

# ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH MESSENGER

CALLED TO WORSHIP / COMMITTED TO SERVE / CONNECTED IN FAITH

**December 2023**

A monthly Publication of  
St. John Lutheran Church

## Worship Schedule

### Wednesday Worship

6:00 pm

### Sunday Worship

8:00 & 9:15

### Sunday School

9:15

### Interim Pastor

Pastor Ted Vanderpan

### Office Staff

Rae Fimon

Audrey Zellman

### Custodian

Wanda Savage

### Choir Director

Allison Vandermark

### Organist

Eileen Hanlon

### Accompanist

Sheila Schmidt

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Belle Plaine, MN 56011

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Web: [stjohnbelleplaine.org](http://stjohnbelleplaine.org)



## **Christmas/New Years**

### **Note Schedules & Times**

- Sunday, Dec. 10** One service at 8:00.  
Sunday School Christmas Program at 9:15
- Sunday, Dec. 24** No 8:00 and 9:15 Worship Services  
Christmas Eve Services at 3:00, 5:00 and 7:00
- Monday, Dec 25** Christmas Day Service 9:00  
**Office Closed Monday, Dec. 25 and Tuesday, Dec. 26**
- Sunday, Dec. 31** 9:00 Worship Service— No livestreaming
- Monday, Jan. 1** Office Closed

## *From Pastor Ted*

Adam and Jean kissed mommy good-bye when she left to go spend a week with her parents in California. As Adam and Jean walked down the corridor of the airport, they got into a profound conversation. Adam said to his little sister, "Do you think mommy will ever come back home again?" Jean quickly responded, "I know mommy will come back again because she left her most valuable possessions at home," Adam questioned, "well what are her most valuable possessions?" Jean quickly said, "Us."

During the next month, most of us will do everything we can to let our loved ones know that they are our most valuable possessions. Most of us will take time to do special activities with them. We will buy and give them presents. Some of them we will call. Many of us will write letters to or fly ourselves across the country to visit them in person. As Christmas comes closer, most of us, I think, will be intentional about remembering what is most important to us, people.

But what is the most important way to show them? There is something I come back to year after year at Christmas. It is a gift that endures, a gift that transcends all the stages of life. It is the gift of knowing Christ Jesus. Beyond the satisfaction that comes from watching kids grow up; beyond their growing ability to add numbers and combine verbs and nouns, there is something far more fascinating to watch. That something is the step by step, day by day building of a living relationship between our children and Jesus Christ."

When we give them the gift of faith, faith in Jesus Christ, we have shown them the one who will love them not only today but long after we are gone. When we give the gift of faith, we give them one who will help them view life as more than possessions, popularity, or power. By encouraging them to walk through life with Christ, we give them one who will help them walk down the path that brings real peace and true satisfaction. When we give the gift of faith, we can rest assured that when they face the struggles and difficulties of life (and they will) we will be able to hear them speak their own words of faith and confidence in God's love for them. When we give the gift of faith, we can rest assured that when they fail (and they will) they will be able to find strength from God to try again; that when they sin (and they will) they will find forgiveness and grace to start over.

"I bring you good news of great joy for all people, to you is born this day in the city of David, a savior, who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10,11

The baby who was laid in the manger has come to find you and me. In the midst of all those things that preoccupy our lives and capture our attention, Christ has come to find us, to be our savior, to show us another way of living life. He is the one who brings forgiveness to the sinner, hope to the hopeless, direction to the directionless. He comes to fill our lives with joy, not just at Christmas but year-round.

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## TRANSITION UPDATE

What a great response!

All of December is already full. No, not your home schedule, I mean the openings for conversations about our church. November had only a couple of options that weren't taken. Thank you for the great response. I am hearing back from you about St. John: what you like best, what we do well, what we should be doing, top priorities going forward and lots of just getting to know you stuff. These conversations are much like visiting members of the church and the visits are keeping me busy. Thank you. I really do consider it a privilege to have some of your time and get to know you.

After the December visits are complete, I will compile a report of what I heard. I will do as little interpreting as I can. I will try to just compile what I have heard you say. Everyone will have an opportunity to read it. The Church Council will see it first and then we will make it available to the whole congregation. After that we will begin processing and interacting with what it says. You will have the opportunity to respond to it. I don't know what that opportunity will look like. We will create those opportunities as we go.

Transition can be difficult. I do hear and experience some anxiety in the congregation. I sense some of the stress and uncertainty transition creates. But remember, transition is also a wonderful opportunity to clarify what is most important to us. Transition offers us an opportunity to do things differently. Stay tuned and engaged because God has a wonderful future ahead for our congregation and God is transitioning us to the future.

Thank  
you

Dear Friends at St. John,

I want to send a brief and belated note here to all of you with a big "thank you" for the warm and wonderful send off you gave to me on my last Sunday. I want you to know that I really appreciated it and it meant a lot to me. Also, a big "thank you" for the cards and gifts that so many of you gave to me. Your warmth and consideration really touched me. Thank You!

Sue and I are enjoying retired life together. Things are going well for us. May the

Lord bless you and keep you and continue leading you into a bright and growing future together!

With appreciation,

Pastor Mark

Don't Miss the  
**DEADLINE!**

**Thinking ahead for the Annual Meeting in January.**

The deadline for reports from any committees for the annual report is

**January 5.** Please email them to

[office@stjohnbelleplaine.org](mailto:office@stjohnbelleplaine.org).

Thanks.

The Annual W/ELCA Christmas Dinner for all Congregation and Community members, family and friends will be held on Tuesday, December 5th in our Gathering area here at St. John. Social hour will begin at 6, dinner at 6:30. A Bar-B-Q Rib and ham dinner including Au Gratin potatoes, stuffing, peas & carrots, fruit salad and a desert will be served by Cindy's Cafe.

A vegetarian meal is available upon request. Entertainment following the meal will be provided by the Wendt Sisters from the Mankato area.



**NEXT MEETING FOR THE MISSION TRIP WILL BE SUNDAY, DEC. 3RD AT 10:15**

**2024 SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL MISSION TRIP  
(JULY 7-12<sup>TH</sup>, 2024)**

***STUDENTS IN GRADES 8-12  
(DURING THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR)***

Plans are underway for a 2024 Senior High Mission Trip to Benton Harbor, MI, through Youth Works. Participants will partner with local organizations to meet ongoing needs in the community. Students may serve all or part of the week at a food shelf, clothing distribution center, or by assisting with painting, cleaning or simple repair projects. During a week in Benton Harbor, our group will partner with local organizations to serve the city across age and racial divides. In the evenings, we will tour the community and learn about the city and area. We'll also will experience local BBQ, visit a Lake Michigan beach, and explore Benton Harbor's sister city, St. Joseph.

Contact Tim or Molly Moonen or Kirk Frank if you're interested.



**MISSION TRIP**

**Things to  
remember...**

***If you have an announcement for the bulletin,*** please let the office know by noon Thursday so it can be added.

***Is your group planning a meeting in the church?*** Please let the office know so it can be put on the calendar to make sure the doors will be unlocked for you.

***The deadline for newsletter articles is the 15th of each month.*** This is to make sure it get into the newsletter and that the newsletter gets out on time.

Unapproved St. John Lutheran Church Council Minutes  
November 13th, 2023

President Ben Aust called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m.

**Present:**

X	Pastor Ted	X	Ben Aust		Chris Schultz	X	Albert Koepp
	Jan Effinger	X	Teresa Latzke		Anne Herrmann	X	Steve Kelm
X	Jaime Petersen	X	Cayla Menke	X	Jim Kerr	X	Tim Moonen
X	Jerold Stauffacher						

**Opening Devotions:**

Pastor Ted opened up with a passage from Matthew 25: versus 14-30 and a prayer.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Members of Council reviewed the minutes from October 9th, 2023 Council Meeting. Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the meeting minutes from October. A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the agenda for November 13th, 2023 with an amendment to add the presentation of the Annual Budget to New Business.

**Pastor Ted Report:**

**November Pastors Report**

Confirmation Sunday, October 29th went really well I thought. Very positive day with 24 9th graders confirmed. There was one student that did not attend her 8th grade year but wanted to be confirmed. I said she could if she would do independent study to make up the year she skipped - she did attend her 7th grade year. I arranged for her to do 20 lessons in a workbook since we have about 20 lessons per year. After her mom agreed to this arrangement I didn't hear back from them. Other than that, I thought the whole process coming with a brand new pastor on board went great. Amanda (Chris' wife) stepped up and organized several parts of the process. She has some suggestions for changes that I think can be incorporated next year.

Wednesday night confirmation and worship has settled into its routine. From everything I see it is going well and the adult leaders I have heard from think it is a good arrangement. The students will stay in worship the last Wednesday of the month to receive communion rather than go to small group time.

I am thinking about how to do First Communion instruction on Wednesday night. Several 5th graders said they wanted to be able to receive communion and not wait until spring. I was planning to do it then, in the spring. The hold up is that I need to finish worship before joining the 5th graders and then it is kind of late to get anything accomplished on First Communion instruction.

We had a funeral in October for John Rickaby. We have 2 baptisms scheduled in the next month. One baptism will be during Wednesday night worship. I visited with one family that is interested in joining St John. They are attending on Wednesday's.

I contacted 3 people by phone that have had medical needs or are on the shut in list. I visited one person at their home who has gone on hospice. I visited another person in hospice at the nursing home. I am conducting a monthly service at Kingsway and stay after to visit, if the residents stay.

The transition interview process is going well. Almost all the November slots filled quickly. I am offering daytime and after work hours options. December dates are now available. It is too early to see trends and themes.

I will be participating in the ecumenical Thanksgiving service next Monday. I am planning to attend the community meal on the 19th.

**Staff Reports:**

A: Wanda's Staff Report - Members of Council reviewed Wanda's custodian report. Pastor Ted will report back to Wanda addressing any concerns.

B: Rae's Staff Report - Rae's report was reviewed by members of the council. Pastor Ted will report back to Rae addressing any concerns.

C: Audrey's Staff Report - Audrey's report was reviewed by the members of the council. Pastor Ted will report back to Audrey addressing any concerns.

**Treasurer:**

Jerold reported the offerings are down and expenses have been down. He answered questions from Council members on last month's reports.

**Transfers:**

Motion was made, seconded, and approved to accept the following transfers:

In: 2023 Confirmation class:

Logan Anderson	Meredith Carstens	Taylor Menke	Luke Schultz
Bennet Balk	Erik Hoff	Jackson Nagel	Will Steinhagen
Josephine Berg	Vincent Holtberg	Thomas Nagel	Kallie Thaemert
Allison Blake	Olivia Jeurissen	Hunter Olson	Madison Theis
Mya Bommelyn	Mallory Kelm	Austin Overline	Dominic Veerkamp
Mason Bungarden	Bailey Kes	Kylee Perry	Anastasia Woods

Out: None

**Ongoing Business:**

A. Church Roll Update: No update at this time.

Job Description: No update at this time.

C. Venmo Account: Jerold updated the council members with an update on what we need to open a Venmo Account. Motion was made, seconded, and approved to accept the purchase of a phone number to open a Venmo account.

D. Books in the Library: The books in the library will be removed from the corner of the gathering area.

E. Christmas Day Worship: A discussion was had on the upcoming Worship Schedule. Motion was made, seconded, and approved to accept times of Worship Schedule:

December 10th:

One service at 8:00 a.m.

Children's Christmas Program at 9:15 a.m.

Christmas Eve:

Sunday, December 24th. Services will be held at 3:00, 5:00, and 7:00 p.m. as usual.

c. Christmas Day:

i. Monday, December 25th 9:00 a.m.

d. New Years Eve:

i. Sunday, December 31st 9:00 a.m.

**New Business:**

Preliminary Budget discussion was had. Jerold reported the budget outlook for 2024. The council had discussion but did not vote to approve the budget. A vote will take place during the December meeting.

**Ministry Team Updates:**

A. Stewardship Committee - nothing new to report.

B. Buildings and Grounds Committee - Tim reported the following from Building and grounds committee:

a. Table room has been cleaned out.

b. New fridge has been purchased.

c. Front entryway sign has been ordered.

d. The Parsonage house needs new carpet. A motion was made, seconded and approved to allocate money from the property improvement funds to recarpet the Parsonage house.

e. The council reviewed a letter received from Susan and Bruce Volek notifying us of the time they donated taking care of the lawn and provided a list of what will need to be taken care of next year.

C. Personnel Committee -

a. The Personnel Committee performed and has completed the staff reviews and have them available for the council to review.

b. The Council provided their affirmation for Pastor Ted and the Personnel Committee to proceed with their plan on how to Job share.

D. Children's Ministry Team - Background checks have been performed on all Sunday School teachers.

E. Small Group/Faith Formation Committee - nothing new to report.

F. Worship and Music Committee - nothing new to report.

G. Technology and Communications Committee - A list of updates has been made. A motion was made, seconded and approved to purchase new laptops from the technology budget.

H. Nomination Committee - Church council members Ben and Albert have volunteered to be part of the Nomination Committee. The Nomination Committee will be looking for the following:

a. Foundation Committee - 1 person for a 3 year term

b. Assistant Head Usher - 1 person for a 2 year term

c. Personnel Committee - 2 people

d. Synod Assembly - Notimate from floor at Annual Meeting.

e. Nominating Committee - Nominate from floor at Annual Meeting.

f. Auditing Committee - 3 people for a 1 year term.

Motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m. Meeting was adjourned followed by the Lord's prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Teresa Latzke

# December 2023



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Robert Stoppelmann	2 Duwayne Dandurand Erik Hoff Joyce Nyblom Andy Steinhagen Nicole Walker Jaydn Williamson
3 Debra Brazil Luke Fogarty Diane Gerres	4 Kyle Arola Dominick Fogarty Lois Gustafson Peggy Malz Alexander Meger	5 Dylan Johnson Randal Kruger John Schmidt	6 Zachary Fahey Michael Gustafson Tristan Lindahl	7 Troy Borresen Allen Latour Tyson Menke Ruby Schultz	8	9
10 Marjorie Gramnis	11 Kerry Arola Wyatt Fogarty Ainsley Maier Taylor Menke Mark Schultz	12 Jade Laue	13 Ethan Martin Zachary Olson	14 Laura Buddenhagen Jeffery Burkman Taylor Finnon Alexander Johnson Theodore Kroells	15	16 Luke Bristlin Chester Gohlke Sue Johnson Connor Kopecky
17 Madelyn Eyrich Laurie Hiles Debra Schaefer Michael Tracy	18 Lori Schmit Madelyn Siekmann Donald Oldenburg	19 Eleanor Staff	20 Katey Borresen Laura Costello Duane Koepf Hoyt Nagorski Kevin Wolff	21 Steven Gerres Adam Meierbachtol Kevin Nyblom	22 Bruch Schmidt	23
24 Megan Holzemer Ira Meierbachtol Brian Siekmann	25 Carissa Schultz Trever Theis	26	27 Garrett Boblitt Daniel Buerkle Makenna Gerres Morgan Hagen Kari Laue Callen Petty	28 Cooper Stier	29 Jan Campbell Elena Salden Harper Schrot Madison Theis	30 Bob Fimon Deborah Trayler
31 Parker Borresen Mason Gerres Luke Meriwether Chris Schultz						

# December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 5:00 pm Koepp Family in Gathering Area	2 10:00 Meeting in Gathering area and Kitchen
3 8:00 & 9:15 Worship Services 9:15 Sunday School 10:15 Christmas Program Practice 10:15 Mission Trip meeting	4 6:30 pm Boy Scout meeting	5 11:00 Lutheran Home Service 1:30 pm Kingsway Service 5:00 pm WELCA Christmas Dinner	6 6:00 pm Bus leaves for Feed My Starving Children- NO PIZZA 6:00 pm Worship Service 7:00 pm Worship Choir	7 5:00 pm TOPS	8	9
10 8:00 Worship Service 9:15 Sunday School Christmas Program 12:00 pm Bench Family in Gathering Area 4:30 pm Girl Scout meeting	11 6:30 pm Boy Scout meeting 6:30 pm Church Council	12	13 4:00 pm Book Club 5:20 pm Pizza 6:00 pm Connect/Confirmation 6:00 pm Worship Service 7:00 pm Worship Choir	14 5:00 pm TOPS	15 Newsletter Article Deadline	16
17 8:00 & 9:15 Worship Service 9:15 Sunday School 11:00 Koepp Family in Gathering Area 4:30 pm Girl Scout meeting	18 6:30 pm Boy Scout meeting	19 6:30 pm Cub Scout Den meeting	20 5:20 pm Pizza 6:00 pm Connect/Confirmation 6:00 pm Worship Service 7:00 pm Worship Choir	21 5:00 pm TOPS	22	23
24 Christmas Eve 3:00, 5:00 & 7:00 pm Christmas Eve Services	25 Christmas Day Office Closed 9:00 Worship Service	26 Office Closed	27	28 5:00 pm TOPS	29 12 Noon- Last day for 2023 gifts	30
31 New Year's Eve 9:00 Worship Service						





December Altar Guild:

December 3 Worship Assistants	
<b>Coffee Hour:</b> Eagle Scouts Mom's	<b>December 6 Pizza Helpers:</b> No Class— Feed My Starving Children <b>December 6 Pizza Patrol:</b>
<b>8:00</b>	<b>9:15</b>
<b>Greeters:</b> Gerry & Diane Bratsch <b>Lay Readers:</b> Michelle Melheim <b>Communion Assistants:</b> Randy & Deb Kruger, Michelle Melheim <b>Ushers:</b> <b>Chris Schultz</b> , Luke Schultz, Logan Schultz, Rob Schultz, Mark Schultz, Wayne Koepf, Aaron Leonard	<b>Greeters:</b> Chris & Annette Moylan <b>Lay Reader:</b> Beth Beuch <b>Communion Assistants:</b> Beth Beuch, Chris & Annette Moylan <b>Ushers:</b> <b>Chris &amp; Annette Moylan</b> , Steve Schroeder, Lee Sauter

December 10 Worship Assistants	
<b>Coffee Hour:</b> Angie & Dorothy	<b>December 13 Pizza Helpers</b> <b>December 13 Pizza Patrol:</b>
<b>8:00</b>	<b>9:15</b>
<b>Greeters:</b> Matt & Kristen Stier <b>Lay Readers:</b> Renee Meuleners <b>Communion Assistants:</b> Matt & Kristen Stier, Renee Meuleners <b>Ushers:</b> <b>Chris Schultz</b> , Luke Schultz, Logan Schultz, Rob Schultz, Mark Schultz, Wayne Koepf, Aaron Leonard	<b>Sunday School Christmas Program</b> <b>Ushers:</b> <b>Chris &amp; Annette Moylan</b> , Steve Schroeder, Lee Sauter

December 17 Worship Assistants	
<b>Coffee Hour:</b>	<b>December 20— Pizza Helpers:</b> Stephanie Paulson
<b>8:00</b>	<b>9:15</b>
<b>Greeters:</b> Wesley Koepf <b>Lay Readers:</b> Deana Siekmann <b>Communion Assistants:</b> Patty Laabs, Deana & Brian Siekmann <b>Ushers:</b> <b>Myron Bratsch</b> , Kirk Franck, Matt Kes, Jeff Eppen	<b>Greeters:</b> Jeremy & Lainey Schwartz <b>Lay Reader:</b> Caren Grotberg <b>Communion Assistants:</b> Teresa Latzke, Beth Beuch, Dave Bungarden <b>Ushers:</b> <b>David &amp; Sara Bungarden</b> , Ron & Dianne Rasmussen

December 24 & 25 Worship Assistants	
<b>Coffee Hour:</b> No Coffee Hour	<b>December 27 No Pizza Christmas Break</b>
<b>Christmas Eve Services at 3:00, 5:00 and 7:00</b>	<b>Christmas Day Service 9:00</b>
<b>Ushers:</b> <b>Myron Bratsch</b> , Kirk Franck, Matt Kes, Jeff Eppen <b>David &amp; Sara Bungarden</b> , Ron & Dianne Rasmussen	

December 31 Worship Assistants	
<b>Coffee Hour:</b> No Coffee Hour	<b>January 3 No Pizza New Year Break</b>
<b>One Service 9:00</b>	
<b>Greeters:</b> Carol Schultz <b>Lay Readers:</b> Linda Schwichtenberg <b>Communion Assistants:</b> Albert Koepf, Dorothy Koepf, Kirk Franck <b>Ushers:</b> James & John Karl, Dan Herrmann, Tim Bristlin <b>Scott &amp; Tricia Ruud</b> , Alex Ruud, Griffin Ruud, Jerry Meger	



# Financial Corner

## St. John Financial Results Ten Months Ended October 31, 2023 and October 31, 2022

General Operating Fund			Year Over Year Increase (Decrease)
	October 31, 2023	October 31, 2022	
Income *	\$ 268,255	\$ 321,067	-16%
Paycheck Protection Loan Forgiveness			
Expenses:			
Personnel	(194,150)	(179,494)	
Office	(13,865)	(15,244)	
Property & Maintenance	(45,829)	(36,438)	
Ministry	(19,197)	(18,175)	
Other	(3,179)	(5,810)	
Benevolence:			
Minneapolis Area Synod	(11,000)	(12,000)	
Camp Onomia	(2,500)	(2,750)	
Belle Plaine Fire Dept	(300)	(300)	
Lutheran Social Services	(1,500)	(1,500)	
Net Receipts / (Expenditures)	\$ (23,265)	\$ 49,356	
Cash Balance at January 1 (excl. all loans)	\$ 69,619	\$ 7,829	
Net Income / (Expenditures)	(23,265)	49,356	
Misc. cash not affecting income	717	201	
Cash Balance at October 31	\$ 47,071	\$ 57,386	

\* 2022 Includes \$40K Employee Retention Credit (ERC). 2023 is down 4.6% from 2022 without considering ERC.

### Property Improvement Fund

	October 31, 2023	
Income (Donations, Rent, Investments)	78,751	
Expenses (Prop Taxes, Repairs, Ins, Mortg Interest)	(63,717)	Includes \$43.5K for three new HVAC units
Net Receipts / (Disbursements)	15,034	
Hayden House Loan Balance at January 1	125,664	
Principal Payments	(3,441)	
Hayden House Loan Balance at October 31	122,223	
Liquid Assets at October 31, 2023	177,892	

## Important Dates to Remember

### December 29– St. John books are closing at 12 noon.

Please note that the financial books will be closing for 2023 at noon on December 29. If you would like credit for offerings given during this year, you will need have them into the church by then. Traditionally, December has been a strong month in this regard. Thank you for the support you provide to our mission and ministry. We have the greatest good news of all to share and, with your help, we will continue to grow in the Lord's work.

### January 28– St. John Annual Meeting.

There will be one service at 8:00 with the annual meeting starting at 9:15.  
Sunday School will also be held at 9:15

CALLED TO SERVE THROUGH OUR GIVING	
Offering Received the week of	
<b>October 26– November 1</b> General Fund—\$8,603 Improvement Fund—\$970	<b>November 2-8</b> General Fund—\$8,189 Improvement Fund—\$690
<b>November 9-15</b> General Fund— \$4,732 Improvement Fund- \$1,255	<b>November 16-22</b> General Fund— \$4,520 Improvement Fund- \$900

**St. John Lutheran Church  
148 S. Chestnut St.  
Belle Plaine 56011**

**Non-Profit Organization  
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