

TIDINGS OF JOY

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2026

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LOVE, LISTEN, LEARN, LEAD



Dear JOYful Family,

In 2026, I feel a calling for *faithful innovation*.

I believe we have it within us to extend hospitality to our new neighbors, whether they be homes or businesses. Inviting and encountering through the giving and receiving of stories. No advances in technology or artificial intelligence will separate us from God's story of our basic, timeless humanity. I pray that God will bless and anoint our potential connections with spiritual seekers.

We bear the message of God's redeeming love. Our stories are compelling; I've heard some but certainly not all of them. The difference Jesus makes in your life and in our church (spiritual community) is not only for those age 55 and over who remember the "glory days" of the church. We carry that hope within us. When I see our youngest, sisters Jasmine and Amelia, soaking in the wonder, joy, and mystery of worship, I know that their souls are being fed subconsciously with the Holy Spirit's power. We can't size up or quantify it; it's like the wind. We need to be different, to present a different culture and climate so that the "nones" can live, think and engage in the ever-unfolding story that we share and participate in – God's story. It is incomplete,

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SCAN FOR ON-LINE
GIVING



Our mission is to share the Good News of grace and love with all through worship, service, and fellowship.



MEET OUR STAFF

CHURCH STAFF & OFFICERS

Pastor-Art Wuertz
 Administrative Assistant-
 Zsuzsanna Jobbagy
 Director of Music-Silas Daniel
 Choir Director-Linda Aker
 Handbell Director-
 Melissa Daniel
 Sexton-Carson Faris
 Treasurer-Terry Owen

CONGREGATIONAL OFFICERS:
 President-
 Vice President-
 Secretary-
 Treasurer-Terry Owen

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Linda Aker
 Karin Campbell
 Richard Cognetti
 Carson Faris
 Don Fields
 J.R. Frederiksen
 Doug Juhl
 Diana O'Neill
 Paul Spellman
 John Voyles
 Patty Willoughby



<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>
<i>01/01</i>	<i>Susanne Beech</i>
	<i>Grace Hansen</i>
<i>01/03</i>	<i>Gail DiCorgia</i>
<i>01/05</i>	<i>Carolyn Cummings</i>
<i>01/06</i>	<i>Mary Key Farrell</i>
<i>01/08</i>	<i>Jean Opferkuch</i>
<i>01/09</i>	<i>Cathy Rosol</i>
<i>01/13</i>	<i>Lois Freebourn</i>
	<i>Christine Presley</i>
<i>01/14</i>	<i>Sharon Cawley</i>
<i>01/17</i>	<i>Paul Spellman</i>
<i>01/21</i>	<i>Bruce Froeschl</i>
	<i>Marsha Treter</i>
<i>01/23</i>	<i>Erika Russo</i>
	<i>Diana Davies</i>
	<i>Sharon Johnson</i>
<i>01/24</i>	<i>Nancy Christianson</i>
<i>01/28</i>	<i>Nancy Grosselfinger</i>
<i>01/29</i>	<i>Violet Frey</i>
	<i>Debbie Cobb</i>
<i>01/30</i>	<i>Juanita Geiger</i>
	<i>Debbie Zander</i>
<i>01/31</i>	<i>Shirley Reents</i>

Continued from Page 1

even meaningless without us. God came to save us from our dark winter of despair and “doom-scrolling”.

We don’t need to “fix” the church. We DO need to make it more present and visible. We keep hearing it, but it remains true: if they won’t come to us initially, we need to initiate the contact. Start the conversation. Cultivate the relationship. Invite them to worship. I guarantee they will be drawn in by our love, warmth, and hospitality. They will hear grace spoken; feel peace exchanges, taste the goodness of God.

I believe in you, faithful people of JOY! Don’t obsess about results. Trust in the progress of the process. The time is drawing near; certainly closer than it was yesterday.

I will show up *any time, any where you want to meet up, hang out, and be led by the Holy Spirit in holy conversation and relationship cultivation!*

Pastor Art



<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i># yrs</i>
<i>01/02</i>	<i>Bob and Debbie Zander</i>	<i>53 yrs</i>
<i>01/04</i>	<i>Silas and Melissa Daniel</i>	<i>28 yrs.</i>
<i>01/27</i>	<i>Doug Juhl and Lynne Shineman</i>	<i>4 yrs.</i>
<i>01/28</i>	<i>Kathleen and Michael Parli</i>	<i>59 yrs.</i>

COUNCIL

JOY 2–5 Year Plan Informational Meetings

You are invited to attend one of three, identical work sessions to review the current status of JOY's 2–5 Year Campus Plan.

Meeting Options

- **Friday, January 16** – 10:30 am, Swenson Hall
- **Saturday, January 17** – 10:30 am, Swenson Hall
- **Sunday, January 18** – 9:30 am, Sanctuary

Each session will focus on the details of the proposed improvements to **Swenson Hall**, with an introductory video offering an early look at ideas for a future **Narthex expansion**.

Our immediate priority is Swenson Hall, ensuring our staff have a safe, comfortable, well-lit place to work and our ministries and community partners have a modern, welcoming space to gather. This project can move forward soon, while longer-term Narthex plans continue through design and County permitting.

These meetings are an opportunity for the congregation to offer input before the Swenson Hall plan is finalized. Following these meetings, the Swenson Hall plan will be finalized, and will be brought to a Congregational Meeting for a vote.

The details of the Narthex project will be presented more in depth at a later date.



What are your spiritual gifts? How can you use them?

Join us for an exciting Spiritual Gifts Discovery and learn how God has uniquely endowed you. Whether you're new to faith or looking to grow deeper, this class will help you identify your gifts and find your place in the body of Christ.

Saturdays, January 31 and February 7 in Swenson Hall at Joy, 10:00 a.m. - 12 noon.

Both sessions required. Cost: \$10 for materials. **Registration starts January 4th** after the Sunday services.

Carson Faris about her experience with the Spiritual Gifts class:

In October I attended the Spiritual Gifts Class given by Pastor Wayne and Pastor Art. First, I got to know one of our newer couples and two members I didn't know. We worked individually and shared with the group. The process helped us identify our five strongest gifts. What I thought were my strongest gifts showed up lower on my list. What a surprise! This experience helped me focus on how to use my gifts to God's glory.

"I encourage everyone to sign up for the next class! It was fun and enlightening."



Joy!formation – New Member Orientation

Are you interested in learning more about becoming a member of Joy?

Our Joy!formation classes offer a welcoming space for information, conversation, and connection. These two sessions are a chance for us to get to know one another, answer your questions, and share the wonderful ways God is at work in our congregation.

Class Dates

***Tuesdays, January 27 & February 3
7:00–8:30 pm • Swenson Hall***

(Swenson Hall is located at the far end of the parking lot. A map is available at www.joylcocala.org.)

New members will be received on Sunday, February 8, 2026, at the service of your choice (Sun. 8:15am or 11:00 am, or Wed. 5:30 pm).

We look forward to welcoming you into the Joy family.



Old New Year's Greeting Card.

EVANGELISM

Here's a goal for 2026:
**a 30 percent increase in
followers for our
JOY! Facebook page.**

This will lead to INVITING people to our church.

We can make it happen!!

**Spirit of the living God, lead us out to wherever you want us to be.
Amen.**

Pastor Art





FIGHT HUNGER SUNDAY

FIGHT HUNGER 2 WAYS AT JOY



Did you know that a recent 2025 survey in Florida shows 3.2 million people (1 in 7 residents) and 800,000+ children (1 in 5) are experiencing food insecurity. Families are skipping meals, traveling further for cheaper food, and buying fewer nutritious items like fresh produce. This causes a rise in health issues such as anemia, asthma, and depression-which in turn increases healthcare costs.

This is not just a Florida issue, it is increasing world-wide.

We here at JOY can make a difference by participating in our FIGHT HUNGER SUNDAY program. Held on the last Sunday of each month we can reduce hunger both locally and globally.

You can help by making a monetary donation to ELCA WORLD HUNGER.

**You can contribute non-perishable food items to our
INTERFAITH FOOD BANK drive.**

Every dollar, every box or can, helps someone in need.

There is no offering that is too small.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ONGOING GENEROSITY AND LOVE.

YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

JANUARY's FIGHT HUNGER SUNDAY IS:

January 25th

2026 OFFERING BOXED ENVELOPES

**Did you request boxed envelopes for your 2026 offerings?
If the answer is yes, please make sure that you have picked them up.**

The boxes are in alphabetical order on the cart in the Narthex.

**Please be so kind as to pick them up as soon as possible.
2026 is here.**

Ps: The initial offering per box is \$8.00.

Thank you.

BIBLE READINGS FOR JANUARY 2026

SUNDAY	FIRST READING	PSALM	SECOND READING	GOSPEL
04-Jan	ISAIAH	PSALM	EPHESIANS	MATTHEW
	60: 1-6	72:1-7, 10-14	3: 1-12	2: 1-12
11-Jan	ISAIAH 42:1-9	PSALM 29	ACTS 10:34-43	MATTHEW 3:13-17
18-Jan	ISAIAH 49:1-7	PSALM 40:1-11	1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-9	JOHN 1:29-42
25-Jan	ISAIAH 9:1-4	PSALM 27:1, 4-9	1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-18	MATTHEW 4:12-23

***PLEASE NOTE THAT ON JANUARY 4TH WE ARE USING THE READINGS FOR EPIPHANY, WHICH IS ON JAN. 6TH.

PROPERTY

CALLING ALL ELVES! WORKERS ARE NEEDED!

On January 4th we will celebrate Epiphany ending the holiday season.
Which means, what went up, must come down.
That includes our beautiful Christmas Decorations.

They will be taken DOWN right after the
11:00 am service, on Sunday, January 4th.

We need all our elves to lend a hand and get everything ship shape
for the new year.
The more "elves", the less time it takes.
Can you spare some time?
Everyone's help is welcomed and appreciated.



Seasons of JOY

Concert Series

2025-26 Season

A New Musical Adventure

John A. Behnke, organ

Join us for a special concert with Dr. John A. Behnke, who is the Minister of Traditional Music at Lakeside Lutheran Church, Venice, FL. He has played organ concerts and hymn festivals throughout the USA, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Latvia, Taiwan, and Japan. He enjoys composing and arranging music having over 550 compositions in print with nineteen different publishers in the United States, Germany, Hong Kong and Taiwan.



January 25, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. in the sanctuary
at JOY Lutheran Church (7045 SW 83rd Place, Ocala, FL 34476)
Free Admission. Reception follows concert.

All we hear about these days is how AI is taking over every aspect of our lives. I dread it as much as anyone else. I thought, why not see what AI has to say about Martin Luther's views on the new year. This is what I found. Definitely something to think about!

AI Overview

Martin Luther viewed the New Year not as a time for self-focused resolutions but for recognizing God's grace, trusting His provision ("daily bread"), and living out faith in daily vocations, seeing it as another chance to serve God and others, not just improve oneself, with a Christian focus on hope and reliance on Christ rather than worldly anxieties or works-based striving. He emphasized that Christians, having found freedom in Christ, are best equipped to face new chapters with faith, not fear, understanding God's overarching plan.

Key Themes in Luther's Approach to the New Year:

- **Trust in God's Provision ("Daily Bread"):** Luther expanded the concept of "daily bread" (from the Lord's Prayer) to include not just physical needs but also good government, health, and friends, urging people to trust God for these things rather than hoard or worry.
- **Focus on Vocation:** Instead of grand personal reformations, Luther encouraged faithful work and service in one's given role (as a peasant, tailor, or ruler), seeing these as ways to serve God, as highlighted in his Christmas sermons.
- **Freedom from Incurvatus in Se:** He taught that the sinful human tendency is to be "curved in on oneself" (inward focus, pride, anxiety). The New Year offers a chance to break from this self-centeredness through faith in Christ, who frees us from sin's burdens.
- **Hope in Christ, Not Self-Improvement:** While acknowledging the value of self-improvement, Luther's focus was on the deeper spiritual renewal found in Christ, contrasting worldly striving with the "march, not the dirge, has ever been the music of Christianity".
- **Recognizing God's Work:** Luther saw the New Year as a new chapter to learn from God's lessons, with the Christian prepared for anything because they have dealt with life's ultimate source of hope and forgiveness in Jesus.

In essence, Luther shifted the New Year's focus from a personal checklist to a communal and faith-centered perspective, emphasizing gratitude, service, and trust in God's ongoing work in the world and in individual lives.

Good Riddance, But Now What?

By Ogden Nash

**Come, children, gather round my knee;
Something is about to be.
Tonight's December thirty-first,
Something is about to burst.
The clock is crouching, dark and small,
Like a time bomb in the hall.
Hark! It's midnight, children dear.
Duck! Here comes another year.**

Communion at home!

If you desire communion at home,

*Please contact the church office
to schedule a visit.*

Our office telephone #: 352-854-4509

*Office hours are Monday-Thursday
8:00 am—3:30 pm.*

*You can always leave a message . We will get in touch
with you as soon as we can.*



BIBLE STUDY*With Charlie.....*

*Are you ready for a new adventure in bible study?
It's happening!*

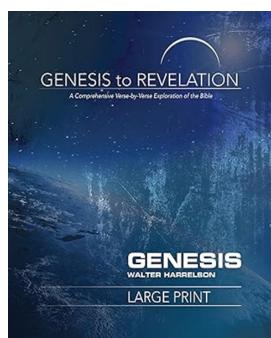
Beginning:

Monday, February 2nd, 2026 at 1:00 pm, in the Narthex

*Prepare to navigate :
“GENESIS to REVELATION”*

This study of the entire Book of Genesis begins with the creation story and ends with Jacob and his family reuniting. Some of the major ideas explored in this Book of the Bible are: personal relationship with God, the mystery of God, God's unconditional love, courage to face the unknown, and turning evil into good. The meaning of the selected passages is made clear by considering such aspects as ancient customs, locations of places, and the meanings of words. The simple format makes the study easy to use.

Includes maps and glossary with key pronunciation helps.



**Participants will need to purchase the book:
Genesis to Revelation: Genesis Participant Book
by Walter Harrelson (Author)**

**The book is available through
Amazon and Barnes & Noble**

“Here come the Santa Clauses”—

That’s exactly how Karin, Terry, Pr. Art, and I felt as we represented all of you while delivering the gifts to Timber Ridge. Everyone was overwhelmed by your generosity. They wanted you to know how much each one of you is appreciated and prayed for. It took 2 cars to get everything down to Timber Ridge—pulled by 8 cylinders named Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blitzen.

God bless you all.

Terry Owen & Susan Jobbagy





JANUARY 2026

SUN	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<p><i>PLEASE observe the following deadlines for copy ready articles to be placed in the bulletin and the newsletter.</i></p> <p><i>Bulletin deadline is Monday 8:00 am</i> <i>Tidings deadline is on the 15th of the month.</i> <i>Thank you. Susan</i></p>		1 OFFICE IS CLOSED HAPPY NEW YEAR!	2 OFFICE CLOSED	3 Cleaning Service 2-4
4 WORSHIP SVC 8:15 & 11:00 AM	5 MEMBER CARE 2:30 pm	6 Beginners' Bible Study 11 AM Worship & Music 6:30PM	7 Happy Hands 9AM Joyful Hands 9:30 AM Choir-3-4:30 PM Worship Svc 5:30 PM	8 Wear Gloves Lunch Publicity 1P Outreach 1:30 P Stewardship 3P BCR-6:30 PM-S	9 BELL CHOIR-10 AM	10 Cleaning Service 2-4PM
11 WORSHIP SVC 8:15 & 11:00 AM	12 Stephen Min. 9:30A	13 Beg Bible Study 11AM Property 10AM Finance 1 PM	14 Happy Hands 9AM Joyful Hands 9:30 AM Choir-3-4:30 PM Worship Svc 5:30 PM	15 TIDINGS DEADLINE 8 AM Council Exec.Bd. 3P BCR 6:30 PM-S	16 BELL CHOIR-10 AM	17 Cleaning Service 2-4PM
18 WORSHIP SVC 8:15 & 11:00 AM	19	20 Beg Bible Study 11AM Council 1PM	21 Happy Hands 9AM Joyful Hands 9:30 AM Choir-3-4:30 PM Worship Svc 5:30 PM	22 BCR 6:30 PM-S	23 BELL CHOIR-10 AM	24 Cleaning Service 2-4PM
25 Fight Hunger Sun. Worship Svc. 8:15 & 11 Concert 5PM – Behnke	26 Stephen Min. 9:30A	27 Beginners Bible S. 11AM JOY Formations-7P –SH	28 Happy Hands 9AM Joyful Hands 9:30 AM Choir-3-4:30 PM Worship Svc 5:30 PM	29 Interfaith Dinner BCR 6:30PM	30 Bells 10AM-S HVAC Maint. S/ SH	31 Spiritual Gifts Class 10-12 SH Cleaning Svc. 2-4P

Contact Us

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JANUARY 2026

*Our vision:
“Joy is a spiritual community sharing
the love of Christ in a challenging
world”.*

