



St. John News

September 2026

Worship this month:

Sundays Sept 6 & 13 at 9:00am

Sundays Sept 20 & 27 at 8:00am and 9:30am

Events this month:

September 9: Connect & Confirmation orientation

September 13: Rally Sunday ~ "God's Work, Our Hands"

September 16: Connect & Confirmation classes begin

September 20: Bible Sunday & Teacher installation

September 27: Sunday School noisy offering

Staff:

Pastor:

Sherri Otto

Office:

Amanda Schultz

Accounting:

Kendra Hilk

Custodian:

Jen Scott

Choir Director:

Allison Vandermark

Accompanist:

Tara Larson

Organist:

Eileen Hanlon

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148 S Chestnut St. Belle Plaine MN 56011

Church office: 952-873-6492

email: office@stjohnbelleplaine.org

Office hours: M-Th 9:00-3:00,

Fri 9:00-12:00

Unapproved St. John Lutheran Church Council Minutes

August 12th, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 6:42pm.

Present:

X	Pastor Sherri Otto	X	Jim Eggers	X	Rob Schultz	X	Deanne Fogarty
X	Jerold Stauffacher	X	David Bungarden	X	Tim Moonen	X	Amy Franck
X	Alicia Shutes		Patty Laabs	X	Cody Schultz		

Approval of Minutes:

Council reviewed the minutes of the July Council Meeting. A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the meeting minutes.

The council reviewed the current agenda. A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the August agenda.

Staff Reports:

A. Amanda's office report was reviewed by members of the council. Amanda has helped with all of the summer events; Vacation Bible School, BBQ days, Twins Game, etc. She continues working on the church history in between all of the daily items to keep our church running smoothly.

B. Pastors report was reviewed by the council. She has had a busy month with all of the summer activities. She also continues to lead services, Bible Study, the Care team, etc.

Treasurer's Reports:

Jerold's treasurer report was reviewed by the council. For the month of July we missed our budgeted offerings by \$9,841. Year to Date, we're behind budget by \$30,153 and behind last year by \$22,651 for offerings. The good news is that our Actual expenses for the month were under our budget by \$3,266. We ended with more expense than revenue, resulting in - \$1,865 balance for the month. Pastor's Salary is up this month for reimbursement of mileage and taxes that were incorrectly deducted from paychecks in 2025. Music and Treasurer Salaries were for July were included on June's icon statement.

Balances in accounts as of August 2nd are as follows:

- a. Ameriprise Account (Stier) balance: \$131,774
- b. Property Improvement (Savings) balance: \$199,936
- c. Foundation Account (Interest from Foundation Investment) balance: \$20,322
- d. General Fund balance: \$13,994
- e. Youth Account balance: \$16,826
- f. Building Fund Checkbook balance: \$1,625.62
- g. Memorial Fund balance: \$11,558 with a \$25,000 CD due Sept. 11
- h. Jackson Annuity balance: \$79,503
- i. St. John Foundation Investment balance (Charles Schwab): \$204,427

The memorial fund CD is coming due. The council made a motion, seconded and carried to open a new CD for \$20,000 and put the remaining \$5,000 plus interest earned back into the memorial fund.

Transfers:

A. No transfers in.

B. The council approved the transfer out of Bob and Rae Fimon.

Ongoing Business:

A. Vacation Bible School has wrapped up. There were 33 kids in attendance, which was up significantly from last year. We had great volunteers who helped make the week a success!

B. We had 73 attend the Twins game; 56 rode the bus and 17 drove separately but sat with our group.

C. The Mission Trip had a great time at Lake Traverse in South Dakota. We're looking forward to hearing more about their trip in September. They'll be heading to Duluth in 2027!

D. The National Youth Gathering is also coming in summer of 2027. We're looking for someone to help organize and lead that trip. If you are interested, please reach out to Pastor or Amanda in the office.

E. Building and Grounds Updates:

a. The committee approved the cost of a new LED sign for the front corner. After reviewing the recommended proposal, the council also made a motion, seconded and carried to approve the cost of a new sign. This will be paid out of the building fund.

b. The parking lot update: curbing is in, next will be the set up, and then the pouring of concrete.

c. Security of the building: a ring doorbell will be purchased so doors can remain locked in the evenings. Community groups using the building will be able to notify when they arrive to unlock the doors.

d. The internet signal isn't always strong enough in the back of the sanctuary to stream the service. They're looking at different options to improve this; different providers, boosters, etc.

New Business:

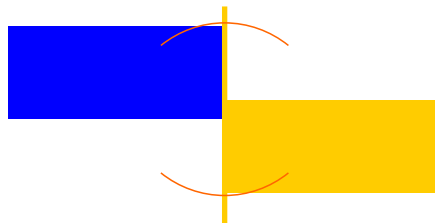
A. Rally Sunday will be held on Sunday, September 13th . God's Work, Our Hands will be the theme for service projects taking place after service. Please mark your calendars!

B. The Personnel committee will meet to begin employee reviews in September.

C. In September we will also begin discussing the 2027 budget. Jerold will have numbers ready for the council to begin reviewing for the next council meeting.

Motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:50pm. We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deanne Fogarty, Secretary



Holding Grace and Consequences Together

In my younger days, I had a friend who told a lie about me to a group of people, some of whom I knew and some I didn't know very well. Although my "friend" knew that what she was telling people about me was not true, she did it anyway, thinking it would make her more popular and gain friends.

What it did was alienate me from some people I thought were my friends. I felt betrayed, hurt, humiliated and just plain sad. And then I became angry because I had been nothing but nice to her. I wondered how she could do this to another person.

So, I started to protect myself by building new friendships and learning how to trust again. I also stood up to her. I took responsibility for my own actions and told that group of friends the truth about what had really happened.

Sometimes life is like this, right? You think that you can trust someone, and they lie, cheat or steal from you in physical, financial or emotional ways.

So where do we turn when someone has hurt us? How does God want us to respond? Do we turn the other cheek, or are there consequences that need to be answered for?

I have been thinking about those questions a lot lately.

One of the things I have always appreciated about our faith is that Jesus never tells us that what is wrong is suddenly right. Forgiveness does not mean pretending that something didn't happen. Grace does not mean that actions don't have consequences. And mercy does not mean that we ignore harm that has been done.

Sometimes, forgiveness and consequences have to exist side by side.

The Bible says, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil" (Romans 12:17). It also tells us to "forgive as the Lord has forgiven you" (Colossians 3:13). Those are beautiful words, but they are not always easy words to live out—especially when we have been hurt, betrayed or disappointed by someone we trusted.

Forgiveness is not the same thing as trust. Trust is rebuilt over time. Forgiveness does not mean that we don't set boundaries, tell the truth, or hold someone accountable for the choices they have made.

There is something important about taking responsibility for what we do. We all make mistakes and poor choices. But part of God's grace is that we are invited to acknowledge what we have done, tell the truth, make amends where we can, and accept the consequences of our actions.

Galatians 6:7 reminds us, "You reap whatever you sow." Our choices matter. What we say and do affects other people, and sometimes those choices have consequences we cannot simply wish away.

And yet, even in the midst of consequences, God's grace remains. That is where I find myself returning again and again to Jesus.

Jesus calls us to forgive. Jesus calls us to show mercy. Jesus calls us to love even when loving is difficult. But Jesus also calls us to live in truth. Sometimes living in truth means acknowledging that something is wrong, that someone has been hurt, and that there are things that need to be made right.

Perhaps that is one of the hardest parts of being a Christian: holding two things together at the same time.

I am still learning how to do this. I suspect most of us are.

Forgiveness doesn't change the past. It doesn't erase consequences. It doesn't always restore a relationship to what it once was. But forgiveness can free our hearts from being controlled by what someone else has done to us.

And perhaps that is where grace begins. Not by saying, "It didn't matter." But by saying, "It mattered. It hurt. It was wrong. And I am choosing to place it in God's hands."

Maybe that is why Jesus' words about forgiveness are not just words we need for someone else.

They are words we need for ourselves.

Peace,

Pastor Sherri

As summer fades into fall, we prepare for cooler mornings, changing trees and shorter days. Some of us are scrambling to check off the many tasks of back to school, some are enjoying the simplicity of change and some are cheerfully awaiting yet another changing of the seasons.

Embracing scripture and reflecting upon it, we are reminded that like the season, life tends to change constantly. We are blessed to be a community of believers who have faith that God will be with us through all our seasons. Guiding us, nurturing us and loving us.

I can't wait for the cooler weather, myself, but I am also looking forward to the busy Sunday School rooms, the chaotic {in a good way} Wednesday nights and the fellowship with coffee hour. I'm heading into fall with a grateful heart and feeling so blessed to be here at St. John.

~Amanda



Next year, in 2027, we will be celebrating our 150th Anniversary of our establishment and I look forward to learning more history through the eyes of our Members! I would love to sit down and chat about 'how it used to be' or 'way back when'. So if you are willing to sit a spell with me, please let me know, I would love to hear from ya!



Faith in action! This year, **Rally Sunday**, is on September 13th and we invite you to help us {join other congregations of the ELCA} for the annual dedicated day of service. This day is an opportunity for congregations to serve and love our neighbor, just as Jesus taught us.

How does this work? Every participating congregation of the ELCA will set up unique service projects that share God's love with their communities.

Who can participate? Everyone!

When will these service projects take place? Projects will start following the 9am service

What else do I need to know? This will also be our coffee hour kick off! That's right ~ Coffee hour returns! We will have light refreshments and snacks to celebrate our morning of fellowship and giving.

Other important dates:

September 20th ~ our 1st and 5th grade students will receive bibles AND we will be installing our Sunday School teachers and Wednesday night leaders at both our 8:00 and 9:30 services

September 27th ~ our Sunday school students will be collecting loose change at the 9:30 service for the first 'noisy offering' of the school year.

****Please contact the office for the Sunday School online registration form**

Connect and Confirmation!

Our Wednesday evening classes for 5th - 8th grade start on September 16th!

We are looking forward to another great year of learning and growth with the students and are excited to see them back! To help prepare for the year ahead, we will have orientation on Sept 9th.

We have big goals here at St. John when it comes to our youth! Early in 2025 we conducted a survey of our top priorities and our youth came in at the top. We are always looking for new ways to engage our Sunday School students, the Wednesday night crew and those who have been confirmed. We look forward to supporting all students throughout their faith journey.



Upcoming dates:

October 4th ~ blessing of the animals

Bring your best pet or your favorite stuffie to be blessed for the year ahead!

October 15th & 16th ~ MEA

No Wednesday night classes on the 14th and no Sunday School on the 18th

October 25th ~ Trunk or treat

Decorate your trunk to hand out candy to Sunday School kids! This year we look forward to having our new parking lot for this event!



Our VBS mountain motto is a great reminder for everyone as we head into a new season of school and of life:

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”

~ Philippians 4:13

Birthdays to CELEBRATE!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
		Caren Grotberg	Madden Carlson Jamey Jeurissen Kim Meierbachtol Derek Scheer Todd Theis	Josh Hanson Brenda Holtberg Avery Mohlin Terry Siemon	Chloe Oldenburg	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Wyatt Borresen Jack Henke Mark Meierbachtol	Nolan Hardel Sandi Wolpern	Austin Overline Sydney Pankonin Kristine Schmidt	Landry Kelm Cayla Menke Charli Jo Stier	John Busse	Bruce Koepp Henry Posthumus Josh Sparby Lydia Sparby	John Koenig
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Jason Schmidt Esther Stoppelman Brooklyn Theas	Amy Franck	Calihan Malecha Cheryl Johnson Jackson Stauffacher Linda Stier	Josh Henning Jill Martin	Harlie Bristlin Henry Luhman	Elliana Kopesky Margaret Schwichtenberg Holly Stier	Elliana Fahey Kristin Stier Carson Tester
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Nora Andert Susie Koepp	Amanda Berg Jason Stier Jaydon Thaemert		Kinley Brabec Justin Stauffacher	Mallory Kelm Sheila Weldon John Franck Steve Kelm		Jordan Johnson Jean Peterson
27	28	29	30			
	Jan Effinger Jeff Scott Wendy Theis Colin Weldon Kase Heinz	Dan Herrmann Liz Hermann Katie Klaverkamp	Claire Malecha			

St. John Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
		1:30 - Kingsway service		10am - bible study 5pm - No TOPS		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9am - worship		6pm - council	c/c orientation 6:00pm	10am - bible study 5pm - TOPS		
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
9am - worship *Rally Sunday	6pm - personnel		6:00pm - connect/ Confirmation	10am - bible study 5pm - TOPS		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
8am - worship 9:30am - worship Sunday school *bible Sunday *teacher installation			6:00pm - connect/ Confirmation	10am - bible study 5pm - TOPS		
27	28	29	30			
8am - worship 9:30am - worship *noisy offering			6:00pm - connect/ Confirmation	10am - bible study 5pm - TOPS		

Sunday Service Volunteers

Altar guild: Jan Effinger & Patty Laabs

Sept 6

Greeters: Sharon Adelman
Lay Readers: Beth Beuch
Communion Assistants: Beth Beuch, Renee Meuleners,
Jan Effinger
Ushers: Dan Herrmann, Wyatt Herrmann, James & John Karl,
Tim Bristlin

Sept 13

Greeters: Brian & Jonathan Schmidt
Lay Readers: MJ Kurvers
Communion Assistants: Dave Latzke, Kirk Franck,
Ushers: Brian, Jonathan & Jason Schmidt, Dave Latzke,
Jerold Stauffacher

8:00am

Sept 20

Greeters: Jamey, Linda & Olivia Jeurissen
Lay Readers: Bryn Davis
Communion Assistants: Olivia Jeurissen,
Nick & Bryn Davis
Ushers: Brian, Jonathan & Jason Schmidt,
Dave Latzke, Jerold Stauffacher

9:30am

Greeters: Ken & Wendy Theis
Lay Readers: Caren Grotberg
Communion Assistants: Sandi Wolpern,
.Abby Kubes, Sara Bungarden
Ushers: Scott & Tricia Ruud,
Monica & Jason Braesch, Mike Nagel

Sept 27

Greeters: Susie Steinhagen
Lay Readers: Luke Schultz
Communion Assistants: Sherrie Simcox,
Patty Laabs, Susie Steinhagen
Ushers: Marc & Mindy Chevalier,
Abby Kubes, Andy Steinhagen

Greeters: John Busse
Lay Readers: John Busse
Communion Assistants: Jan Effinger,
Chris & Annette Moylan
Ushers: Brent Koepp, Mitchell Koepp,
Tim Moonen, Justin Stauffacher,
Aaron Leonard

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."

~ 1 Peter: 4:10

Coffee hour resumes on September 13th!!!!

If you are interested in hosting upcoming Sundays, PLEASE reach out to
Amanda in the office

St. John Lutheran Church		
Statement of Activities		
General Fund	07/01/26-07/31/26	07/01/25-07/31/25
Revenues		
Offering Revenues	\$ 20,531.40	\$ 31,610.49
Confirmation Income	\$ 1,300.00	\$ 202.76
Sunday School Offering	\$ 50.00	\$ 70.00
Vacation Bible School	\$ 352.20	\$ 304.13
Rental Income-Sanctuary & Gathering Area	\$ 100.00	\$ -
Miscellaneous Income	\$ 2,491.00	\$ -
Total Offering Revenues	\$ 24,824.60	\$ 32,187.38
Expenditures		
Total Benevolence Expense	\$ 800.00	\$ 2,843.38
Total Church/Grounds Maintenance Expense	\$ (9.99)	\$ 1,366.08
Total Education Expense - Youth	\$ 565.77	\$ 3,513.23
Total Insurance	\$ 1,577.41	\$ -
Total Office Expenses	\$ 1,360.11	\$ 2,423.23
Total Other Expenses	\$ 5,209.13	\$ 2,488.46
Total Staff Benefits	\$ 283.57	\$ 1,868.84
Total Staff Salaries	\$ 15,544.32	\$ 12,892.64
Total Utilities	\$ 1,896.27	\$ 1,042.05
Total Mission Trip Expenses	\$ -	\$ 2,504.98
Total Worship Music & Arts Expenses	\$ -	\$ 553.03
Total Expenditures	\$ 27,226.59	\$ 31,495.92
Net Revenue	\$ (2,401.99)	\$ 691.46
Property Improvement / Building		
Income (Donations, Rent, Investments)	\$ 2,474.76	\$ 3,467.40
Total Expenditures	\$ 21,078.04	\$ 83,000.00
Net Receipts / Disbursements	\$ (18,603.28)	\$ (79,532.60)
Offerings	General Fund	Property Improvement
07/01/2026-07/11/2026	\$ 7,496.58	\$ 1,023.38
07/12/2026-07/18/2026	\$ 4,821.28	\$ 600.00
07/19/2026-07/25/2026	\$ 4,128.21	\$ 346.38
07/26/2026-07/31/2026	\$ 4,211.02	\$ 505.00

To schedule a *recurring electronic contribution* via Vanco:

Visit our website: www.stjohnbelleplaine.org

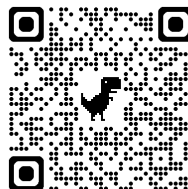
Select the green 'online giving'

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:



Or give using venmo

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Change Service Requested