

MARCH {2026} NEWS

St. John Lutheran Church

All are welcome to worship:
Sundays at 8:00am & 9:30am
Wednesdays in Lent at 6:30pm

Join us for our Lenten soup and sandwich suppers on Wednesdays at 5:30
Followed by our Holden evening prayer service at 6:30pm

This month:

March 15th ~ noisy offering at 9:30am service

March 29th ~ Palm Sunday (Sunday School sings)

Church office: 952-873-6492 email: office@stjohnbelleplaine.org

Staff:

Pastor:

Sherri Otto

Office:

Amanda Schultz

Treasurer:

Jerold Stauffacher

Custodian:

Jen Scott

Choir Director:

Allison Vandermark

Organist:

Eileen Hanlon

Accompanist:

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Unapproved St. John Lutheran Church Council Minutes

February 10, 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	Rob Schultz	X	Deanne Fogarty
X	Jerold Stauffacher		David Bungarden	X	Tim Moonen	X	Amy Franck
X	Alicia Shutes	X	Patty Laabs	X	Cody Schultz		

New Council Member Items:

The council reviewed their responsibilities and the council covenant. We also added the following members as council liaisons: Amy Franck - Funeral Committee, Patty Laabs - Care Team, Cody Schultz – Personnel Committee, and Alicia Shutes – Children, Youth and Families.

Approval of Minutes:

Council reviewed the minutes of the January Council Meeting. Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the meeting minutes.

The Annual Meeting Minutes were reviewed with no corrections.

The Reorganizational Council Meeting Minutes were reviewed with a motion made, seconded and carried to approve.

The council reviewed the current agenda. Requests were made to add Summer Schedule discussion, Mission Trip Fundraiser, and Building and Grounds updates 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. In addition to the day to day work to keep our church running smoothly, Amanda prepared all of the items needed for the annual meeting, continues with Connect and Confirmation and a trip to Feed my Starving Children, and is finalizing the church directory.

B. Pastor Sherri’s report was reviewed by the council. She continues to make home visits, presides at Kingsway, and has bible study. She is working with Connect and Confirmation on the Ten Commandments and was able to participate in FMSC with them. We also briefly touched on the reformation ideas, focusing on youth, hospitality, music and marketing.

Treasurer’s Report:

A. Jerold’s treasurer report was reviewed by the council. During the month of January, we did not meet the budgeted offerings amount. The offerings for the month totaled \$16,853.87, just under half of what we had budgeted for (\$32,500). Expenses for the month totaled 25,007.89, which was also below the budget of \$33,258 and largely due to a credit on insurance. Overall, we operated in the red for the month by the amount of \$7,602.26.

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

- a. Ameriprise Account (Stier) balance: \$126,771
- b. Property Improvement (Savings) balance: \$125,078 (plus \$101,985 CDs)
- c. Technology Fund balance: \$1,682
- d. Foundation Account (Interest from Foundation Investment) balance: \$15,661
- e. General Fund balance: \$21,957
- f. Youth Account balance: \$19,764
- g. Building Fund Checkbook balance: \$1,388
- h. Memorial Fund balance: \$21,579
- i. Jackson Account (Larry Kiewel) balance: \$81,930
- j. St. John Foundation Investment balance: \$198,141

Coming out of the Annual Meeting, additional insights were requested on the Property Improvement/ Building Fund Accounts:

	April 7, 2025 Sale of Parsonage	\$259,640
	April 8, 2025 Hayden House payoff	\$(116,460)
	April 11, 2025 Invest in CD	\$(100,000)
**Note 2 \$175,000 in CDs as of 12-31-25	April 14, 2025 Storage shed	\$(5,000)
	May 29, 2025 Sale of garage lot	\$63,609
	July 8, 2025 Parking lot fees	\$(8,000)
	July 11, 2025 Invest in CD	\$(75,000)
	Total property change	\$18,789

At the end of the treasurer's report, the council accepted the resignation of Monica Braesch as accountant.

Transfers:

A. No transfers in or out this month.

Ongoing Business:

A. The council reviewed the Personnel Handbook revisions from the Personnel Committee. We believe the handbook should now be finalized.

New Business:

A. The Belle Plaine Community Expo is Sunday, April 19th and is sponsored by the Belle Plaine Chamber. We'd like to have a table to represent St. John and all we do! Creating promotional materials would allow us to also use them for future events, such as the BBQ Days parade. The Council made a motion, seconded and carried to spend up to \$1000 from the memorial fund towards marketing and promotional materials. Anyone interested in helping with this event or others in the area can contact the church office.

B. As we're all aware, we have opted to discontinue our relationship with Camp Onamia. For camp this year, we are hoping to attend the Summer Festival Camp at Gustavus in July. This camp is for all youth, and will be highly recommended that the incoming 8th grade confirmation students attend. More details to come as we get confirmation and finalization of dates.

C. We are ready for Lent Services and the speakers are lined up.

D. Our WELCA group has arranged for us to have a polka service on May 3rd . We will only have one service – the polka service – at 10am with a beef sandwich lunch to follow. Mark your calendars.

E. Summer Worship will be as follows:

Beginning May 10th , we will drop to one service on Sundays at 9am for the summer months.

Wednesday evening worship will begin June 3rd . Services will be 6pm and will run through August 26th .

F. Grounds and Facilities updates: Brothers Exterminating in Jordan was hired to help with bat control. They have blocked the steeple to keep bats from entering and will revisit several times to ensure that has eliminated our problem. The AED machine has been updated, they're looking into replacing the EXIT signs in the building, and adding a handrail at the stairs in front of the sanctuary. They are also getting estimates for better choir microphones and new hearing devices with estimates currently coming in near \$10,000. The council made a motion, seconded and carried to approve \$10,000 spending for these items from the technology and memorial funds. Lastly, the parking lot project is still on track with planning & zoning approving the joining of lots and approval from the city council next.

G. The Mission Trip group is working on a raffle ticket fundraiser. They have several donations and are hoping to add to those donations with a few more items. The council made a motion, seconded and carried to allow the mission trip up to \$500 to spend on raffle items to help raise additional funds for their trip.

Ministry Team Updates:

We will begin reviewing the ministry teams next month.

Motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:06pm. We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Deanne Fogarty, Secretary

Your Story Matters

There was a time in my life when I was incredibly shy. I never wanted to speak in front of a group. I preferred to listen rather than talk. At large gatherings, especially when I didn't know anyone, I would quietly fade into the background. I longed to join conversations and share my thoughts, but I could never quite find the courage. Deep down, I didn't believe anyone would really want to hear what I had to say.

Now, many years later—and perhaps a little wiser (though that may be up for debate!)—I see things differently. I have come to understand that everyone wants to be heard. Every person has a voice. Every person has a story worth telling.

Experiencing Ash Wednesday at St. John for the first time was a beautiful reminder of that truth. Even with an unexpected snowstorm, more than 160 people gathered together. What a testimony to the strength and faithfulness of this community! I am especially looking forward to hearing faith stories during our midweek Lenten services and growing closer as a community through sharing and listening.

For stories matter. Your story matters. Through them, we learn from one another. We grow together. We begin to see that we are often more alike than we are different.

I have been here nearly nine months now, and I still find myself wanting to know more—about the building, about your families, about the rich history and traditions that have shaped St. John over the years. Most of all, I want to know you and I would truly love to hear your story.

So I am asking a favor during this Lenten season: Would you write me a story? Would you share a time here at St. John that brought you joy? Or perhaps a time of struggle, challenge, or growth?

For some, writing may feel harder than speaking; for others, it may come more easily. Yet there is something sacred about putting words on paper. Writing makes our experiences more lasting and more meaningful—not only for the reader, but also for the writer. It can be healing. It allows us to reflect, to process, and sometimes to discover God's presence in moments we hadn't fully recognized before.

This Lent, I invite you to give yourself—and me—the gift of your story, written in your own words and from your own heart. Please know that I will hold your story in confidence and will not share it with anyone unless you give me permission.

You may email me at pastorsherri@stjohnbelleplaine.org.

I truly look forward to hearing from you and reading your story.

Peace,
Pastor Sherri


March into Spring!

Here we are, in the muddy season of waiting.....waiting for the snow to melt (again) and the ground to thaw....waiting for flowers to bloom and the grass to turn green again. Waiting to get into the field or plant our gardens. But as we sit in wait, let us reflect on the other season upon us. The season of Lent, the season of reflection and renewal.

We start Lent with Ash Wednesday and year after year it amazes me to see so many familiar faces for our soup and sandwich meal and Holden evening service! This year's crowd was a brave one, as they headed out into the blustery winter weather to get those ashes placed on their foreheads.


As we move into Spring, we are gearing up for some pretty BiG moments in the church -- baptisms, First Communion and Confirmation. So as we prepare for EaSter and these milestones of renewal, let us be mindful and grateful to be loved children of God.

Many blessings,
Amanda



“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”

Romans 12:1



March lent speakers:

Join us weekly during Lent to hear powerful stories of faith from:

{ March 4th } **Molly Moonen**

{ March 11th } **Cody Schultz**

{ March 18th } **small group interview with Linda Stier**

{ March 25th } **small group interview with Marty Siemon**

Thank you to Pastor Sherri for sharing with us on Ash Wednesday and to Kalli Koepf for sharing about her grandpa, Wes Koepf!

Holy week schedule

Maundy Thursday (April 2) at 7:00pm

Good Friday (April 3) at 7:00pm

**And new this year, children are invited to a join Pastor Sherri for a 'walk through Holy Week (crafts, snack and a lesson). MORE details to come soon!!

Easter Sunday at 7:00am and 9:30am

Come sit awhile, the coffee is always warm:

March 1 host: Kindergarten families

March 8th host: Scott West Wrestlers

March 15th host: Shara & Aimee's 5th grade small group

March 22nd host: Theis/Henning families

March 29th host:

In today's world we're all so busy; appointments, sports, work and the list goes on! **Coffee hour** is a great way to stop, relax and mingle with fellow members of our great congregation!

We are a team here at St. John:

We are so 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?

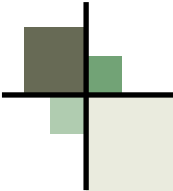
St. John Lutheran Church welcomes all members to be a part of our team! If you would like to hear more, please stop by the office ~ we would love to chat!!



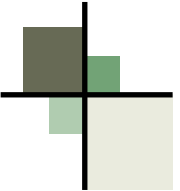
Quilting has begun! Join this fabulous group Tuesdays at 1:00pm to work on the beloved graduation quilts!



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
1 Phoebe Einertson Carter Kes Sarah Leonard	2 Katie Herrmann Kacie Reinsma Kyle Sammons	3 Noah Hornaman John Karl Amy Rosario	4 Harrison Bungarden Michael Meierbach- tol	5 Joey Franck Luke Schultz	6 Ollie Beckius Walker Herrmann Douglas Nasby	7 Lauren Tesch
8 Courtney Bristlin Mya Holzemer	9 Lee Bessel Tim Carlson Jacqueline John- son Curtis Koepp Alyana Lindahl	10 James Karl Wendy Koepp	11 Audrey Havemeier Jean Jackels Sarah Theis Hope Lawler	12 Luke Andert	13	14 Alaina Buesgens Ann Carstens Alex Rosario
15 Vivian Holtberg Lucy Leonard Jack Scott Callie Stoutland Shaye Buddenhagen	16 Ally Fink Michael Olson Keith Siemon Doug Steen	17 Abigail Johnson Mack Theas	18 Kace Hutchison Brian Overline Sully Schultz	19 Meghan Worshek Will Posthumus Sheila Schmidt Emily Siemon Arianna Anderson	20 Connie Bergs Treyden Hiles Ivy Pankonin Bennet Balk	21 Mary Kay Nasby Mya Bommelyn
22 Noah Hansen Blair Henke Alexandra Stauffa- cher	23 Dorothy Koepp	24 Shane Henke Roland Perkins	25 Miranda Koenig Joan Olson Joseph Petersen Aria Roff	26 Diane Bratsch	27 Brittney Dandurand Cory Hansen Mitchel Stier	28 Eli Braun Megan Doebebeling
29	30 Landon Graff Alexander Stier	31 Nora Meuleners				

MARCH 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 5:30pm supper 6:30pm worship 7:00pm 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 5:30pm supper 6:30pm worship 7:00pm choir	12 10:00am bible study 5:00pm TOPS	13	14
15 8:00am worship 9:30am worship	16 6:30pm boy scouts	17	18 5:30pm supper 6:30pm worship 7:00pm choir	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 7:00pm choir	26 10:00am bible study 5:00pm TOPS	27	28
29 <i>*Palm Sunday*</i> 8:00am worship 9:30am worship	30 6:30pm boy scouts	31				

~ SUNDAY VOLUNTEERS ~

Alter guild: Sharon Adelman and Dorothy Koepf

March 1	<p>Greeters: Ken and Sue Koenig Lay Readers: Albert Koepf Communion Assistants: Kirk Franck, Jerold & Kathi Stauffacher Ushers: Dan Herrmann, James & John Karl, Wyatt Herrmann, Tim Bristlin *April W Acolyte:</p>	<p>Greeters: Ken & Wendy Theis Lay Reader: Jan Effinger Communion Assistants: Phoebe Einertson, Jan Effinger, Lynne Jeurissen Ushers: Scott & Tricia Ruud, Mike Nagel, Monica & Jason Braesch *Adalena B, Alex R Acolyte:</p>
March 8	<p>Greeters: Brian & Jonathan Schmidt Lay Readers: Angie Kahle Communion Assistants: Olivia Jeurissen, Rob & Sandy Schultz Ushers: Brian , Jonathon & Jason Schmidt, Doug Hillstrom, Dave Latzke, Jerold Stauffacher *Miranda W Acolyte:</p>	<p>Greeters: Brent & Wendy Koepf Lay Reader: Sara Bungarden Communion Assistants: Sara Bungarden, Jan Effinger, Brent Koepf Ushers: Brent & Mitchell Koepf, Tim Moonen, Justin Stauffacher, Aaron Leonard *Emma D, Emily W Acolyte:</p>
March 15	<p>Greeters: Matt & Kristin Stier/Dalton O Lay Readers: Renee Meuleners Communion Assistants: Patty Laabs, Nick & Bryn Davis Ushers: Brian , Jonathan & Jason Schmidt, Doug Hillstrom, Dave Latzke, Jerold Stauffacher *April W Acolyte:</p>	<p>Greeters: Kevin & Sandi Wolpern Lay Reader: Brent Koepf Communion Assistants: Peg Longhenry, Cindy Schoenbauer, Sandi Wolpern Ushers: Brent & Mitchell Koepf, Tim Moonen, Justin Stauffacher, Aaron Leonard *MJ K, Jackson K Acolyte: Cami O, Wayde H</p>
March 22	<p>Greeters: Sharon Adelman Lay Readers: Linda Schwichtenberg Communion Assistants: Abby Kubes, Greg & Linda Schwichtenberg Ushers: Marc & Mindy Chevalier, Abby Kubes, Andy Steinhagen *Lucy L, Lacy S Acolyte:</p>	<p>Greeters: Ron & Diane Rasmussen Lay Reader: Amy Franck Communion Assistants: Beth Beuch, Kirk Franck, Renee Meuleners Ushers: Chris & Annette Moylan, Steve Schroeder, Lee Sauter, James Fogarty *Janah H, Macy L Acolyte: Josalyn H</p>
March 29	<p>Greeters: Mindy Chevalier Lay Readers: Michelle Melheim Communion Assistants: Michelle Melheim, Mindy Chevalier, Terry Siemon Ushers: Marc & Mindy Chevalier, Abby Kubes, Andy Steinhagen Acolyte:</p>	<p>Greeters: Cindy Schoenbauer Lay Reader: Dave Bungarden Communion Assistants: Linda Schwichtenberg, Monica & Jason Braesch Ushers: Chris & Annette Moylan, Steve Schroeder, Lee Sauter, James Fogarty Acolyte:</p>

St. John Lutheran Church		
Statement of Activities Previous		
Beginning Balance: \$21,294.74		
Ending Balance: \$15,638.63		
January 1 - January 31, 2026		
General Fund	1/1/2026 - 1/31/2026	1/1/2025 - 1/31/2025
Revenues		
Total Offering Revenues	\$17,067.08	\$42,785.44
Coffee Hour Income	\$89.00	\$37.00
Sunday School Offering	\$82.25	\$40.00
Confirmation Income	\$380.51	\$4,207.69
Total Revenues	\$17,618.84	\$47,070.13
Expenditures		
Total Benevolence Expense	\$1,100.00	\$1,350.00
Total Church/Grounds Maintenance	\$110.99	\$288.20
Total Insurance	\$0.00	\$4,239.69
Youth Expenses	\$547.44	\$1,568.15
Total Office Expenses	\$2,186.50	\$1,761.80
Other Expenses	\$225.60	\$459.84
non cash donation	-\$55.00	
Total Staff Benefits		\$115.47
Total Staff Salaries	\$16,400.61	\$15,178.24
Total Utilities	\$1,857.06	\$2,238.32
Total Worship Music & Arts Expenses	\$1,215.84	\$741.00
Total Expenditures	\$23,589.04	\$27,940.71
Net Revenue	-\$5,970.20	\$19,129.42
Property Improvement / Building	1/1/2026 - 1/31/2026	1/1/2025 - 1/31/2025
Income (Donations, Rent, Invest-	2,437.59	9,124.66
Total Expenditures	2,600.00	1,146.00
Net Receipts / Disbursements	(162.41)	7,978.66
Offerings	General Fund	Property Improvement
1/1 - 1/3	\$0.00	\$0.00
1/4 - 1/10	\$4,741.75	\$857.50
1/11 - 1/17	\$3,440.36	\$844.38
1/18 - 1/24	\$4,272.92	\$290.00
1/25 - 1/31	\$4,612.05	\$445.71
	\$17,067.08	\$2,437.59

* \$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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Change Service Requested