

News from St. John's

JANUARY 2026

Worship with us!

Sunday mornings at 8:00 and 9:30

***And the first Wednesday of every month at
6:30 pm***

This month:

11-18 ~ Pastor Sherri will be on vacation

25 ~ Annual meeting

26 ~ all committee meeting

28 ~ 5th - 8th graders go to FMSC

*****The office will be closed on
January 1st***

Church office: 952-873-6492

email: office@stjohnbelleplaine.org

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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President Jim Eggers called the meeting to order at 7:08pm.

Present:

X	Pastor Sherri Otto	X	Jim Eggers	X	Albert Koepp	X	Amy Franck
X	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 November 10th , 2025 Council Meeting. Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the meeting minutes.

The council reviewed the current agenda. After a request was made to add Wednesday evening service discussion to the new business, a motion was made, seconded and carried to approve.

Staff Report:

A. Amanda's office report was reviewed by members of the council. Amanda has been working diligently with the directory and members of the church who have had issues with postage of photos. If you are someone impacted, please reach out to Amanda in the office. She has also been working with companies regarding the copy machine contract. As always, Amanda continues to keep our church running smoothly behind the scenes.

B. Pastor Sherri's report was reviewed by the council. She continues to keep very busy with Services, our connect and confirmation students, bible studies, home visits and everything in Between. The Christmas season is in full swing and we are excited for Advent, our new Hope In the Darkness service, and the Christmas services.

Treasurer's Report:

A. Jerold's treasurer report was reviewed by the council. During the month of November, we came up short on reaching the Offering Revenues by \$6,282. While revenue was higher than last year, budget was also increased to reflect a 5-weekend month. Overall, for the year we are behind roughly \$16,631 for the year on the budgeted Revenue needs.

Expenses for the month according to the Icon report came in under our budgeted amount. Expenses were down \$4,668.

Balances in accounts as of December 7th are as follows:

- a. Ameriprise Account (Stier) balance: \$119,300
- b. Property Improvement (Savings) balance: \$57,426 (plus \$101,985 & \$75,000 CDs)
- c. Technology Fund balance: \$1,518
- d. Foundation Account (Interest from Foundation Investment) balance: \$22,659
- e. General Fund balance: \$8,393
- f. Youth Account balance: \$21,578
- g. Building Fund Checkbook balance: \$7,400
- h. Memorial Fund balance: \$21,578
- i. Jackson Account (Larry Kiewel) balance: \$78,903
- j. St. John Foundation Investment balance: \$192,571

B. The council discussed the new MN Paid Leave program, which is a new Minnesota Law in 2026. There is an additional payment (0.66% of wages) to the state for this program; at least 50% must be paid by the employer. After much discussion, the council made motion, seconded and approved that St. John would cover the entire portion of this expense. Jerold was able to quickly add it into the budget for the final review.

C. The council completed their final review of the 2026 Budget for St. John; including the new paid leave program discussed above. A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the 2026 budget. Members of the congregation will receive a copy of the proposed budget with the annual meeting materials.

Transfers:

A. No transfers in or out this month.

Ongoing Business:

A. The council reviewed the proposed changes to the bylaws; a motion was made, seconded and carried to approve them. These changes will be voted on at the annual meeting in January. If you have not yet reviewed, please reach out to the office for an electronic or paper copy.

B. In the spirit of time, a motion was made seconded and carried to table the review of the Personnel Handbook until January.

C. Council reviewed the Personnel Committees recommendation to move 4 positions to contract workers. The organist position was already a contract worker. A motion was made, seconded and carried to move the following positions to contract workers: Accompanist, Treasurer, Accountant, and Choir Director. Pastor, Communications Coordinator and Custodian positions will remain employees of St. John.

D. Again, in the interest of time, a motion was made, seconded and carried to discuss the list of Reformation Ideas in January. At that time, the council will determine a few topics to focus on for the coming year.

New Business:

A. Amanda has reviewed our current copy machine contract company, Loffler, as well as another company to determine best service and best rates. Loffler provides great service response times and rates were comparable between both companies. The council made a motion, carried and seconded to continue the contract with Loffler.

B. We received a request for payroll to be a bit more consistent in timing. Due to the turnaround between timecards and paychecks, the preferred ACH dates are not always available and therefore inconsistent. Adjusting payroll to the 1st and 15th of the month and allowing for 2 weeks of processing time would allow for the payroll dates we'd prefer. The council made a motion, seconded and carried to approve the switch of payroll, effective January 1, 2026, to be the 1st and 15th of the month for employees. Contract workers will continue to get paid monthly.

C. Council discussed the Wednesday Evening Worship attendance. Unfortunately, the number of attendees on Wednesday evenings is minimal and makes it difficult to justify the helpers and time required to hold the service. If the service is eliminated, Pastor would spend that additional time connecting more with the students in small groups. Currently Connect and Confirmation join service on the 1st Wednesday of every month and we would like to continue with that service. Based on previous attendance, Lent and Summer services on Wednesdays would also continue. The council made a motion, seconded and carried to discontinue Wednesday services with the exceptions made above; 1st Wednesday of the month (all members are still welcome to join this service!), Lent and Summer (defined as Memorial Day –Labor Day).

Ministry Team Updates:

A. Our Children, Youth and Families Team wrapped up Operation Christmas Child and has been busy preparing for the Christmas Program on December 14th.

B. Our Personnel Committee completed the employee handbook and is awaiting council review.

Motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:47p.m.

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deanne Fogarty, Secretary

~~~Dancing and Joy in 2026~~~

It is 6:00 a.m. The fireplace glows in the living room, the dogs stretched out nearby, each contentedly chewing on their favorite bone. The Christmas tree is lit, with its beautiful red and gold ribbons and ornaments casting a warm, familiar light. It is quiet and still – exactly what my heart needs this morning.

The busyness of this season has left me exhausted, but in the best possible way and as I sit here, my thoughts turn toward 2026 and all that it may hold. I look forward to Epiphany which happens on January 6, marking the close of the Christmas season, but also the start of something new. And in this newness, I find joy and excitement about the coming year for me and for us at St. John.

I can't help but smile as I think about this community and the New Year before us. We are growing, thriving, and embracing new possibilities both within and beyond the walls of the church and I am truly grateful to God for this call to serve as your pastor. I am also grateful for all of you who have volunteered and taken the time out of your busy schedules to help St. Johns with your time, talent and treasures. We are truly blessed!

These past 7 months have flown by and I pray that as we continue to work together in 2026, we are open to the Spirit's joy as we try new things, meet new people and enjoy our fellowship together at St. John.

I'd like to share with you a poem that was posted in one of my devotions from Terry Hershey and I hope you enjoy it. Blessings to you and your families as we bring in the New Year with dancing and joy!!

~ Pastor Sherri

Created For Joy

I sometimes forget that I was created for joy

My mind is too busy

My heart is too heavy

*Heavy for me to remember
that I have been called to dance*

the sacred dance for life

*I was created to smile
to love, to be lifted up
and lift others up*

O sacred one

*Untangle my feet
from all that ensnares*

Free my soul

*That we might dance
and that our dancing
might be contagious.*

-Hafiz

Happy New Year!!!

December was full of hope and promise, starting with the annual Christmas dinner hosted by our fabulous W/ELCA group ~ the meal was delicious and Autumn sang beautifully in the dimly lit sanctuary! Put this event on your calendars for next year!! Next up, we enjoyed the Sunday school Christmas program and it's always nice to see the children so active up there in church. This year our 5th -8th grade students were able to sneak in a song there as well (it was good practice for the caroling they did at the Lutheran Home and Kingsway!)

The Hope in the Darkness service was a beautiful tribute to those who are missing someone around their table this year. And I hope we keep this special service on our calendars for next year.

The decorations were neatly placed, the tree was splendid and our December activities really captured the spirit of Christmas. But the true joy was felt through our worship services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day!! There is truly something magical about sitting in the pews admiring the nativity scene and celebrating the birth of our Savior and Lord.

So with Christmas of 2025 behind us, here's to a new year, a fresh start, a beginning! May this year bring you happiness, peace and good health. This past year has been such a blessing and I am looking forward to 2026 at St. John's!!

Many blessings to you,
Amanda

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 29:11



2025 was a great year!

Kick off to Summer event



Graduation
Quilts



7th graders at Camp Onomia

§

The Mission trip went to Niagara Falls, NY



We called on
Pastor Sherri





BBQ Days parade

VBS

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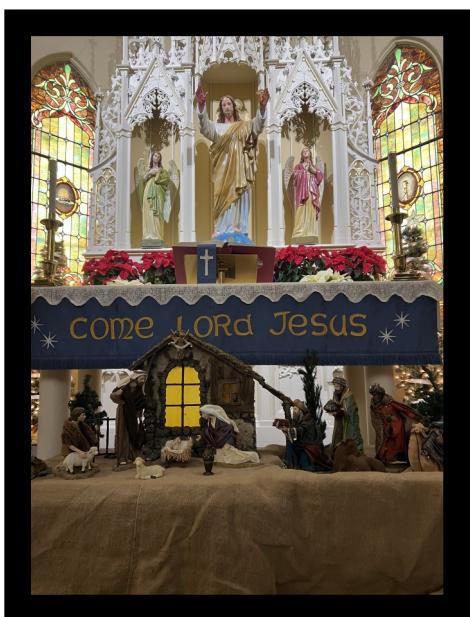
G
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Rally Sunday



Trunk or treat



Another blessed Christmas season, with the Christmas dinner, the Sunday School Program, the Hope in the Darkness service and of course, our wonderful Christmas services.

Thank you St. John's for a beautiful 2025!!



Blessing of the animals

January Birthdays

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4 Melissa Arola Brad Latzke Ben Stier	5 Matthew Fink Steve Latzke Megan Schmidt	6 Andrew Hillstrom	7 Donna Herrmann	8 Minnie Aust Donna Cooper Violet Holtberg Olivia Jeurissen	9 Diane Stier	10 Ryan Stene
11 Joyce Chaves Owen Herrmann Jeff Petersen Jodi Savage	12 Ron Rasmussen Nolan Swenson Troy Armstrong	13 Kevin Baulke Fritz Beckius Marie Koenig	14 Sharon Adelmann Dale Schmidt Cindy Schoenbauer	15 Arlene Latzke	16 Amanda Schultz	17 Faith Adelmann Scarlett Wolf
18	19 Earl Gransee Dick Peterson Pam Shackle	20 Ashton Holbrook Easton Wolf Janah Heckers	21 Tara Henke	22 Brian Hillstrom	23 Aaron Leonard Alyssa St. Germain	24 Blake Andert James Carter Tony Theis Andre Westerfield
25 Terry Zellman	26 Thomas Chaves Jennifer Korbel Michael Kritzman Victoria Tietz	27 Eli Hoff Noelle Hoff Pierce Nagorski	28 Teresa Latzke Emily Nagel	29	30 Carter Johnson Garrett Korbel Rene Meuleners Muriel Hilgers	31 Larry Hanson

January Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4 8:00am worship 9:30am worship	5 6:00pm personnel 6:30pm boy scouts	6 6:00pm church council	7 5:00pm youth choir 6:00pm c/c lesson 6:30pm worship 7:00pm adult choir	8 10:00am bible study 5:00pm TOPS	9	10
11 8:00am worship 9:30am worship	12 6:30pm boy scouts	13	14 6:00pm c/c lesson 7:00pm adult choir	15 5:00pm TOPS	16	17
				Pastor Sherri will be out this week		
18 8:00am worship 9:30am worship	19 6:30pm boy scouts	20	21 5:00pm youth choir 6:00pm c/c lesson 7:00pm adult choir	22 10:00am bible study 5:00pm TOPS	23	24
25 8:00am worship Annual meeting	26 6:30pm boy scouts 7:00pm all team meeting	27	28 5:00pm youth choir 6:30pm FMSC 7:00pm adult choir	29 10:00am bible study 5:00pm TOPS	30	31

~ SUNDAY VOLUNTEERS ~

Alter guild: Renee Mueleners & Wendy Theis

Jan 4

Greeters: Jamey, Linda & Olivia Jeurissen
Lay Readers: Michelle Melheim
Communion Assistants: Michelle Melheim, Olivia Jeurissen, Kristin Stier
Ushers: Albert Koepp, Dorothy Koepp, Kevin Koepp, Matt Stier, Bruce Volek, Tim Carlson, Josh Koepp, Dominic Veerkamp *Ellie & Chloe O.
Acolyte: Derek S, Jacob K

Greeters: Sue Koenig
Lay Reader: Dave Bungarden
Communion Assistants: Sara Bungarden, Peg Longhenry, Cindy Schoenbauer
Ushers: Chris & Annette Moylan, Steve Schroeder, Lee Sauter *Nicole W, Janah H
Acolyte: Riley S, Emily W

Jan 11

Greeters: Brent & Margaret Schwichtenberg family
Lay Readers: Bonnie Vinkemeier
Communion Assistants: Patty Laabs, Jerold & Kathi Stauffacher
Ushers: Brent & Peyton Schwichtenberg, Greg Schwichtenberg, Bruce Schmidt, Richard Laabs *Wesley H, Miranda W
Acolyte: Carter J

Greeters: Ken & Wendy Theis
Lay Reader: Amy Franck
Communion Assistants: Brent Koepp, Phoebe Einertson, Jan Effinger
Ushers: Dave & Sara Bungarden, Mason Bungarden, Ron & Diane Rassmussen *Minnie A, Nicole W
Acolyte: Elise D

Jan 18

Greeters: Greg & Linda Schwichtenberg
Lay Readers: Linda Schwichtenberg
Communion Assistants: Dave Latzke, Greg & Linda Schwichtenberg
Ushers: Brent & Peyton Schwichtenberg, Greg Schwichtenberg, Bruce Schmidt, Richard Laabs *Greyson H, Easton C

Greeters: Kevin & Sandy Wolpern
Lay Reader: Sandi Wolpern
Communion Assistants: Abby Kubes, Sandi Wolpern, Lynne Jeurissen
Ushers: Dave & Sara Bungarden, Mason Bungarden, Ron & Dianne Rassmussen *Emma D, Emily W

Join us after the 8:00 service for brunch and our annual meeting on January 26th

Jan 25

Greeters: Lowell & Laurie Hiles
Lay Readers: Bryn Davis
Communion Assistants: Nick & Bryn Davis, Kirk Franck
Ushers: Chris, Luke & Logan Schultz, Rob Schultz, Mark Schultz, Wayne Koepp
Acolyte: Lacy Schultz

Annual Meeting

St. John Lutheran Church		
All Funds: Statement of Activities		
General Fund Opening Balance		\$17,618.01
November 1 - November 30, 2025		
	11/1/2025 - 11/30/2025	11/1/2024 - 11/30/2024
Revenues		
Total Offering Revenues	31,514.67	31,473.60
Total Product Revenues	0.00	0.00
Total Miscellaneous Revenues	100.00	1,325.00
Total Revenues	31,614.67	32,798.60
Total Cost of Product Sales	0.00	0.00
Total Benevolence Expense	1,100.00	0.00
Total Church/Grounds Maintenance	430.06	1,050.00
Total Insurance	1,730.78	1,128.00
Total Office Expenses	2,420.62	989.66
Other Expenses	949.63	0.51
Total Education Expenses	658.27	696.45
Total Staff Benefits	1,538.80	112.08
Total Staff Salaries	15,641.77	13,660.97
Total Utilities	1,324.91	1,537.74
Mission Trip Expenses	0.00	0.00
Total Worship Music & Arts Expenses	21.13	645.25
Total Expenditures	26,663.61	19,862.12
Net Revenue	4,849.15	11,720.26
Property Improvement / Building Fund	11/1/2025 - 11/30/2025	11/1/2024 - 11/30/2024
Income (Donations, Rent, Investments)	\$4,018.01	\$2,745.00
Total Expenditures	\$0.00	\$470.51
Interest Expense	0	\$0.00
Net Receipts / Disbursements	\$4,018.01	\$2,274.49
Offerings	General Fund	Property Improvement
11/1 - 11/8	\$8,692.57	\$782.50
11/9 - 11/15	\$9,553.13	\$2,126.38
11/16 - 11/22	\$5,824.41	\$465.00
11/23 - 11/30	\$3,877.93	\$644.13

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

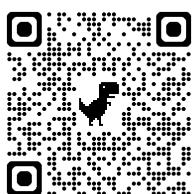
Select the green 'online giving'

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:



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