



There are certainly times when we're not up for hosting because the house is a mess, or the apartment is unfinished.

Even if we give some time to cleaning things up and getting things ready, we might still wonder if our guests will look in the closet or see the dust bunnies under the couch.

Maybe we wonder at the dawning of the Advent season, do we really want to prepare the way of the Lord - knowing full well that Jesus will most likely notice the mess we've made of things.

Seems like we're never quite able to get it all together. We're in a mess in Israel / Palestine, Ukraine / Russia, the civil war in Sudan and the rising refugee crisis around the globe. We've made a mess of things globally, locally, internally.

So maybe that's where we begin the Advent season.

Maybe the best way to prepare for Jesus is admitting that we need Jesus.

He has always known the messes we get ourselves into and happened to arrive in a context of hostility, violence, and confusion. So, knowing He is the Prince of Peace, we make room and receive His peace. We get honest this season and name the mess, confess the sin, and repent of harmful ways. We're tired of pretending and trying to hold it all together and getting life spotless. We need Jesus, and we are ready to prepare room for Him in our messy world. We're ready for change, growth, and joy to the world. Come, Lord Jesus.

Tom

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

*Matthew 3:3*

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.*

- Isaac Watts, 1719



## DECEMBER CALENDAR

### December 3

Fall Prevention Workshop  
11am—Fellowship Hall

### December 5

Evening of Remembrance  
7pm—Sanctuary

### December 7

Cookie Baking/Exchange  
12pm—Kitchen

### December 10

Preschool Board Meeting  
11:15am—Library

Christmas Concert & Reception  
4pm—Sanctuary & Trinity Hall

### December 11

Session  
7pm—Lounge

### December 12

Pause Women's Small Group  
7pm—Sanctuary

### December 19

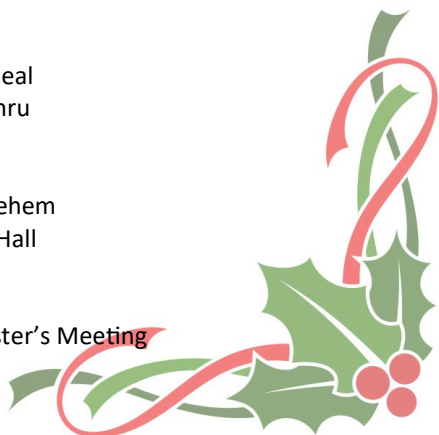
Community Meal  
5:00—Drive-thru

### December 20

Night in Bethlehem  
6pm—Trinity Hall

### December 26

Stephen Minister's Meeting  
7pm—Lounge



## DECEMBER HYBRID WORSHIP

### December 3

#### First Sunday of Advent

#### Communion Sunday

Rev. Dr. Tom MacMillan  
*Luke 1:67-79 & Romans 13:11-12*  
*Dawn Breaking*

### December 10

#### Second Sunday of Advent

#### Healing Prayer

Rev. Dr. Tom MacMillan  
*Isaiah 40:1-11*  
*In the Wilderness*

### December 17

#### Third Sunday of Advent

Rev. Dr. Tom MacMillan  
*Luke 1:26-38*  
*Let It Be*

### December 24 (10am)

#### Fourth Sunday of Advent

#### Intergenerational Service

Rev. Dr. Kristian & Rev. Susanne Bendoraitis  
*Luke 1:46-55*  
*Elders of Jazz*

### Christmas Eve Worship (6pm)

Family Friendly Worship Service  
Rev. Susanne Bendoraitis

### Christmas Eve Worship (8pm)

Hymns, Candlelight, Traditional Feel  
Rev. Dr. Tom MacMillan

### December 31

Rev. Dr. Tom MacMillan  
*Luke 2:21-38*  
*Resilience - Sisu*

## HATS, MITTENS, GLOVES AND SOCKS

God's love lives in each of us and encourages us to help one another in times of plenty and in times of want. Many in our community struggle to stay warm as the temperature drops. We are hoping you will help keep the hands and feet of our neighbors toasty this winter.



Congregational Life is, once again, collecting new hats, mittens, gloves and socks for those in need and will coordinate with the Mission Committee to identify recipients. Please help make our donations generous.

Through Sunday, December 10, you can place your donations in the shopping bags found in front of the Christmas tree near the north entrance. Your donations will allow us to serve many. Thank you.

# NOVEMBER RECAPS

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS - November 13, 2023 MEETING

- Session began with a reading from *Exodus 18* where Moses' father-in-law gave him advice to not do all the leading by himself but to find competent God fearing people to be leaders over groups. This led to a discussion with Session and committee chairs on reviewing our committees and what we as a church community are doing.
- Treasurer, Mindi Schibley reported that regular offering is 3% below the budgeted amount for 2023. Operating expenses were for the most part within budget. We are thankful to report the church received a special gift in the amount of \$17k to help offset the driveway repairs this past summer. Overall, we have a month-to-date gain of \$33K, with an overall year-to-date gain of \$16K including the budgeted amount from the Morris Fund.
- Noted that quarterly the Finance Committee will review gifts received from the Mortgage to Ministry Commitments and make an appropriate principal prepayment to reduce the total principal. The Finance Committee approved a \$43K payment to principal in October. The mortgage loan balance as of October 31 is \$165K.
- Rev Susanne Bendoraitis presented a proposal for 2024 sabbatical for time for soul, mind, and body renewal through exploring the concept and spiritual discipline of Sabbath.
- Membership submitted a list of members we haven't seen in worship or active at the church for some time. Membership is asking Session to review and possibly reach out to those on the list to invite back or learn where their faith journey is taking them.
- Lori Haag provided an update on the Preschool future concerns with Nancie retiring at the end of the school year and the options in finding a replacement and options we may be facing very soon.

Recently, our John Knox women's group got together for prayer and fellowship and packaged between 60 and 75 small gift bags for the women and children Currently living at Laura's home in Cleveland. We had some great donations of women's toiletries and personal items and small gifts for young ones to bring a smile to the faces of our friends and families as they celebrate this holiday season. Thanks to everyone who dropped off donations and are praying for the women and children at Laura's Home.

Join us anytime for women's group the second Tuesday of every month from 7:00-8:00 PM. Merry Christmas!



On the evening of November 9th approximately 16 people gathered in Trinity Hall to welcome our friends from NOICA for our first Cooking Club.

It was an evening filled with fellowship, fun and amazing food. We learned about Turkish cooking traditions, the importance of music and dance in the preparation of food and the many spices used to flavor the meal perfectly. In addition, we had the opportunity to get to know our friends better.

If you were not able to join us don't despair another Cooking Club is scheduled for Thursday, January 25 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend. Reservations are a must so our friends know how much food is needed. You can reserve your spot now by contacting Connie Smith at [connie928smith@gmail.com](mailto:connie928smith@gmail.com).





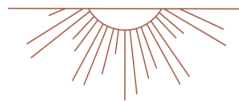
2024 STEWARDSHIP



Then Moses summoned Joshua. He said to him with all Israel watching, "Be strong. Take courage. You will enter the land with this people ... God is striding ahead of you.

God's right there with you. God won't let you down; God won't leave you. Don't be intimidated. Don't worry."

DEUTERONOMY 31:7-8



John Knox does not exist without you or your generosity. As a result, we are so grateful for your participation in this stewardship campaign and your commitment to the work of God at John Knox. Thank you!

We are able to report that we have 130 pledges for a total of \$515,000 towards our 2024 Ask Budget of \$938,000. We are well on our way to witnessing how God works through our congregation.

## HELP US PLAN FOR 2024

The next two Session meetings will solidify the operating budget for 2024. This budget will determine how much money is allocated towards the programs, ministries, and building of John Knox. When Session meets, the largest factor influencing the budget is the result of the 2024 Stewardship Campaign. Please pledge if you have not already. It is incredibly helpful with our planning.

If you are pledging, we would be grateful if you could do so as soon as possible. You can visit our webpage, contact our Finance Manager, Mindi Schibley, or scan the QR code on the right. Thank you for your continued support and belief in our mission. Let us continue to take bold steps of faith together.



*Let every*  
**HEART PREPARE**  
*him room*

EVENING OF REMEMBRANCE  
DEC 5, 7 PM. SANCTUARY

CHRISTMAS CONCERT & RECEPTION  
DEC 10, 4 PM, SANCTUARY

PAUSE WOMEN'S EVENT  
DEC 12, 7-8 PM, SANCTUARY

NIGHT IN BETHLEHEM  
DEC 20, 6-8 PM

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES  
10 AM CHRISTMAS JAZZ WORSHIP

6 PM FAMILY FRIENDLY WORSHIP

8PM TRADITIONAL CANDLELIGHT WORSHIP



JOHN KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
25200 LORAIN RD, NORTH OLMSTED

# MERRY CHRISTMAS



JOHN KNOX CHURCH

## *Christmas Concert*

DECEMBER

10

4:00 PM

25200 Lorain Rd, North Olmsted  
440-777-3744

In the Sanctuary & Online  
Reception to Follow

December 20  
6:00-8:00 PM



For unto us  
a child is born!



*John Knox Church*

# Night in Bethlehem

Join Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and wise men along with live animals including a camel! Enjoy a Christmas carol sing along, treats, crafts and celebrate the season with friends and family!

**25200 Lorain Rd, North Olmsted**

# Evening of Remembrance



Our beautiful and reflective Evening of Remembrance will be on Tuesday, December 5, at 7:00 PM. This is an evening for members of our John Knox congregation and the community whom have lost loved ones in past years. More and more members and friends of our John Knox Church have discovered this service to be a most meaningful remembrance of their loved ones and an appropriate beginning for the Advent Season. This very special meditative evening in the Sanctuary involves a candle lighting service, music, readings, and a meditation by Rev. Susanne Bendoraitis. Please contact the church office to give the name of your loved one being honored at [info@johnknoxpc.org](mailto:info@johnknoxpc.org) or 440-777-3744.

## FINANCIALLY SPEAKING

### **Did you know John Knox accepts gifts of stocks and other securities?**

Donating stock or securities is another way you can fulfill your operating pledge and make a special year-end gift. It could help you avoid paying capital gains tax on appreciated stocks, and John Knox will receive the full value. Making a gift of stock is easy:

1. **Contact your broker** and provide them with the transfer information:  
DTC Number 0164  
Charles Schwab: Account Number 9820-3777  
John Knox Presbyterian Church
2. **Contact Mindi Schibley** to notify her of the pending transfer at  
440-777-3744 x 102, or [mschibley@johnknoxpc.org](mailto:mschibley@johnknoxpc.org).
3. Once the stock is transferred, Mindi will be notified by the church's broker.  
**The stock will then be sold**, and the church will receive the proceeds.
4. **You will receive a donation receipt** from John Knox indicating the details of the donation for tax reporting purposes.



John Knox Family,

Thank you for your loving support of The Mendoza Family in Esteli Nicaragua. Many years of your prayers, love, and caring financial support for the family during very difficult and challenging times has allowed them to continue to bring the Word of God to many who have not heard.

If you wish to make a financial donation for the end of 2023, or moving into 2024, kindly contact Mindi Schibley via email or phone call to the church office. Below is an update from the Mendoza family.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your loved ones.



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### FIET - Nicaragua Second quarter report 2023

The is a report about what Arlene and I have been doing as a family and about our work with the ministry. First of all, we want to say thank you so much for all your prayers and support. This month we are celebrating the first five years of the first seminary for pastors and leaders in Estelí. Today we can say that as Presbyterians we have made a great contribution to the Church in Estelí.

#### Family

During this year we have been having all what we need, thanks to God and all of you. Fred and Maria Arlene are very active in sports and many others activities at the school. Arlene and I have to be full of extra energy. Fred will be finishing high school the next year. He has been participating in many college basketball tournaments. Probably, he will get a scholarship. Maria Arlene has been blessed by God with many gifts. She writes music, plays guitar, sings, paints pictures, and is a national swimming champion.



During this year, Arlene and I have been part of a new project. Estelí is one city that is growing up quickly and many children have a lot of problems, and there is a lot family separation. As social work, we are helping our city in many cultural activities where children can make their gifts known. We have been part of the first children's music group, and it has been a successful project. Maria Arlene is part of this group, and Fred sometimes plays the piano.

#### Ministry

During the last five years we have been training leaders and pastors through the seminary, for the grace of God the program has been successful, the next month the second group of Pastors and leaders will finish their classes. that mean that most of the churches have Pastor and leaders qualified for the work of God with Bible base. Previously, there was not program capable of working with all the churches together.

We have finished the first part of this project. There are 280 pastors with new methods and skills to do a good job. Now our focus will be children, youth pastor, and new preachers. The second part of our project with the seminary in 2024 will be called ministerial school FIETNIC. We will be teaching three courses during the year.

Here we have a group of young people and adults who are in charge of doing recreational activities for the churches, most of them are FIET students. They will be helping us with the courses.



May God bless you all.

Ariel

Once again John Knox proved to be a very generous family. Because of you, many families in North Olmsted had a wonderful Thanksgiving meal. In addition to the roughly 500-600 pounds of food I delivered, many of you donated financially to Oxcart. Each week I delivered at least 2 trunk loads of food to them, and every time the response was "John Knox sure is a generous congregation!" I just want to thank you for your response and look forward to next year! - Lillian Predota

# EXPRESSIONS OF *Gratitude*

To our John Knox Congregation:

Thank you for the support shown for the Love Inc. Coat Drive. We were able to collect 17 men's coats, 21 women's coats, and 15 children's coats. Your generosity and kindness is much appreciated.

Thank you,  
Sarah D.

Thank you John Knox for making the College Care Package Ministry so successful. Twenty young people received packages the first week in November. They were filled with cookies, popcorn, trail mix, granola bars, Mio water enhancer, 3 gift cards, a Christian book mark, and a magnet and notes of encouragement. This package tells our young people they are not alone, God is always with them and so is John Knox!

Deacons

A few weeks ago you heard from Terry Jones and Tim Claiborne about the August trip and the 150 water systems that were installed in The FUNDNOR Mayan Communities of Guatemala. They also reported on the Young Women's Scholarship program for 2024 and the need to, hopefully, fund 46 young women in 2024.

This past year, 35 young ladies successfully completed their school cycle thanks to scholarship funds you provided. During the August trip our team met with the girls from all communities registered in the program. The purpose was to recognize their achievements and build relationships. What a joyful time! We celebrated with joy and laughter as they expressed their gratitude.

Many of them would not have been able to continue their education without this support. All this is possible thanks to your prayers and support. We believe in futures for these ladies. CHECK GUATEMALA: A FAMILY DEVELOPMENT.COM for more information. Thank you for your prayers and support.

Dear Scholarship Committee and John Knox Members ,

God bless all of you! Thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping make it possible for me to go to Baldwin Wallace. I'm currently studying Communications Science to hopefully become a Speech Language Pathologist where I can help others. I have also joined a sorority where I feel accepted and loved. I also have made loving friends who are supportive and kind. None of this could have happened without your help and I am thankful beyond belief that God has given me this opportunity! I love each and every one of you!

God Bless,

Avery Story

I'd like to extend a note of thanks to the members of our John Knox Family who sent me cards, notes, or made calls and brought food these past months during my extended surgery recovery. Your many prayers, kind expressions of care, faith, and love were deeply appreciated! Blessings were shared so beautifully, and I thank you.

Gratefully,

Margaret Knestrick

## GET CONNECTED!



Join us for a cookie baking and exchange party on Thursday, December 7. Help bake cookies in the church kitchen from noon-4:30 PM, or you can bring finished cookies to exchange by 3:00 PM to the north door hallway outside of Trinity Hall. **RSVP** with type of cookie (and email your recipe to be included in an electronic "Cookie Book" to share) to Valerie Lyons, [vlyons@prodigy.net](mailto:vlyons@prodigy.net) or text/call 216-236-3898.

## CLEAN UP DAY JOIN US!

Folks may think that the Building and Grounds Committee is all dull work and lots of back-breaking landscaping chores. However, there are many ways to contribute as a member of the Building and Grounds Committee that doesn't involve ANY of that! Do you like being involved in the "center of action" where you get to know who's who and what is going on at the church? Do you like to enjoy fellowship with great people and accomplish things that everyone is thankful you did? Do you like to learn new skills that you can apply in your own home and yard? Do you like to come up with new ideas to save resources, energy, money, time? Would you like to make our church more environmentally friendly to take better care of God's creation? Do you want to get more involved in the church and the community? Do you like a commitment that only asks you to come to one meeting a month (and an event here and there: for example our first Saturday of the month clean-up days, 9am-12noon. Next one is December 9). Then the Building and Grounds Committee is just the place for you! We are always looking for folks with great ideas to plan for new projects (for example an outdoor pavilion, a possible playground for kids and adults, re-decorating or re-modeling areas of our church in exciting new ways, etc.) Please call/text/email Valerie Lyons (216-236-3898/[vlyons@prodigy.net](mailto:vlyons@prodigy.net)) to join us for at least one meeting to see what you think! We really need you!

Take a moment to *Pause...*

To the ladies of John Knox Church and our friends and family members.

Please join our JKPC Women's Small Group on Tuesday, December 12, from 7:00 to 8:00 PM in the Sanctuary for an evening to *Pause* in calm, peace, and quiet as we prepare our hearts for birth of Jesus.

These hectic times as we hustle and bustle around getting everything ready and just right for Christmas can be very stressful. Take some time for yourself to unwind and enjoy scripture, music, and meditation. Invite your friends, sisters, neighbors... any woman who you think might benefit from a little relaxation during this busy, busy time.





Greater Cleveland  
**Habitat**  
for Humanity®

# Habitat Open House

## Lunch & Learn

Join us on a construction site  
(it will be safe and warm)

Learn about Habitat's community work,  
our 400 home initiative & how you can partner.

Friday, December 1st

or

Saturday, December 9th

10010 Shale Avenue, Cleveland Ohio

Open House 11-2 pm

Staff available for conversation 11-2 pm

John Litten, President/ CEO will give a

Presentation 12:30-12:45 pm

a lite lunch available from 11-2 pm

rsvp to Philip at

[pkatsadouros@clevelandhabitat.org](mailto:pkatsadouros@clevelandhabitat.org)

216.318.0274

All Are Welcome to Attend

# John Knox Church

## CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRY

**Second Hour Happenings** were very well attended again in November by our families. Jennifer Smith's talk on Emotionally Safe Parenting was so well received that we've invited her back to speak again! While our parents were in the talk, the kids enjoyed their time in the Rainbow Room painting on easels with Valerie Lyons and Karen Koza. We discovered we have a few master painters amongst us!

**In children's Sunday School, we finished our series *On The Right Track*.** Joshua found courage in God's words to bring down the wall of Jericho. In preschool to 1st grade, we learned about and practiced following traffic signals just like Joshua followed God's directions. In the 2nd to 5th grade class, the kids read Joshua and learned how Joshua listened to and followed God's words. They followed the direction of the red and green race flags as they raced down the hallway to the checkered flag! I admire their courage to stand at the start line. We ended the class with prayer and a pit stop - a snack!

Our upcoming series theme for December is entitled *Christmas Vacation*.

We've never experienced Christmas like this before! We are grabbing our sandals, sunblock, and swim gear! And we'll be making sand angels on our tropical getaway. In this five-week series, we'll focus on the birth of Jesus and how God had planned things from the very beginning. We'll see how God sent Jesus for a reason, learn to trust God's timing, understand why God gives us what's best, and see how we celebrate Jesus as God's gift to the world.



**Mark your calendars for our popular LIVE Nativity: Night in Bethlehem on Wednesday, December 20 from 6-8 pm.** Join Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and wise men along with live animals including a camel! Enjoy a Christmas carol sing along, treats, crafts and celebrate the season with friends and family!

We also look forward to being with you **December 24 in the Sanctuary for intergenerational Christmas Eve services.** Family services will be at 10 am and 6 pm.

## Children & Youth Calendar

### Children (through grade 5):

December 20 Night in Bethlehem 6:00-8:00 PM

December 24 6pm Family Christmas Eve Service

### Youth (grade 6 & above):

December 3 Progressive Dinner 4:30-8:30 PM

December 20 Night In Bethlehem; Sign up to Volunteer 5:00-8:00 PM (pizza at 5:00 PM, event 6:00-8:00 PM)



**JOHN KNOX**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

December 2023  
Volume 131  
**KNOX NEWS**

**Drop-In Grief Support Group**

A safe space.  
Share or don't share.  
Listen or be heard.  
Be kind.  
Know you are not alone.

**Thursdays, 6-7PM  
Lounge (Room 106)**

John Knox Church  
25200 Lorain Rd, North Olmsted

**JOHN KNOX**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

25200 Lorain Road  
North Olmsted, OH 44070

Phone: 440-777-3744  
E-mail: [info@johnknoxpc.org](mailto:info@johnknoxpc.org)

Website: [johnknoxpc.org](http://johnknoxpc.org)

PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

You're not alone.  
God cares about you. So do we.