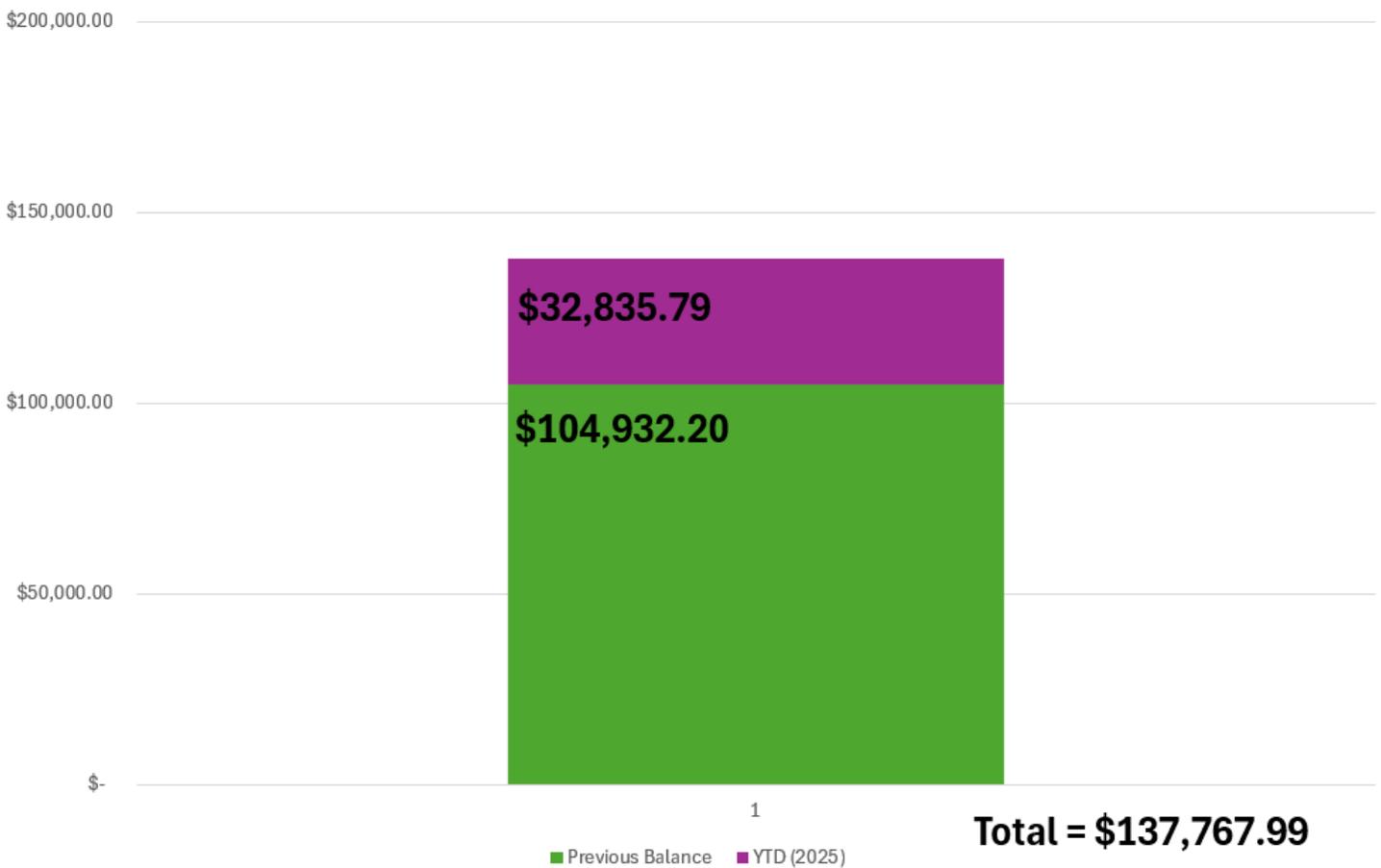
Grab an ornament off the Christmas trees in our Gathering Space or The Well to support the prize closet at Horace Mann this Christmas season!





If you are looking for ways to support SoJ ministries that align with your financial goals, here are four tax-smart giving strategies you may want to explore: stock gifts, IRA gifts, donor-advised funds or beneficiary designations. Please consider investing now in SoJ’s future!

Mission Endowment Fund Balance



For more information on Mission Endowment Fund, visit:
spiritofjoy.net/mission-endowment-fund-2



Faith Formation



Adult Sunday School | This year's adult education will follow closely with our Bible in a Year Program. Each week will be an independent overview of an entire book or books of the Bible. Come regularly.

- Dec. 7- Horace Mann
- Dec. 14- 1 and 2 Kings
- Dec. 21- 1 and 2 Chronicles



Brewed Theology | Monday, 12/15 7PM @ Jack Rose

**BREW
EDTHE
OLOGY**

Christmas holiday decorations are populating retail stores and advertising spaces. As reliable and obvious as the fact that “Christmas comes this time each year”, equally reliable is the arrival of retail hype and consumerism, along with the sparks of what some decry as the “war on Christmas.”

But what is this “war”? Who is battling whom? What’s really at stake? Arguments over seasonal greetings (“Merry Christmas” vs. “Happy Holidays”), debates over recognizing (or not) non-Christian religious holidays, complaints about *not* participating or *too much* participating in neighborhood decorations, and the confusion about the incursion of Santa into nativity scenes mixed with complaints of Old Saint Nick being cancelled, all fly around the holidays more frantically than reindeer. (Or was it angels?) Let’s talk about it. **Find more information and the pre-reading at spiritofjoy.net/signups.**

Guatemala Trip with Sharing the Dream

Experience an immersion trip focused on community building and a faith experience outside of our normal opportunities.

When: May 24-June 2, 2026

Why: Love our neighbor. Learn about how others worship, live, and connect to Spirit of Joy.

Cost: \$2,800 (see breakdown below)

- Deposit to hold spot - \$300
- Program Cost - \$1,800
- Flight Cost - \$600-\$800
- Passport Cost - \$165 new or \$130 renewal

Email Tori
tori.spiritofjoy@gmail.com
to reserve your spot today!

Important Dates: Mark Your Calendars!

- December 14 - Registration deadline
- January 12 - Passport application deadline
- February 15 - First travel prep meeting
- March 1 - Final program cost deadline



Spirit of Joy Preschool

It has been a busy November at preschool with preschool photos, Parent/Teacher conferences, and the weekly lesson activities. We are thankful for the beautiful weather, wonderful learning resources, and supportive volunteers.

The nature of teaching means offering a variety of opportunities to learners with the goal of connecting just right. We are constantly reviewing our lessons and attending to learning interests of children. But sometimes, God provides a clear reminder that God is in control. One day, in the midst of transitions, Miss Miranda shared the song “B-I-B-L-E”. It took just one time for the children to catch on.

Since that time, the children have been singing it while playing, walking down the hallway and in their homes (as noted by many parents!). It goes with us everywhere and catches everyone they encounter. As adults, we also are taught and reminded of God’s presence through the preschool children. God’s love is always present and for all people. For this reminder, we thank you, God.

Advent Blessings, Miss Amy



Family Christmas Event and Milestone

December 18, 8:15-9:30am

The preschool children will be celebrating the birth of Jesus with a Christmas milestone this year. Partnering with the Faith Formation Team, preschoolers will learn explore the Bible, create a craft, share music, and enjoy a treat with their families. If you would like to support these learners, please feel free to attend the event. Please contact Amy Cauble to RSVP and assist with preparations.

Merry Christmas!

Cozy Christmas Sunday, December 7



Wear your Christmas pajamas or favorite flannel to worship

Freewill donation (suggested \$30) can be dropped off at the Preschool Christmas Tree

all proceeds will benefit operating costs

Preschool Christmas Cards are scheduled for delivery on December 7 and December 9. If you have ordered cards, please visit the card distribution table. Forgot to order? It's OK! We have a few extra cards for you. Share the joy of the season with these adorable cards and support your preschool. (1 card= \$5, 1 set of 12 cards= \$50) Thank you for your support.

Creation Care Corner

What are some of your traditions in the Advent season?



Did you know that the pre-Christian Germanic and Scandinavian people used to mount candles on wooden wheels or evergreen wreaths because they were pleading the gods to change the dark season back to the season of warmth and light? As they became Christians, many of their old traditions took on new meaning. As these Christians observed the decreasing daylight, they declared Jesus as the light of the world; thus, lighting the candles on the wreath symbolized resistance to the darkness.

Do you have any traditions that are eco-friendly? It's never too late to try something new!

Have you ever heard of **furoshiki**? This is a tradition originating in Japan that was originally a way to wrap, carry, and transport valuables for emperors. It eventually became a way to carry and wrap just about anything, but especially gifts. If you do a Google search of furoshiki, you will find some lovely inspiration for your gifts and keep more gift wrap waste out of the landfills! Also, you can search "reusable gift wrap" and see what you find. Try something reusable for your gift giving this year.

If you have little ones in your family, why not consider **adopting a species** via World Wildlife Fund?

Do you always give physical gifts? How about **gifting an experience** instead? Try tickets to a concert, movie, or sporting event, or a fun day trip, or give the gift of music lessons or a community education class.

Volunteer to ring the bell for the Salvation Army. You will get some fresh air and get to know some of the people in your community – all for a good cause! Run or walk in a fundraiser for a charity and bring the whole family.

If you are interested in being a more vocal and active voice for change from an eco-friendly perspective, the Creation Care Team would like to invite you to join us for a **letter writing event on Monday, December 8th at 5:30 pm in the Shalom area**. Bring your coffee, water, or other beverage in a non-plastic reusable bottle and bring some treats to share (hint: we all love Christmas cookies 🍪). We will have some templates on hand as well as ideas for companies to contact. Our goal is to encourage them to engage in practices that minimize waste and emissions. Wouldn't it be nice to buy something and not have to peel off layers of plastic just to get to it?

But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.
Romans 8:25



Church Office closed

December 25-26 & January 1st

Year-End Giving. Any gift that you would like to be reflected in your 2025 giving must be in the Spirit of Joy office by end of day on Tuesday, December 30. We'd love to have any remaining 2026 Commitment Cards in the office by the end of 2025! Thank you for your continued support of the mission and ministry of Spirit of Joy.



Financials through October 2025

Checking Account:

General Fund	(\$10,751.76)
Building Fund	\$8,907.30
Donor Restricted	\$143,060.88
Reserve Fund	\$4,360.10
Petty Cash	\$200.00

Savings Accounts:

Building	\$192,941.62
<u>Donor Restricted</u>	<u>\$41,435.33</u>
Total Cash Balance	\$380,153.47

	October 2023	October 2024	October 2025
Attendance	1809	1260	1574
General Offering	\$ 49,085.99	\$ 76,078.18	\$ 84,300.39
Building Offering	\$ 17,867.67	\$ 20,582.16	\$ 8,907.30

Year-to-date Income for Ministry	\$661,213.01
<u>Year-to-date Expenses for Ministry</u>	<u>\$682,949.31</u>
Net Income/Deficit for Ministry	(\$21,736.30)