

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH MESSENGER

CALLED TO WORSHIP / COMMITTED TO SERVE / CONNECTED IN FAITH

March 2022

*A monthly Publication of
St. John Lutheran Church*

Worship Schedule

Saturday night
worship at 6:00 p.m.
In Gathering Area

Sunday Worship 8:00 a.m.
In Person Worship or Watch
Live on Facebook

9:15 a.m. Worship Service

9:15 a.m. Sunday School

Pastor

Pastor Mark Johnson

Office Staff

*Rae Fimon
Audrey Zellman*

Treasurer

Robin Fink

Custodians

Curt & Cheryl Johnson

Organist

Eileen Hanlon

Accompanist

Sheila Schmidt

148 S. Chestnut St.
Belle Plaine, MN 56011

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office@stjohnbelleplaine.org
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Ash Wednesday Service
March 2, 2022
6:30 p.m.



Lenten Services
Wednesday Evenings
March 9 thru April 6, 2022
6:30 p.m.

Join us for our
Soup and Sandwich Meal
During the Lenten Season
Serving starts at 5:30 p.m.
Menu inside



Daylight Savings starts
March 13.

Don't forget to move
your clocks ahead one
hour.

From Pastor Mark

Two years ago, we were in the midst of the Lenten Season. We had just finished a Midweek Soup and Sandwich Supper and Worship on Wednesday evening. Thursday, we had a council meeting and discussed some ways that we should change some of our regular worship routines, sharing the peace, passing offering plates, etc. in light of concerns about the pandemic. Two days later, on Saturday, we had an emergency council meeting and made the decision to close the doors.

How's that for a fast moving situation! It made my head spin (and, I have to think, a lot of heads). Times had changed swiftly and suddenly. And, since then, we have been gradually opening up again. Sometimes, it seems, two steps forward and one step back. We are still in this process of transition. But I'm glad that we have progressed to this point. And I look forward, step by step, toward pandemic concerns receding and normal patterns of life together returning. We're not there yet, but we're moving in that direction.

With that said, I am looking forward to our Midweek Lenten schedule once again this year, beginning with Ash Wednesday on March 2. Our schedule includes a Soup and Sandwich Supper in our Gathering Area at 5:30 p.m., hosted by our Confirmation small group and their families. At 6:30 we transition into the Sanctuary for "Holden Evening Prayer," a special service designed to be used in the evening and also a familiar friend that we welcome back in these unfamiliar times. Confirmation students will be attending our services along with an adult Lenten mentor of their own choosing and filling out a worship form with their mentor each week.

Lent is the forty day season of the church year calendar leading up to Easter (not counting Sundays) and is, traditionally, a season of meditation and devotion on the passionate suffering and life giving death of Jesus for us.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. In the Bible, ashes represent our mortal nature. After the Fall into Sin in Genesis, Chapter 3, the Lord says to Adam: "By the sweat of your brow shall you eat your bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; dust you are and to dust you shall return." And so we pronounce at each graveside service the words: "Ashes to Ashes and Dust to Dust" - words that come from the Bible - words that remind us that we are mortal, that our days are limited and that, one day, we will die.

This is not meant to be morbid but to remind us of the simple truth and reality that life is precious and that this earthly life will not last forever, so let's make the most of it and use it well. Let's be reminded that we are not going to take any material things with us. What we will leave behind are the ways we have affected the lives of others, either for good or for ill. And in that light, we rededicate ourselves to do good, to give ourselves in loving service, to be a source of healing and a willing instrument through which the good and gracious will of God might be made real in this world.

Along with symbolizing our mortality, ashes have also been used in the Bible as a symbol of repentance. People in Bible times would repent by covering themselves with dust and ashes, literally clothing themselves in these signs of their own mortal nature and offering themselves in humility to God's mercy and grace.

On Ash Wednesday, we lift up and remember this truth about ourselves, that in ourselves we are but mortal creatures of dust and ashes. And then, we also lift up and remember that, in Christ, we find our redemption - that in Christ we receive and take down inside of us a New Body and a New Blood - a foreshadowing of a greater feast that is yet to come. As St. Paul puts it in that beautiful passage from the end of I Corinthians that I like to read at a graveside service:

"Lo, I tell you a mystery! We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised, imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When this perishable nature puts on the imperishable and this mortal nature puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who has given us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ."

I look forward to worshiping with you on Ash Wednesday, this rich gateway to the Season of Lent. And I look forward to being with you for each of the following Wednesday evenings during this deep and rich season as we gather at 5:30 to share a meal and at 6:30 to worship the Lord through the beautiful vehicle of the "Holden Evening Prayer" service. I'm also looking forward to hearing from some of our fellow members as they reflect on our theme: "What Does Being a Christian Mean to Me?" And while they're at it, it's a good time for all of us to reflect on that same theme.

I look forward to being with you!

Pastor Mark

Unapproved St. John Lutheran Church Council Minutes
February 17, 2022

President Ben Aust called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m.

Present:

X	Pastor Mark	X	Ben Aust	X	Chris Schultz	X	Albert Koepp
X	Matt Stier		Wendy Theis	X	Jen Nagorski	X	Steve Kelm
X	Robin Fink		Jan Effinger	X	Teresa Latzke	X	Tim Moonen
	Curt Johnson	X	Anne Herrmann				

Opening Devotions:

Pastor Mark shared a passage from Luke chapter 6 and an opening prayer.

Approval of Minutes:

Members of Council reviewed the minutes from January 13, 2022 Council Meeting. Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the meeting minutes from January. A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the agenda for February 17, 2022 with a change of order to allow the Property Manager to address the Council first.

Pastor Mark's Report:

Preparations are underway for our Midweek Lenten Season that will begin on Ash Wednesday, March 2. We are planning for a 5:30 Soup and Sandwich Supper in the Gathering Area, hosted each week by our Confirmation Small Groups and their Families. At 6:30 we will worship together in the Sanctuary with the Holden Evening Prayer service. I have also been setting up people each week to share with us their personal testimonial on our theme, "What Does Being a Christian Mean To Me?" Our Confirmation students will be attending each week with an Adult Lenten Mentor they have selected and they will be filling out a Lenten Worship Sheet together.

Information letters and brochures were mailed out to all seventh grade Confirmation students and their families about Confirmation Camp this Summer which will be held on the week of June 12-17. Registration is online at the Camp Website and the deadline for registration is Ash Wednesday, March 2. Camp is a unique experience and has always been a part of our Confirmation program, so we are subsidizing our seventh graders again this year.

The Children's Ministry Team is doing a fine job again this year in sponsoring our Sunday School (which we badly missed last year). As of this writing, I will also be meeting with them to decide our course for Vacation Bible School this Summer. There are a couple of options. One option we've used regularly over the years is "Day Camp" with Camp Onomia sending counselors down to host a camp-like experience for our kids. This would take place the week after Confirmation Camp, June, June 20-23. The other option is new this year and would involve partnering with the Synod's Spanish ministry, Cristo Obrero, to host a week of VBS at Prairie Oaks Institute here in Belle Plaine. Holy Trinity Lutheran in New Prague is patterning with them already. This would take place the week of August 1-5. At this point, I'm not sure what is all involved in being part of this option. We'll discuss and decide together as a team.

It has been a really nice year walking through the Bible with our seventh and eighth grade Confirmands and Small group leaders. We have covered a lot of ground, walking through the stories of the Old Testament and on into their fulfillment in the stories of the New Testament. They are a great group to work with, attentive, respectful and happy to participate.

In person worship levels continue to be a challenge. I chalk up a lot of this to continuing concerns around the pandemic and the addition of our online option. We are still in a time of transition and looking to find our way forward in a number of ways related to worship together

Regular and ongoing things include staff meetings, coordination, and correspondences, preparation and presentation time for teaching, preaching, baptisms, weddings and funerals, visitation, etc.

Staff Reports:

Custodial:

No report was presented.

Treasurer:

Robin walked through the monthly reports noting that electronic donations were up 11% from last month and answered questions from Council members.

Bank signature cards were signed by the Council's newly elected President and Vice President.

She clarified that staff could spend up to \$500 without authorization from the Executive Committee.

A discussion was had regarding the balance of the Building Fund and the amount owing on the mortgage. A motion was made, seconded, and carried to pay off the mortgage for the 2003 building addition. The building fund will continue as there is still a \$39,000 loan from the Foundation to be repaid.

Transfers:

No Transfers in or out this month.

Ongoing Business:

Strategic Planning was tabled at this time.

Foundation Loan Repayment was tabled at this time.

New Business:

Council Job Description was distributed and reviewed.

Volunteer back-ups for custodians, powerpoint presenter, and video live streaming to be solicited from the congregation. Interested members can contact the church office.

A discussion was had on the objective of the rental properties. The Buildings and Grounds Committee will return a proposal to the Council.

Property Manager, Kim Meierbachtol reviewed a list of repairs needed based on a walk through of the rental properties. The Buildings and Grounds Committee will meet to prioritize and action the repairs with the Maintenance Technician.

A discussion was had on increasing the rental amount. Since the properties are self-sustaining, no rental increase is needed at this time.

Transitional items will be discussed at an upcoming meeting with the Worship and Music Committee.

Ministry Team Updates:

Stewardship Committee - nothing new to report.

Buildings and Grounds Committee - declined to accept a donation of an activity table.

Personnel Committee - nothing new to report.

Children's Ministry Team - met to discuss VBS.

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

Worship and Music Committee - nothing new to report.

Technology and Communications Committee - nothing new to report.

Motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. Meeting was adjourned followed by the Lord's prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anne Herrmann, Secretary

**Are you or someone you know
experiencing a barrier accessing
essential groceries?**

Hop Scott may be able to help.

Please contact the Belle Plaine Food
Shelf for more information or to arrange
for deliver.

Their phone number is 952-649-2499.

March is Minnesota Food Share Month

You can help support our local Food Shelf here in Belle Plaine in a number of ways. One way is through donating food. We have a food shelf cabinet in our Gathering Area and boxes will be set out by it for you to bring in nonperishable items which will be picked up and transported to the food shelf. Another way you can help is through offering a financial gift. Your donated dollars to the Food Shelf can be amazingly multiplied.

Check out the posters on the bulletin board and the Food Shelf cabinet for more information (and even a way to have groceries delivered to you, if you need that kind of help). Pretty cool! Thanks for your support!



March Children's Ministry Update

The Sunday School children finished up Woman at the Well and Wedding at Cana in February and will start learning about The Sower in March.

SAVE THE DATE: Vacation Bible School (VBS) will be June 20-23! You will be able to register your child(ren) online starting in *April*. VBS schedule is the following: Children in grades Kindergarten through 6th grade attend from 9am-3pm. They will need one snack and a sack lunch each day. **Please register**

your child in the same class they were in for the 2021-22 school year . The cost of VBS is \$50/child or a \$150 family cap.* Scholarships are available. VBS payment can be made online at the time of registration or your child can bring payment on the first day. Registration will be open in April.

VBS ON THE FARM is another opportunity for your child/children to attend VBS this summer! This is new and is a collaboration between Cristo Obrero and Prairie Oaks Institute and will take place here in Belle Plaine. There will be more details to follow, but as of the now the information is as follows:

August 1-5

Elementary 9:00-3:00

Pre-K & Kindergarten 9:00-12:00

Middle and High School volunteers welcome!

Online registration coming soon

Cost: Free (free will offering accepted)

****We are still in need of volunteers for VBS at church.** Please contact youthsjlc@gmail.com if you are able to help with registration, lunch, and/or hosting our camp counselors.

Upcoming Events

Sunday, March 27th: **Spring Break** - No Sunday School

Sunday, April 10th: **Palm Sunday:** Sunday School children will sing at the beginning of both 8:00 and 9:15 services.



Sunday, April 17th: **Easter Sunday--NO SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Sunday, May 1st: **Last Day of Sunday School**

Connect Update

In February, Connect students focused on Prophets & Psalms. They also made Valentines to be delivered to residents at the Lutheran Home. During Lent, students are expected to attend the Wednesday Evening Lenten Services at 6:30 p.m. with their family and fill out family worship sheets. There will be **no** regular class or pizza for Connect students during the season of Lent (March 2nd - April 13th). Classes resume on April 20th.

REMINDER: The 5th and 6th grade Connect students are expected to have completed **10 sermon notes** by the end of our Connect year in May. Lenten services do not count towards the sermon note requirements.

 Soup and Sandwich Supper Menu 2022 Lenten Season St. John Lutheran Church (menu subject to change) 	
March 2- Ash Wednesday Soups: Chicken Wild Rice and Creamy Potato Sandwiches: Sloppy Joes, Ham and Turkey Confirmation Group Serving: Teresa Latzke/ Cody Schultz and Cayla Menke/ Tonya Smith	March 23 Soups: Chicken Wild Rice and Chili Sandwiches: Ham and Turkey Confirmation Group Serving: Karen Bessel/ Jaime Peterson, Diane Gerres/ Cassie Gerres
March 9 Soups: Chicken Wild Rice and Vegetable Beef Barley Sandwiches: Ham and Chicken Salad Confirmation Group Serving: Sue Steinhagen/ Matt & Heather Kes	March 30 Soups: Leftovers Sandwiches: Cooks Choice Confirmation Group Serving: Wayne Nagel/ Dave Bungarden
March 16 Soups: Chicken Wild Rice and Chicken Noodle Sandwiches: Turkey, Egg Salad Confirmation Group Serving: Kim Thaemert/ Andrea Gerres	April 6 Soups: Leftovers Sandwiches: Cooks Choice Confirmation Group Serving: Ann Carstens/ Alex & Angie Hoff
For unlimited soup, sandwiches, fixings, desserts and drinks we suggest a donation of \$12/person, \$6 for children under 10.	

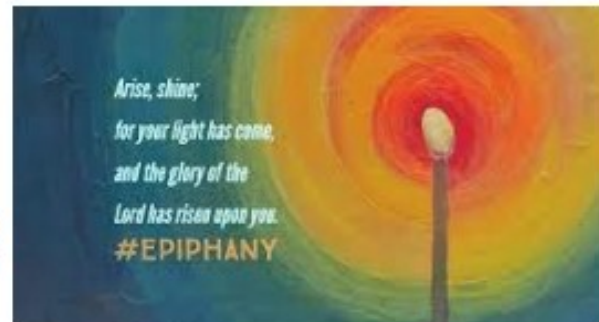
Letter from Elisabeth Johnson

January 31, 2022

Dear friends and sponsors,

Warm greetings from Cameroon, and blessed Epiphany to all!

I hope this letter finds you well. Once again, I am long overdue for an update. Here are a few highlights from recent months:



October

The 2021-2022 academic year at the Lutheran Institute of Theology in Meiganga started at the beginning of October with our largest student body in recent history (63 students), including a new class of seven master's degree students.



Beginning of the 2021-2022 academic year at the Lutheran Institute of Theology in Meiganga.

Also, I am pleased to announce that I am no longer the only female professor at the Institute! I have a new colleague, the Rev. Dr. Jeannette Ada, one of the first women ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon and the first woman in this church to earn her doctorate.



Rev. Dr. Ada leading worship for the opening of the academic year.

November

Rev. Dr. Ada also serves as Vice-President for Africa for the Lutheran World Federation. In November, we were pleased to welcome a delegation from LWF to the Institute, including LWF's current President, the Rev. Dr. Filibus Musa, Archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, and the Rev. Dr. Elieshi Ayo Mungure, Regional Secretary for Africa. Although the visit was brief, we enjoyed an enriching conversation about Lutheran theological education in Africa.



Professors at the Institute with delegation of the Lutheran World Federation

December

Before the Christmas break, we had our annual Christmas celebration at the Institute. Along with the usual singing and skits, this year the celebration included the baptism of several children of students, including a 7-month-old little girl named Elisabeth, for whom I was honored to serve as a sponsor.



Left: With newly baptized Elisabeth and her family / Right: Children of students and professors singing in the Christmas program (Etienne in red shirt, David in white shirt with stripes)

In a previous newsletter, I had mentioned that Eric finally received a transfer from Yaoundé to Ngaoundéré, a city much closer to Meiganga. Unfortunately, his company changed their mind about that transfer, so Eric has still been in Yaoundé these last several months. David, Etienne, and I traveled to Yaoundé to spend Christmas with Eric and Schekina. David and Etienne were thrilled to meet Santa (Père Noël) at a stop along the way. Our Christmas was low-key, as Schekina tested positive for covid-19. She had cold-like symptoms, but thankfully, her case was not severe, and she recovered quickly.



January 2022

In January, the first semester at the Institute wrapped up, with final exams last week. The students were trying very hard not to be too distracted from their exams by the Africa Cup of Nations football (soccer) tournament, which Cameroon is hosting this year. Football fever is everywhere as the national team, the "Indomitable Lions," have made it to the semi-finals.



Looking ahead...

Finally, I have some important news to share with you. After nearly a decade in Cameroon, I have decided to finish my missionary service here and move back to the U.S. with my family this coming summer. This has been a difficult decision to make, as I have truly loved my work teaching at the Lutheran Institute of Theology in Meiganga. It has been the adventure of a lifetime and has enriched my life immeasurably.

At the same time, for reasons mostly related to family, we believe it is a good time to make the move. We don't know yet exactly where we will end up, but we ask for your prayers as we discern God's call and make this transition.

I cannot thank you enough for your financial support of my work in Cameroon, for your faithful prayers, and for the warm welcome you have extended to my family and me on home assignments. The relationships formed in this partnership have been a blessing to us.

I will be in touch again in the coming months. Please know that your financial support is still needed as I wrap up my work here. When I leave Cameroon, a representative from the ELCA global mission team will contact you about transferring your sponsorship to another missionary. I hope and pray that you will continue to support the important partnerships in which we engage with our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world.

+ Grace and peace +

Elisabeth (with Eric, Schekina, David, and Etienne)

Lutheran Institute of Theology, B.P. 9, Meiganga, CAMEROON

elisajo@msn.com



March 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
		11:00 Lutheran Home Service 1:30 pm Kingsway Service 6:30 pm Cub Scout meeting	Ash Wednesday 5:30 pm Soup and Sandwich 6:30 pm Ash Wednesday Service 7:15 Adult Choir			6:00 pm Worship Service
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
8:00 & 9:15 Worship Services 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 New Member Orientation	6:30 pm Boy Scouts		5:30 pm Soup and Sandwich 6:30 pm Lenten Service 7:15 Adult Choir			6:00 pm Worship Service
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
New Member Sunday 8:00 & 9:15 Worship Services 8:50 Council Executive meeting 9:15 Sunday School	6:30 pm Boy Scouts		5:30 pm Soup and Sandwich 6:30 pm Lenten Service 7:15 Adult Choir	6:30 pm Church Council		6:00 pm Worship Service
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
8:00 & 9:15 Worship Services 9:15 Sunday School	6:30 pm Boy Scouts	6:30 pm Cub Scout meeting	5:30 pm Soup and Sandwich 6:30 pm Lenten Service 7:15 Adult Choir			6:00 pm Worship Service
27	28	29	30	31		
8:00 & 9:15 Worship Services	6:30 pm Boy Scouts		5:30 pm Soup and Sandwich 6:30 pm Lenten Service 7:15 Adult Choir			

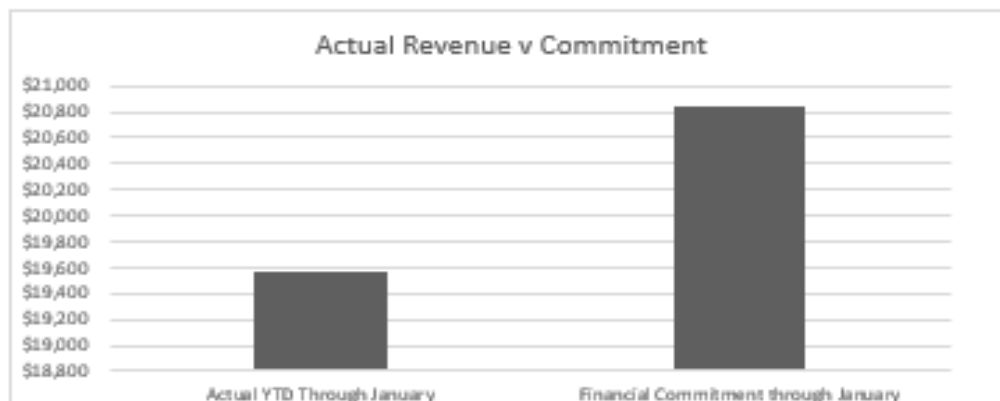
Financial Corner

St. John General Fund Financial Results One Month Ending January 31, 2022 and January 31, 2021

Operating Fund			Year Over Year
	<u>January 31, 2022</u>	<u>January 31, 2021</u>	<u>Increase (Decrease)</u>
Income	\$ 19,575	\$ 20,054	-2%
Expenses:			
Personnel	(17,661)	(17,442)	
Office	(2,197)	(1,982)	
Property & Maintenance	(2,495)	(3,425)	
Ministry Teams	(327)	-	
Other	(270)	(234)	
Benevolence:			
Minneapolis Area Synod	(2,100)	(1,000)	
Camp Onomia	(500)	(250)	
Net Receipts / (Expenditures)	<u>\$ (5,975)</u>	<u>\$ (4,279)</u>	
Cash Balance at January 1 (Excl. Loans)	\$ 7,829	\$ (82,735)	
Net Income / (Expenditures)	(5,975)	(4,279)	
Misc. cash not affecting income	(489)	(586)	
Loan from Building Fund (2018 & 2019)	-	44,500	
Loan from St. John Foundation (2014-2016)	39,782	54,294	
Cash Balance at January 31	<u>\$ 41,147</u>	<u>\$ 11,194</u>	

52% of Donations in January were Electronic. Thank You!

Building Fund			
	<u>January 31, 2022</u>	<u>January 31, 2021</u>	
Receipts	\$ 5,031	\$ 6,907	-27%
Principal	(10,285)	(9,907)	
Interest	(275)	(653)	
Net Receipts / (Disbursements)	<u>\$ (5,529)</u>	<u>\$ (3,653)</u>	
Loan Balance at January 1	\$ 87,906	\$ 325,224	
Principal Payments	(10,285)	(9,907)	
Loan Balance at January 31	<u>\$ 77,621</u>	<u>\$ 315,317</u>	
Building Fund Bank Balance at January 31	\$ 76,050		
Actual Income Compared to 2022 Financial Commitment:			
Actual YTD Through January	\$ 19,575		
Financial Commitment through January	20,841		



March 6, 2022 Ushers	
8:00 Service	9:15 Service
Brent Schwichtenberg Greg Schwichtenberg Juls Robbins	David & Sara Bungarden Louis Longhenry Ron & Dianne Rasmussen



March 13 & 20, 2022 Ushers	
8:00 Service	9:15 Service
Chris Schultz Luke & Logan Schultz Rob Schultz Mark Schultz Wayne Koepp Aaron Leonard	Tim Moonen Dale Schmidt Samuel Schmidt Dick Bristow

March 27 & April 3, 2022 Ushers	
8:00 Service	9:15 Service
Curt & Cheryl Johnson Bryn Davis Corey Johnson Craig Johnson	Scott Ruud Alex & Griffin Ruud Dale & Jake Mercado Jerry & Alex Meger

Acolytes for March 8:00 Service		
March 6	Madi Theis	Meredith Carstens
March 13	Caden Vycital	Ethan Martin
March 20		
March 27	Allison Blake	Mya Bommelyn

Acolytes for Lenten Services		
March 9	Hanna Konopacki	Hunter Olson
March 16	Brady Bessel	Joseph Petersen
March 23	Isaac Hanson	
March 30	Ruby Schultz	Izzi Lindahl

In Memory

Memorials were given to the Building Fund and General Fund in memory of :

- Myron Malz,
 - Pat Kremin (Cheryl Johnson's Mother)
 - Joan Ciavarelli (David Einertson's Sister)
- by Family and Friends.

CALLED TO SERVE THROUGH OUR GIVING			
Offering Received the week of			
January 27– February 2		February 3-9	
General Fund—\$6,019		General Fund—\$5,870	
Building Fund—\$1,820		Building Fund—\$1,035	
February 10-16		February 17-23	
General Fund—\$3,886		General Fund— \$2,866	
Building Fund—\$1,155		Building Fund- \$2,670	