



The Beacon

December 2025

In the Bleak Mid-Winter

We have a daughter in New Zealand – one of four exchange students we hosted, decades ago – and when we call to wish her a Happy Christmas, she is usually out with her family at a barbecue, or with friends at the beach. Once she was at a kiwi farm (the fruit, not the bird). It's summer down there.

Being a northerner, I resonate with all those English Christmas carols about snow on the ground, frosty wind, horse-drawn sleigh rides to church (shall we try?). The Beach Boys are not on my playlist. After visiting the Holy Land in 2019, I know that they are more appropriate than sleigh rides. Maybe Katie and I should adjust our music plans for Christmas Eve?

Nope.

Appropriate or not, bleak mid-winter is my imagination's setting for the arrival of the Son of God. Bleak not only because of the weather, but because of humanity's condition. Back then as well as today, leaders were not taking care of all their people. Children in the poorest families were extremely vulnerable. Healthcare was for the wealthy. Neighbors might or might not watch out for one another.

God showed up anyway, right into the middle of it all.

When I am feeling bleak about our messed-up world, and all the ways we aren't the caring society that God hopes for, I remember that the Incarnation didn't wait for perfection, or even an improvement, in those troubling conditions. Just why God picked ~4 BCE (during Herod's reign, of all the leaders!) to break the barrier between heaven and earth, is a great mystery, too.

When we look out at the world, from whatever climate zone and economic circumstance we happen to be in this December, may we remember God's persistence in breaking barriers to be with us. Then, now, and always. That's what Christmas promises to us all.

Braving the bleak with you,

Susan+

St. Jude's Episcopal Church

106 E. ELIZABETH STREET
FENTON, MI 48430

(810) 629-5681
STJUDESFENTON.COM

OFFICE HOURS:

MONDAYS & THURSDAYS
9 AM - NOON

TUESDAYS & WEDNESDAYS
9 AM - 4 PM

STJUDESCHURCHFENTON106@GMAIL.COM

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CHOIR DIRECTOR

RON SPAULDING
ORGANIST

STEVE & LAURA KOCH
SEXTONS

Thanks to all of our Outreach Volunteers



St. Jude's is very active in outreach to our community, and we are fortunate to have many other organizations to partner with. As this year ends, we want to thank all of our St. Jude's members for making this work possible. Whether you donated money, worked in the Pantry, used your vehicle to transport food, helped in planning and organizing, stuffed gift boxes, passed out food at the Mobile Pantry, helped sign people in, restocked shelves, picked up and delivered socks, made copies of advertisements or prayed for us; we know that this work takes all of us to accomplish, and we thank you all. We are grateful every day for our church community.

Our programs continue to grow and this year we served more people than ever before. Here are just a few of the highlights St. Jude's and our partners accomplished this year:

- You provided over 4,000 bundles of Pantry items to guests from the community
- Along with Fenton Firefighters you distributed over 21,000 lbs of food
- You provided groceries for 326 kids so they would have meals over Spring Break when they wouldn't get free lunches at school
- You contributed to 100 Thanksgiving Food Boxes for the community and delivered 40 of those boxes to Millpond Manor
- You contributed to 100 Christmas Food Boxes for the community and delivered 45 of those boxes to Millpond Manor
- You contributed to 100 Easter Food Boxes for the community and delivered 43 of those boxes to Millpond Manor
- You purchased and donated 1,200 pairs of socks to CrossOver Downtown Ministries that primarily go to the homeless community in Flint

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“Thanks ...Outreach...” continued

- You walked in the CROP Walk and donated over \$1,500, 25% of which will be used in our own community and the other 75% will be used for disaster relief and hunger related causes around the world.
- Along with our brethren churches in Fenton you donated children’s pajamas that will be given out at Christmas time by CrossOver Downtown Ministries.
- By the time you read this article you will have provided Christmas for 22 children and 7 of their parents

This is only a partial list, but enough to make it clear that St. Jude’s makes difference in our community and our world. As Jesus was quoted in Matthew 25:40: *“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”*

Bright Futures Meal Program with Family Promise

St. Jude’s Outreach is sponsoring a new activity in conjunction with Family Promise. We will be preparing a meal, once a month, for the children who come to St. Paul’s Episcopal Church for an after-school tutoring program, “Bright Futures”. The sessions are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., with dinner being served at 4:30. Meghan Rayner has volunteered to organize and cook the meals, but she could use lots of help. You may offer to make a dish, join in preparation and serving of the meal at St. Paul’s, or donate to Outreach with Bright Futures noted. Our first date is December 9th, and we have volunteers and funding covered. Please look for a sign-up list in Vandenberg hall the first week in January.



“First Coming” by Madeleine L’Engle

He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace.
He came when the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine.

He did not wait till hearts were pure.
In joy he came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
he came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

*Celebrate the bright light
of Jesus, God-with-us.*

You're invited to Christmas
Eve Worship with the joy,
candles, music, and welcome
you've missed.

December 24 at 8:00 pm
St. Jude's Church
106 E. Elizabeth St. at Leroy,
downtown Fenton.

www.stjudesfenton.com

December Birthdays

1st John Pettipher
7th Josephine Feijoo
8th Beth Jagos
15th Kelly Cronk
16th Rylan Jones
30th Nicole Jagos

December Anniversaries

3rd Doug & Michelle
Gangwer (25th)
6th Ron & Catherine
Trimmer (57th)
19th Mark & Beth Jagos
(28th)
30th Paul & Sarah Dolza
(43rd)
Kris & Greg Forsyth
(38th)
Dave & Debbie
James (28th)
The Rev. H. Wayne
& Katherine Knotts
(53rd)



Are you 73+ with an IRA? Make a QCD with your RMD!

Need a translation? If you own a regular IRA and have reached age 73, you must take a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) by year-end or face tax penalties. The IRS wants their cut of your money! UNLESS... you send it directly to a qualified (501-c-3) charity, like ST. JUDE'S. Such gifts are called Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs).

In addition to the benefits of giving to charity, such as St. Jude's, a QCD reduces your taxable income, since otherwise your RMD would be considered as such. This in turn reduces the amount of income tax you are required to pay. Also, QCDs don't require itemizing, which means you may decide to take advantage of the higher standard deduction, but still use a QCD for charitable giving.

That's right, you can avoid some taxes, possible penalties, and benefit your church. Direct your IRA's custodian or account manager to send your RMD to St Jude's Episcopal Church, 106 E. Elizabeth St., Fenton MI 48430. Note: This provision in the tax law is not for Roth IRAs. Be sure to talk to your financial adviser about your particular situation. Members of St Jude's Finance & Endowment Committee, Bob Alexander, Charlie Johnston, Mike Marinco, Dave Rayner, John Pettipher, Clay Putnam, and Jerry Rucker, will happily answer general questions.

You could also read [IRS Publication 590b](#) for the latest QCD provisions, especially if you need help getting to sleep at night.

-Rev. Susan



Cookie Coffee Hour

On December 21 the social committee will be hosting a special cookie coffee hour. It is your turn to share your Christmas specialties with your St Jude's family. This is not a cookie exchange, just a sharing. Bring a few of your favorite holiday treats and we will enjoy samples from our excellent church cooks.

Wanted: Christmas Characters!

Our worship on **December 21** (4th Sunday of Advent) will include a dramatic presentation. Rev. Susan is looking for three theatrical adults to play Mary, Joseph, and an Angel. Memorization is not required (you can hold your page; each is a monologue).

Children's Procession on Christmas Eve

Kids of all ages are invited to participate in the **8:00 pm Christmas Eve "Nativity Procession"** that will begin our worship. We will bring in the creche animals, Holy Family, and some magical surprises. No need to register, just get to church before 8:00 and find us in the library, to take part. Some of the figures will be toddler-appropriate (ie. unbreakable). There will also be additional "busy bags" for families to keep ready for their children in the pew, after we've processed.

Building & Grounds

Advent is here and Christmas is right around the corner. How fortunate we are here at St. Jude's to have a group of individuals called the Building and Grounds Ministry. These folks are those that have a love for our building and grounds and spend hours behind the scenes making repairs, managing projects and making sure our church is a safe, clean and welcoming space for all.

Some things we would like to highlight over the last couple of months. First is the repair and cleaning of the Organ and Pipes. They enhance and support our worship service and it is truly a blessing. As mentioned before, a big thanks to our anonymous donor to the tune of \$9,000.00. The second is, over the last 3 to 4 years, your committee has been looking at and working on a project to replace the roof of our church proper. The roof and fascia boards have now been replaced! A bonus was the replacement of some of the old and broken concrete around the entrances. Our Project Leader Doug Hill has done an amazing job in leading and coordinating this project. With Doug Hill, David Little, and Kelly Cronk it was as if they were living at the church through the project. Reverend Susan support and her leadership with the Vestry reaching approval to do the project. And also to the finance Committee who found the way to get this important project to the finish line.

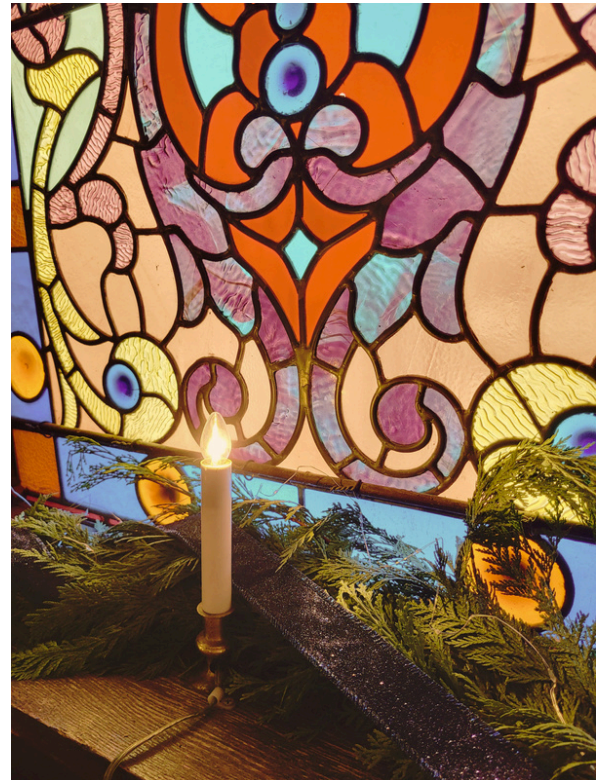
We also would like to recognize the Craft Show Committee consisting of Heather Ludwig, our Chairperson, Lynn Hopper, Susan Premo, Liz Salius and Ron Trimmer for their support in placing this years profits to the Building And Grounds Accounts. And to those who have donated funds to help with the cost of our new roof. We can now say we have totally completed the Vandenberg hall roof, our flat roof and the church roof. Hopefully we do not need to worry about them in the near future.

Our committee met on November 15, 2025 to review the roof project and the aftermath. We had to remove a couple of trees for the cherry pickers, and do some tree stump grinding. We will probably have to do some ground leveling and probably lawn replacement in the spring. The Committee has also been working on a few important projects such as critter control and water coming in the windows and the need of caulking and painting of all the white fascia boards and slots in the bell tower.

The Building and Grounds funds are always in need of gifts to support the major projects. If you're able this year to offer a gift to the Building and Grounds you could do so by writing a check to St. Jude's and marking in the memo line Building and grounds. We on the committee would appreciate your help. Our building is in need.

We hope everyone has a great Christmas!

Your Building and Grounds Committee



Reflections

Submitted by Judy Maringo from "Our Daily Bread", October 13th edition

Christ-Based Connection

Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.

Proverbs 12:25



Could eight minutes change someone's life? In a world where meaningful connections can be rare, author Jancee Dunn proposes the power of an eight-minute phone call. She believes such brief calls can help us connect with family and friends. Studies show that such calls a few times a week help reduce depression, loneliness, and anxiety. And Dunn cites the research of other experts who affirm that minor relationship adjustments can profoundly affect our well-being and that of others.

This insight aligns with Proverbs 12:25, which states, "Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up." In this verse, anxiety refers to a person's emotional response to a threat to their well-being. Being anxious can also stem from fear and uncertainty about the

future. For believers in Jesus, reassuring and encouraging words can help transform others' anxiety into cheerfulness and lead to real life (v. 28). Those words can also provide signposts to help others "choose their friends carefully" (v. 26).

Let's pray and ask God who might need an eight-minute call with encouraging words based in Scripture. Though brief, this simple act of connection might just be the spark He uses to lighten someone's load, brighten their day, and offer them hope and healing.

By Marvin Williams

Reflect & Pray

How can you share Scripture-based words of hope with others today? Why is it vital to share the hope of Christ with those who are anxious?

Dear Jesus, please help me speak words of kindness and hope to those who are anxious and lonely.

St. Jude's Annual Meeting will be held Sunday, January 25, 2026

More information to come...

Upcoming Events to Note in December

Friday, 12/5

5:30 pm: Caroling at group home, potluck party following at Dolza's

Saturday, 12/6

9 am - Noon: Basic Needs Pantry

Sunday, 12/7

5 pm: Advent Tea

Wednesday, 12/10

1 pm: Outreach

Thursday 12/11

6 pm: Book Club @ Nancy Day's

Friday, 12/12

11:30 am: Craft Show
Debrief Meeting @ Hopper's

Tuesday, 12/16

1 pm: Prayer Shawl Ministry

Wednesday, 12/17

7 pm: Vestry

Sunday, 12/21

Christmas Cookie Coffee Hour following service

Wed. 12/24

8 pm: Christmas Eve Service

Thursday, 12/25

Christmas Day
Church closed

Thursday, 12/25 -

Saturday, 12/3

Church office closed for the holidays

November 30

Holy Eucharist - The Rev. Susan Anslow Williams

Dave Rayner	Dee Grossmann	Deb James	Denise Rayner	Dave & Denise Rayner	Dee G. Lisa Cronk	Sue Premo	Paul Dolza	???
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December 7

Holy Eucharist - The Rev. Susan Anslow Williams

Paul Dolza	Dave Rayner	Katie Young	Pedro Melchor	Charlie J. Jessica M.	Terri H., Francine J.	Paul Dolza	Dave Rayner	???
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December 14

Holy Eucharist - The Rev. Susan Anslow Williams

Amy Freeman	Mary Louise S.	Dave Rayner	Denise Rayner	Lisa and Kelly Cronk	Sarah D., Lisa Cronk	Dave Rayner	Dave James	Rosa-Norred Family
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December 21

Holy Eucharist - The Rev. Susan Anslow Williams

Dee Grossmann	Paul Dolza	Amy Freeman	Nancy Day	Nancy Day, Lynne R.	Dee G., Lisa Cronk	Megan Rosa	Lynn Hopper	Cookies - Social Committee
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December 24

Christmas Eve Holy Eucharist - The Rev. Susan Anslow Williams

Lynn Hopper	Dave Rayner	Rev. Bill McDonald	Katie Young	Charlie J., ??	Everyone	??	??	—
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December 28

Holy Eucharist - The Rev. Mary Jo Schuetz

Clay Putnam	Amy Freeman	Dolores Ruby	Paul Dolza	Dave & Deb James	Terri H., Francine J.	??	Paul Dolza	??
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Monday Office Volunteer(s):

1st - Francine Johnston
 8th - Denise Rayner
 15th - Dave Little
 22nd - Francine Johnston

Thurs. Office Volunteer(s):

4th - Dave Little
 11th - Lynne Ronthi
 18th - Nancy Day



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VESTRY

2026

Bill Anderson

Paul Dolza

Heather Ludwig

Dave Rayner

2027

Doug Hill

Dave James

2028

Charles Johnston

Sue Premo

Megan Rosa-Norred

Delegates to the Diocesan Convention

Dave & Debbie James

Alternates: Paul & Sarah Dolza