



FEBRUARY NEWS

St. John Lutheran Church

All are welcome to worship:

Sundays at 8:00am & 9:30am

Wednesday February 4th at 6:30pm

We will begin our Lenten soup and sandwich suppers on Ash Wednesday, February 18th!

Supper is at 5:30pm

Holden evening prayer service is at 6:30pm



Staff:

Pastor:

Sherri Otto

Office:

Amanda Schultz

Accounting:

Monica Braesch

Custodian:

Jen Scott

Choir Director:

Allison Vandermark

Organist:

Eileen Hanlon

Accompanist:

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Church office: 952-873-6492

email: office@stjohnbelleplaine.org

Unapproved St. John Lutheran Church Council Minutes
January 6th, 2026

President Jim Eggers called the meeting to order at 6:05pm and Pastor Sherri led us in a devotion.

Present:

X	Pastor Sherri Otto	X	Jim Eggers	X	Albert Koepp	X	Amy Franck
	David Bungarden	X	Jan Effinger	X	Chris Zellman	X	Steve Kelm
X	Jerold Stauffacher		Jaime Petersen	X	Tim Moonen	X	Deanne Fogarty
X	Rob Schultz						

Approval of Minutes:

Council reviewed the minutes of the December 10 th , 2025 Council Meeting. Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the meeting minutes.
The council reviewed the current agenda. Requests were made to add Winter Weather discussion, Holiday Weekend services, and offering plate discussions to new business. After the additions, a motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the evenings agenda.

Staff Report:

- A. Amanda's office report was reviewed by members of the council. Amanda had a busy month, working in conjunction with Pastor to plan and prep the December services; children's program, Hope in the Darkness, Christmas services, and our regular Sunday services. She is currently prepping for our annual meeting at the end of January. She continues to complete the day to day tasks to keep our church functioning: managing the calendar, ordering supplies, connect and confirmation, and all of the communications from the church.
- B. Pastor Sherri's report was reviewed by the council. In addition to her home visits and presiding at Kingsway, we were blessed with all of the Christmas services. New this year was the "Hope in the Darkness" service which was well received by all in attendance. She continues to involve youth and families as helpers in our services including the advent readings and lighting of the advent wreath. Pastor Sherri has also been working with the foundation committee and have determined 5 organizations to donate the foundation funds to. These will be voted on at the annual meeting.

Treasurer's Report:

- A. Jerold's treasurer report was reviewed by the council. December came up short of the budgeted Offering Revenue for the month by \$10,941, however it was more than last years revenue and we were able to pay all the bills and operate in the black for the month. Expenses for the month were a little over the anticipated amount by about \$2,324. They're finalizing the year end reporting for the annual meeting.

Balances in accounts as of January 1st are as follows:

- a. Ameriprise Account (Stier) balance: \$121,851
- b. Property Improvement (Savings) balance: \$63,471 (plus \$101,985 & \$75,000 CDs)
- c. Technology Fund balance: \$1,597
- d. Foundation Account (Interest from Foundation Investment) balance: \$22,660
- e. General Fund balance: \$22,611
- f. Youth Account balance: \$20,125
- g. Building Fund Checkbook balance: \$3,455
- h. Memorial Fund balance: \$21,579
- i. Jackson Account (Larry Kiewel) balance: \$79,707
- J. St. John Foundation Investment balance: \$192,504

Transfers:

- A. No transfers in or out this month.

Ongoing Business:

- A. The council reviewed the Personnel Handbook. All proposed revisions will be sent back to the Personnel Committee for review and finalization.
- B. The council reviewed the list of Reformation Ideas from Reformation Sunday. Common themes were youth, music, hospitality, bible studies, and marketing. We'll continue to keep these top of mind throughout the year to continue improving on them.

New Business:

- A. The Annual Meeting agenda was reviewed with an added emphasis on the parking lot project. Building and Grounds will plan to highlight that during the meeting. Council members will also plan to bring food for the coffee hour.
- B. Winter Weather: On school days, St. John will abide by the Belle Plaine Schools decisions. If school is closed or activities are cancelled, church activities would also be cancelled. For Sundays and non-school days, Church Council will do our best to make decisions on Saturday evenings to allow additional time to get notifications sent out. Jan has offered to look into our closures being announced on local news stations (similar to school closures). The council also made a motion, seconded and carried to get a laptop for Amanda to be able to assist with items such as this from home when needed.
- C. Holiday Weekend Services were discussed. MEA break, Thanksgiving, and Christmas have significantly lower attendance and it was recommended that we reduce those Sundays to 1 service at 9am. This allows us one larger service to worship together and for service helpers to get time back on those days. To avoid any confusion, we'll be sure to announce these changes as those days approach next fall. The council made a motion, seconded and approved that those 3 Sundays would have a single service next year.
- D. The passing of the Offering Plate was also discussed. With many members of the congregation donating electronically, we'd like to remove the passing of the plate from service. Instead, we'll place an offering plate near the front of the sanctuary and any offerings may be placed in the offering plate as they proceed to communion. This will be communicated to the ushers and will go into effect on Sunday, February 1st .

Ministry Team Updates:

- A. The Stewardship Committee has no reports for this quarter.
- B. Building and Grounds has been busy! The office doors have been updated with new locks, the coffee machine and the countertop in the coffee area have been replaced. Demolition work has begun at the Hayden property to prepare for the parking lot. They are also actively looking into replacing the choir microphones.

Lastly, we'd like to thank our council members that have completed their time on the council; *Albert Koepp, Chris Zellman, Jan Effinger, Jaime Petersen, and Steve Kelm*. We appreciate all of the time spent on the council to help keep our church running smoothly – THANK YOU!

Motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:19pm.

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Deanne Fogarty, Secretary

~Holy Permission~

Twenty-one years ago, our mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. My dad had died two years earlier and so this was exceptionally hard for our mom not to have him with her during this time. After the surgery, it was recommended that she have both chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

I took off work for her first chemo treatment, driving down from Burnsville to pick her up and drive her to the appointment in Red Wing. I wanted to do something for her, feeling helpless for what she was going through, so I bought her new pajamas and a robe as I thought this would somehow comfort her.

I was happy to find out that I could sit with her as they hooked her up to receive the chemicals and wondered what she was thinking as this went into her body. I didn't bring it up as I did not want to upset her as she was putting on a good front of being the strong Norwegian woman I knew and loved. She was just about ready to open my gift when my phone rang.

It was Bob stating that our daughter Emily had gotten hurt at day-care and he was on his way with her to the emergency room. He said she was okay but that they needed to check her out to see if there were any internal injuries. My heart was racing, my head spinning, but somehow, I managed to tell him to call me when he gets any updates.

As I set the phone down, my mom said this, "Go. Your daughter needs you." I thought to myself, "But you need me too, mom! Right?"

My mom knew exactly what I was thinking and repeated herself again. "Go Sherri. Your daughter needs you. I will be fine."

And so, I listened to my mom. I drove faster than the speed limit to get to the ER and when I arrived, I saw my beautiful two-year-old, sitting on the bed, eating a Freeze pop.

My mom knew the importance of being with my child and gave up her own needs for that of someone she loved and cared about. She gave me permission to leave, a permission that I was not willing to give to myself.

This act of love reminds me of our God who understands our need for permission. We don't always know what the right thing is to do and sometimes we can either ignore a situation or stay in it too long. I believe God works through people, like my mom, every day in their ordinary lives to give us guidance, love and yes, even permission.

What is it today that you need permission to let go of, to leave or to stay put? How can the people around you help in giving you this permission? Who do you turn to when tough choices or decisions need to be made?


Our God is here for you and so are we, to love you, care for you, forgive you, restore you and give you permission to be the amazing person that God created you to be.



Please, receive this blessing:

When you are on a rough sea
May it be calmed for you
When you are in a dark place
May it be lightened for you
When your path has been lost
May it be found again for you
When the view is obscured by cloud
May it be cleared for you
When you need permission
May God's Spirit move within you*
And when you feel alone
Know I will be there for you.

Written by Iain Tweedale
(*Added on by me)
Peace,
Pastor Sherri



**“May God’s
spirit move
within you”**

Fantastic February

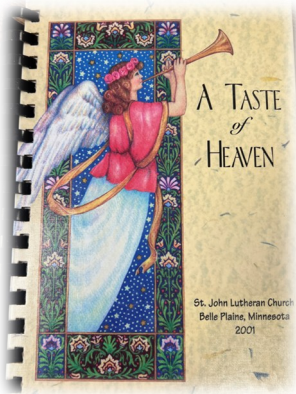
The first month of 2026 has come and gone! The winter chill brought in some challenges, but we pushed through and we made it to February ~ the month of 'love'. Let us pay special attention to those we love this month and maybe reach out to neighbors who might need a little love.

Last month our Connect and Confirmation kids went to Feed My Starving Children to pack meals, we held our annual meeting and we had an all team meeting! Quite the month!! This month we look forward to our Lenten soup and sandwich suppers on Wednesday evenings, followed by our Holden Evening service. There's just something so special about coming to church for food & fellowship {{during lent}}! Be on the lookout for the menu coming soon.

Also this month, we are going to try a new way to collect our offering during church services. Rather than the ushers collecting the offering row by row as we have done thus far, you will now be encouraged to leave your offering on the way to receive communion.

Many blessings,
Amanda

Recipes for remembering 1/19/2026 ~ written by Larry Kiewel



My wife and I have entered a strange era of our lives. Nothing is easy. Walking the dog, mowing the lawn, remembering the grocery list, finding the remote or our phone, or even cooking a favorite meal. So the church cookbook has moved to a central place in our kitchen and our lives.

I found the recipe we were trying to remember. It took a minute because it was named 'Hamburger Stroganoff' not 'stroganough' like we were looking for. But it was exactly what we remembered and what we will have for supper tonight as soon as I go to the store for more sour cream.

I sorted through several pages before and after the recipe I was looking for. I realized there is more to a church cookbook than recipes. The name of the home cook is in the title line of every recipe, and you get a moment to remember the person and the time and place they all came together. I was struck by a moment of humor from my favorite county commissioner, who was not necessarily thought of for his humor.

Bill Koniarski was an elder in what I call my home church as opposed to the churches I have been part of for short times when I was away from home or now that I have moved to a retirement situation. He represented my part of Scott County for a long time, and I admired the job he did and hoped to one day run for county commissioner. That didn't happen but I did get a chance to sit with Bill as part of our men's bible study in the early part of this century. His knowledge and wisdom were appreciated and admired by all of us who had a chance to sit with him.

Here is his recipe for Elephant Stew. I am not sure where he stole it from and some of the humor is dated but it will make you want to dig out your church cookbook and read some names and old church basement recipes...

Elephant Stew from Bill Koniarski

1 medium sized elephant

2 rabbits (optional)

Salt and pepper to taste

Cut the elephant into bite-sized pieces. This should take one person about 2 months. Add enough brown gravy to cover. Cook over kerosene fire for 4 weeks. This will serve about 3800 people. If more are expected, 2 rabbits may be added, but do this only if necessary, as most people do not like to find hare in their stew.

Directory update:

Our updated directory is in progress, and I thank you for your patience as we are working with a new company and there are a few kinks to work out ~ one of them being my rookie season in this office position.

2026 quilting:

We will be starting on Tuesday, February 10th at 1 p.m. No experience necessary, we will teach. Only requirement is persons willing to have good conversation while putting together the quilts to be given to our St. John graduating Seniors. Any questions, contact Sandy Schultz 952-215-8304.

St. John teams:

Here at St. John we are blessed with a vibrant community of dedicated members who devote their time and talents to various teams, ensuring our church thrives.

Each team represents a piece of our puzzle:

- **Foundation** : how can we best disburse the endowed gifts of St. John?
- **Facilities & Grounds/Technology**: how can we best support our physical and digital presence?
- **Finance**: how can we ensure our resources are being managed effectively?
- **Stewardship**: how can we inspire the congregation to be faithful stewards?
- **Care**: how can we reach members of our congregation that need extra care?
- **Worship & Music**: how can we support the growth of our worship services?
- **Children's, youth & family**: how can we encourage our youth to stay connected?
- **Funeral**: how can we best support families who are grieving?
- **Coffee**: how can support the food and fellowship between services and during special services?
- **W/ELCA: (altar guild, quilting)** how can we use our time and talents to support the members of St. John?

St. John Lutheran Church welcomes all members to be a part of our team! If you would like to hear more, please stop by the office ~ we would love to chat!!

February Birthdays

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Nathan Shutes	2 Myron Bratsch Cassidy Burkman Robin Fink Rick Martin	3 Marv Laue Dave Menke Elissa Moonen Austin Oldenburg	4 Emily Aust Marci Kiewel Mikayla Olson Connor Vycital	5 Cheryl Flynn Rebecca Johnson Joanne Musick Zoe Otting	6 Jane Baker Katherine Wermerskirchen	7 Lynne Jeurissen Kim Koepp Brent Schwichtenberg
8 McKayle Siemon Sherrie Simcox	9 Elizabeth Koonst- Kopesky Marty Siemon	10 Bryn Davis Tucker Kritzman Luke Luskey	11 Karen Bessel	12 Alissa Henning Angela Kahle Lavonne Moore Larry Schmidt Jennifer Scott	13 Courtney Eppen Abigail Liebhard	14 Oliver Henke Noah & Nolan Rust Ben Swanson
15 Julie Adelman Maria Jonason Aiden Koepp Evan Koepp Leah Schaefer	16 Wayde Holm Kathy Stauffacher Dominic Veerkamp	17 Nick Davis Josh Schultz Aria Foster	18 Savannah Berg Crosby Carlson William Costello MaryAnn Koonst	19 Jacob Koepp Dale Mercado Michael Ritsch	20 Dennis Aretz Connie Haas Sydney Paulson Brian Schmidt Veaya Scott	21 Evan Muehlenhardt Ross Overline
22 Baylen Anderson Bev Stier	23	24 Marcy Boblitt Brian Fahey Pamela Koepp	25 Charles Koepp Jonathan Vinkemeier Chris Bieder	26 Sven Berg Tyler Gruhn Becca Schwichtenberg	27 McKenzie Koepp Ally Schultz Eva Tharaldson	28 Zach Tracy
						

February Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 8:00am worship 9:30am worship	2 6:00pm personnel 6:30pm boy scouts	3	4 5:00pm youth choir 6:00pm c/c lesson 6:30pm worship 7:00pm adult choir	5 10:00am bible study 5:00pm TOPS	6	7
8 8:00am worship 9:30am worship <i>*noisy.offering</i>	9 6:30pm boy scouts	10 5:00pm Worship & music 6:00pm church council	11 5:00pm youth choir 6:00pm c/c lesson 7:00pm adult choir	12 10:00am bible study 5:00pm TOPS	13	14
15 8:00am worship 9:30am worship NO Sunday School <i>*boy scout pancake breakfast</i>	16 6:30pm boy scouts	17	18 Ash.Wednesday 5:30pm supper 6:30pm worship	19 10:00am bible study 5:00pm TOPS	20	21
22 8:00am worship 9:30am worship	23 6:30pm boy scouts	24	25 5:30pm supper 6:30pm worship	26 10:00am bible study 5:00pm TOPS	27	28
						

~ SUNDAY VOLUNTEERS ~

Alter guild: Renee Mueleners & Wendy Theis

Feb 1	<p>Greeters: Sharon Adelman</p> <p>Lay Readers: Amy Franck</p> <p>Communion Assistants: Rob & Sandy Schultz, Terry Siemon</p> <p>Ushers: Chris, Luke & Logan Schultz, Rob Schultz, Mark Schultz, Wayne Koepp</p> <p>Acolyte:</p>	<p>Greeters: Cindy Schoenbauer</p> <p>Lay Reader: Chris Moylan</p> <p>Communion Assistants: Jason & Monica Braesch, Chris Moylan</p> <p>Ushers: Chris & Annette Moylan, Steve Schroeder, Lee Sauter, James Fogarty</p> <p>*Hailee S, Adriann S</p> <p>Acolyte: Josalyn Henning</p>
Feb 8	<p>Greeters: Bruce & Susie Volek</p> <p>Lay Readers: Mindy Chevalier</p> <p>Communion Assistants: Matt & Kristin Stier, Mindy Chevalier</p> <p>Ushers: Myron Bratsch, Kirk Frank, Matt Kes, Jeff Eppen</p> <p>*Miranda W</p> <p>Acolyte:</p>	<p>Greeters: Ron & Diane Rasmussen</p> <p>Lay Reader: John Busse</p> <p>Communion Assistants: Dave Bungarden, Beth Beuch, Renee Meuleners</p> <p>Ushers: Dave & Sara Bungarden, Mason Bungarden, Ron & Diane Rassmussen</p> <p>*Adalena B, Alex R</p> <p>Acolyte:</p>
Feb 15	<p>Greeters: Susie Steinhagen</p> <p>Lay Readers: Susie Steinhagen</p> <p>Communion Assistants: Susie Steinhagen, Sherrie Simcox, Renee Meuleners</p> <p>Ushers: Myron Bratsch, Kirk Frank, Matt Kes, Jeff Eppen *Alek P, Reese P</p> <p>Acolyte:</p>	<p>Greeters: Brent & Wendy Koepp</p> <p>Lay Reader: Steve Schroeder</p> <p>Communion Assistants: Steve Schroeder, Brent Koepp, Teresa Latzke</p> <p>Ushers: Dave & Sara Bungarden, Mason Bungarden, Ron & Dianne Rassmussen</p> <p>Acolyte:</p>

Ash Wednesday is February 18th, join us for supper at 5:30pm,
Followed by the Holden evening prayer service at 6:30pm

Feb 22	<p>Greeters: Terry & Angie Kahle</p> <p>Lay Readers: Bonnie Vinkemeier</p> <p>Communion Assistants: Bonnie Vinkemeier, Dave Latzke, Dorothy Koepp</p> <p>Ushers: Dan Herrmann, James & John Karl, Wyatt Herrmann, Tim Bristlin *Dalton O</p> <p>Acolyte: Madden C, Crosby C</p>	<p>Greeters: Chris & Annette Moylan</p> <p>Lay Reader: Annette Moylan</p> <p>Communion Assistants: Sara Bungarden, Peg Longhenry, Cindy Schoenbauer</p> <p>Ushers: Scott & Tricia Ruud, Micheal Nagel, Monica & Jason Braesch *Jeff Scott, Veaya S</p> <p>Acolyte: Gavin T</p>
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St. John Lutheran Church		
All Funds: Statement of Activities		
Beginning Balance	\$13,909.03	
Ending Balance	\$21,294.74	
December 1 - December 31, 2025		
	12/1/2025 - 12/31/2025	12/1/2024 - 12/31/2024
Revenues		
Total Offering Revenues	42,771.76	30,212.23
Coffee Hour Income	70.00	196.00
Sunday School Offering	70.12	115.00
Confirmation Income	340.53	439.64
Investment Income	500.00	104.81
Total Revenues	43,752.41	31,067.68
Expenditures		
Total Benevolence Expense	1,600.00	907.78
Total Church/Grounds Maintenance	10,696.98	2,458.23
Total Insurance	1,171.76	0.00
Total Office Expenses	1,243.27	2,774.24
Other Expenses	99.00	4557.34
Total Professional Fees	0.00	40.25
Total Staff Benefits	357.04	67.04
Total Staff Salaries	15,882.35	15,162.73
Total Utilities	1,770.75	614.91
Total Worship Music & Arts Expenses	15.00	298.00
Total Expenditures	33,879.32	27,812.07
Transfers In	1,999.00	0.00
Transfers Out	-100.00	0
Net Revenue	11722.09	3255.61
Property Improvement / Building		
	12/1/2025 - 12/31/2025	12/1/2024 - 12/31/2024
Income (Donations, Rent, Invest-	\$11,274.39	\$11,012.30
Total Expenditures	\$11,527.98	\$9,377.00
Transfers In	\$5,000.00	\$1,000.00
Transfers Out	-\$6,999.00	\$0.00
Net Receipts / Disbursements	(\$2,252.59)	\$2,635.30
Offerings	General Fund	Property Improvement
12/1 - 12/6	\$3,731.99	\$717.50
12/7 - 12/13	\$4,725.60	\$531.38
12/14 - 12/20	\$8,890.24	\$1,925.00
12/21 - 12/27	\$17,268.02	\$1,710.51
12/28 - 12/31	\$7,754.53	\$6,390.00

* \$5,000 was transferred from the Building fund to the Property Fund to cover the cost of tree removal at the Hayden house*

There are many ways to give back, one way is giving back financially.

To schedule a *recurring electronic contribution* via Vanco:

Visit our website: www.stjohnbelleplaine.org

Select the green 'online giving'

Scroll to the bottom and select 'get started today'

Select where you would like the funds allocated

Follow the prompts to set up your account

Or scan the code:



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

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Belle Plaine, MN 56011

Change Service Requested