

THE GOOD NEWSLETTER

December 2020



ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH

"God's Love in Action"

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
200 South Main Street
Charles City, IA 50616-2751
Phone: 641-228-3397

Website: www.stjohncharlescity.org



Find & like us on Facebook!

Subscribe to the E-Skinny by
emailing Kathy at
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St. John Christian Preschool
641-228-7274

Preschool Director: Whitney Franke
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Pastor Russ Leeper:
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Rev. Anita Nuetzman
Part time Visitation/Preaching Pastor

Office Secretary: Kathy Hoeft
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Office Hours: 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Business Manager: Linda Hughes
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Music Director:
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Youth & Family Coordinator:
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Custodian: Jamie Carolan
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Pastor's Note

It's official. This is going to be the strangest Christmas ever. Well, it's going to be the strangest one in my lifetime, anyway: no service at the church, no Christmas caroling, no family gatherings for us, and a hundred other little things that just won't be the same. As it turns out, it was a lot harder to find our way out of this pandemic than we thought it would be.

It reminds me of a trip I was part of several years ago to a corn maze. It was a lot of fun wandering through the stalks, looking for signs, and trying to find the way out. And, to make things a little more interesting, the operators of the maze also provided us with Bible questions to help us find our way. Whenever we came to a numbered sign, we had to answer a multiple-choice Bible question for that corresponding number. Depending on the answer we chose, we were directed to go either to the left or to the right. Some of the questions were simple like: "What were the names of the man and woman that God created first?" and "The Israelites created a golden statue in the shape of which animal?" But some of the questions were harder like: "The word 'corn' appears in the Bible how many times? a) 94 b) 198 c) 47" Do you have any idea? Yeah, neither did we. We were very thankful for our cell phones and their data plans! (The answer is "a", by the way.)

Yet, even though we had all of those signs and clues to guide us, finding our way out of the maze was a lot more challenging than we expected. The people of Israel had the same problem. God had promised to send a messiah to rescue them and to show them the way out of their suffering. They had clues from the ancient scriptures to help them and they were continually on the lookout for signs. Yet, it was still challenging and took much longer than they expected - hundreds of years longer. But, finally, they saw the sign ... a bright star in the East. Yet even with the star, it took the Wise Men two years to find the baby Jesus AND they had to stop in Jerusalem to get directions!

Life is often more complicated than we expected or wanted it to be. That's especially true this year. Even with the Bible to guide us, we can find it difficult to navigate the maze of decisions and situations we're facing on a daily basis. But the good news is that, despite our confusion and limited understanding, the messiah did come. And he didn't come just for Israel ... he came for all of us ... even those of us who are now living through a pandemic.

It's going to be a strange Christmas, but maybe we can use this special year to cut away some of the clutter of the season and focus a little more clearly on what Christmas is really about. As you celebrate the birth of Christ this month in whatever complicated and confusing situation you find yourself this Christmas, remember that Jesus has come to show us the way out ... the way out of sin and selfishness ... the way out of death ... the way out of fear and despair. But we have to follow him, even when things are strange. The way isn't always easy, but it's worth the trip. Merry Christmas!

Peace,
Pastor Russ

From the St. John Lutheran Church Council:

Due to the rising cases of COVID, a high positivity rate that's expected to rise after Thanksgiving, & a shortage of hospital beds in the area, the Church Council has decided **to do only online & radio services for the rest of the year.** Sunday School Confirmation and other meetings will be online. Baptisms & funerals can be held at the church with 25 or less in attendance. Pastor will continue to do "Drive-Through" Communion on the 1st Sunday of the month.

Things to know...



The St. John Church Council has extended a call to Rev. Anita Nuetzman to serve as our Part-time Visitation and Preaching Pastor. She has accepted the call! Because of the pandemic, the bishop has given our church council special authorization to issue the call to Pastor Anita with the understanding that there will be a congregational vote as soon as it is safe and feasible to do so. In the meantime, Pastor Anita will be serving with us 15 hours per week, beginning on December 1, 2020. Until recently, Rev. Nuetzman served as the pastor of both Calmar and Springfield Lutheran Churches. She now lives in Mason City with her husband, Dennis. Let's hold Pastor Anita and Dennis in our prayers!

Your offering can be mailed to St. John Lutheran, 200 S Main St, Charles City, IA 50616

OR...

If you would like to sign up for Simply Giving, the program that allows you to give to the church through electronic transfer, call Linda at 228-3397 if you would like her to help you set up Simply Giving.

OR...

Electronic Giving – this is an option that has been added to the St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church website in recent months. You can use this option to set up your giving on a weekly, monthly or yearly plan. But it is also convenient if you want to use it for one-time transactions – to give to specific funds, events, or memorials for instance. You can give through your personal accounts or credit cards. Just remember that if you use your credit card, unless you specifically indicate the service charge be taken from your account, St. John will be assessed that charge. This means of giving has seen some activity and we are really excited to be able to give you this option. Please keep in mind electronic giving as you plan your budgeting needs. At <http://www.stjohncharlescity.org/>, you will find Digital Simply Giving on the blue menu bar at the top of the page; that is your link to electronic convenience!

Our Generosity in October

Your offerings to St. John were shared beyond our walls in July in the Following ways:

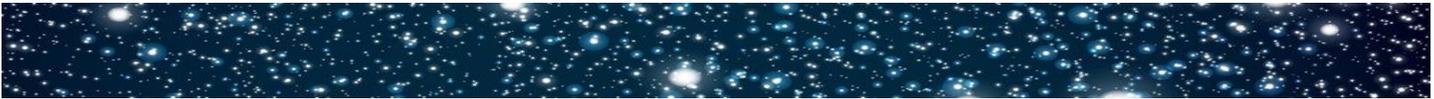
8% of our regular October offering (\$1663.38) went to support the mission of the larger church.

2% of our total offering goes to support our community needs. In September (\$624.01) was given to Messiah's Food Pantry.

The Finance Board voted to give (\$400.00) to the Floyd County Salvation Army Fund, (\$300.00) to the YMCA, and (\$288.29) to "Toys for Tots" out of the 8% Quarterly Thank Offering Benevolence fund.

"Drive Through Communion"

On December 6th between 10:00 a.m. & 11:30 a.m. we will have "Drive Through Communion. We also plan to offer this communion on the 1st Sunday of each month. We will ask that you enter the parking lot at the top. You will proceed down to the canopy where you will be handed a disposable communion cup with wafer. Next you will proceed to the pastor to partake of communion. Gluten free cups will be available.



Advent begins November 29th! Advent is a call to followers of Christ to remember the birth of the Savior. The word *advent* stems from a Latin word that means “coming” or “arrival.” The season begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and, depending on the year, can range from 22 to 28 days. Its purpose is to help believers remain focused on the birth of Christ and Jesus’ glorious return.

Family Advent Wreath Craft

Time needed: 30-45 minutes (1-2 adults with toddler/preschooler/kid assistance)

Materials needed:

Green tissue paper (2 sheets) - they do not have to be the same shade of green!

Green construction paper (1 sheet)

Purple construction paper (2 sheets)

Pink construction paper (1 sheet)

4 long yellow pipe cleaners (12 inches long)

4 empty cardboard toilet paper rolls (or 2 empty cardboard paper towel rolls cut in half)

Masking tape, Scissors, Glue, Stapler (optional)

Wreath Directions:

1. Fold the green construction paper in half lengthwise. Cut in a straight line along the fold. You will only need 1 of these pieces.
2. Take that piece of green construction paper and fold in half lengthwise again. Cut in a straight line along the fold. You should now have two long, thin pieces of green construction paper.
3. Take both pieces of paper and glue or staple the ends together so you have one very long, skinny piece of green construction paper. This is the base of the wreath. Set aside to dry.
4. Take the green tissue paper, and fold in half twice so it is close to the shape of a square. Cut along all of the folds. You should have 4 squares. Cut each square into thirds. Then, cut each third into thirds. (I placed each of the 4 large squares on top of each other and then cut them all at together - this saves a lot of time!) Repeat for the second piece of tissue paper. You should yield 36 squares per sheet of tissue paper so 72 squares total. (Don't worry about the cuts being even or straight - it does not need to be perfect!)





Angel Tree gifts are due back to the church by December 6th! They can be dropped off at our table during drive through communion. Any questions? Call Shirley Holm at 641-330-8336

CHRISTMAS EVE

We will not be having in-person Christmas Eve worship services this year. We WILL celebrate with the radio worship service on KCHA at 5:00 p.m. & the online video service which will be available by afternoon on December 24th.

Additionally, there will be drive-through communion on December 24th from 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.



St. John will have poinsettias in the Sanctuary for Christmas! If you would like to donate towards the poinsettias let Kathy know at 641-228-3397 or khoeft@stjohncharlescivcity.com. Donations will be listed in the online Christmas Eve bulletin.

(Each Sunday's worship bulletin can be found on the frontpage of the stjohncharlescivcity.org website.)

Hospice Tree of Life: COVID-19 will make this year's event look and feel a little different than in year's past — but no worries, we'll still have the same beautiful memorial service, virtually!

Our compassionate team at MercyOne North Iowa Hospice invites you to remember your loved ones or honor those living with a light on the Tree of Life. With a donation of any amount, lights are placed on a Tree of Life and "brought to light" symbolizing the presence of those honored and remembered. Names of those remembered and honored are listed at the tree lighting program specified by the donor. In addition, a holiday ornament is provided to each donor who attends a Tree of Life service. This year the service will be Tuesday, December 22, 6 p.m. & it will be a virtual location: wherever you are!

The event link will be available on our [Facebook page](#), the [Tree of Life Facebook Event](#) and on our website. The event link will be available on Wednesday, December 16.

This year's event includes a video featuring live music, the lighting of the tree and a special surprise from the bereavement staff. Plus, each location will have a special program with the reading of the names and a tree lighting. We'll release the individual videos after the 6 p.m. event.

To participate virtually, click the event link on the event date and time and enjoy the program from the comfort of your home! Missed the event? We'll share the video on our Facebook page and website afterward.

Lights on the Tree of Life celebrate and honor loved ones in a very special way and help extend MercyOne North Iowa Hospice's services to those affected by end of life. Services include compassionate and special care to improve the quality of life for the patient and their family. Help us remember and honor those who have made a difference in your life with your donation to the Tree of Life. Questions concerning this program and gifts to North Iowa Hospice may be directed to the Office Manager at 641-428-6232.

People Page...

December birthdays of our members who are 80 & older!

2nd Arlene Thomas
3rd Bette Gullickson
21st Ed Exline
22nd Mary Jean Zilm
30th Dorothy Rodda
30th Donna Gambaiani



December anniversaries of our members who have been married 50 or more years!

December 2, 1961 Bob & Marian Dight
December 23, 1961 Gary & Janice Dana
December 26, 1960 Lawrence & Doris Hibbs
December 31, 1952 Larry & Donna Stewart
December 31, 1960 Kip & Judy Hauser

Celebrated the baptisms of ...

Charlotte Allison Wood, 11/14/20

Gracie Mae Ferch, 11/15/20

June Rose Montagne, 11/22/20

In Sympathy...

Funeral of Donn Ivan Schafer, November 7, 2020

Memorials were given in memory of...

Margaret "Meg" Louise Haugland Tjaden : Kip & Judy Hauser, Kay Tjaden

Carol Mae Koebrick Chestek: Gary & Sandie Quade

Edwin LeMont Benedict: Lynn & Peg Poppen, Arlene Thomas, Helen Goplerud, Marilyn Isakson, Michael & Ronda Christensen, Ron James

Glenda Jane Otto Link: Eldon & Lynne Meyers, Louie & Cheryl Peters, Cheryl Meek, Judy Jurrens, Mary Link family

Donn Ivan Schafer: Barbara Fuls, Linda Hughes, Chuck & Janet Bonzer, Georgie Miller, Cteve & Connie Schiller, Helen Goplerud, Dorothy Rodda, Edna Stott, Lenis & Nadonne Buseman, Katherine & Chad Ford, Leona Howe, Andrew Schafer, Lynn & Peg Poppen, John & Myrna Culbertson, Timothy & Jennifer Anderson, Arlene Thomas, Marilu Wohlers, William & Carol Frye, Ralph & Ruth Smith, Amy & Paul Yeager, Larry & Patty Plumb, Kris Tjaden, Daniel & Sarah Barrett, Michael Scholten, Duane & Ileen Jerdee, Kara M. K. Hoogensen, Clara Iversen, Nancy Western, Brad & Brenda Bailey, Larry & Ellen Brewer, Dale & Helen Bond, Karmen Mehmen, Marilyn Isakson, Diane Melrose, Greg & Rosie Pieper, Walter & LuAnn Armstrong, Jan & Leon Mulford, Gary & Sandra Quade, Carl & Linda Johnson, Jeremy & Jodi Heyer, Craig & Julie Begemann, Bruce & Viva Boerschel, Leslie & Dienna Schafer, Margaret Jensen, Greg & Kendra Buenger, Kip & Judy Hauser

STEWARDSHIP BOARD – We are so pleased with the response to the Kans for Kids project. You just keep giving us those cans and you will be seeing a lot of rewards for your generous donations in the weeks and months to come. Just for your information, the recycling center we use has told us that, while they will continue to take crushed cans, we will not receive the same amount of money for them since there is more labor to sorting these cans. They will give us only \$.03 for each can instead of the full redemption price. You may certainly continue to donate crushed cans to Kans for Kids or Tynan's Junk Yard will take them. We wanted to make you aware of this restriction but we will thankfully accept any of your cans.

Youth & Family

But Jesus said, "Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14
Blessings, Laurie

FAMILY BOARD

The Family Board included supplies to make a Thankful Chain and Advent Calendars in the Sunday School packets that went home with those who registered for online Sunday School. Now our students can be using their calendars to watch and wait and work their way through Advent in anticipation of the birth of Christ!

PARISH EDUCATION BOARD

There will be **NO** Online Sunday School on December 27th or January 3rd. We will resume on January 10th.

The Parish Education Board is working on the safe re-opening plan, which it will present to Council for approval, so that we can have in-person Sunday School hopefully as soon as January depending on Covid numbers in Floyd County. Be watching for more details as we near the middle to end of December.

CONFIRMATION

This year, for our confirmation "service to others" day, we will be holding a Food Drive(thru) on Wednesday, **December 16, from 5:30-7PM**. Donations of non-perishable food items, which will be donated to the local food pantry, can be dropped off under the canopy by the Narthex doors during that time. (Any monetary donations will go to ELCA World Hunger.)

St. John Christian Preschool



For the many blessings that come from Heaven above; we thank you, Lord, with heart and soul and sing of Your great love!

We are very blessed here at St. John Christian Preschool. We have forty-five little ones who enter our preschool center with shining smiles and happy hearts each week. It's easy to love your job when you are surrounded by such enthusiasm!

During the month of November, we talked about letters A, H, F & I. We also talked about how **THANKFUL** we are for all the blessings God bestows upon us each and every day! We celebrated the end of November with a Thanksgiving feast. Each little one brought enough 1-bite items to share with all of his or her friends in the class. Even though 20 raisins did not look like much on their own; when everyone combined their "little bits" we were surprised at the feast that we were able to create.

We presented our new afternoon friends (4/5 year olds) with their very own Bibles on Monday, November 30th. It is always such an **EXCITING** day! We then ask each of our friends to bring their Bibles back to preschool on Wednesday's so that we may "read" the Bible story together with Pastor Russ! What an awesome opportunity to expand our literary skills using **GOD'S WORD!**

St. John Christian Preschool Cont...

As some may have heard, the preschool was shut-down due to a positive Covid case and went to online learning from Nov. 4-Nov. 22. We returned to school on the 23rd and 24th to celebrate our Thanksgiving Feasts mentioned above. We would also like to let everyone know, that after 30 years at St. John Christian Preschool, Grandma Evelyn has made the choice to quit the Foster Grandparent program. She contracted the COVID-19 virus and is on the mend, however it has left her quite weak. She feels it is just time to step down. We will certainly miss her but we know that this is the best decision for her at this time. Please be on the lookout for more information about a future "celebration" of some kind to honor Grandma Evelyn.

We do not have the words to offer thanks to everyone who supports the preschool. In addition to our amazing preschool staff: Carleen Laue, our substitutes and parent volunteers, Foster Grandmas Evelyn Schmidt and Cindy Kinney, and myself, we have a church staff who supports us on every level. Pastor Leeper makes frequent visits to our preschool to talk with, sing with, laugh with and read the Bible story with our little ones. Jamie Carolan and Julie Heddens keep our preschool so sparkling clean that even visitors comment on how amazing our preschool looks! Kathy Hoeft is quick to answer our phone when we are tied up with our little ones and Linda Hughes keeps track of all of our financial transactions. Our preschool is also greatly impacted by the six women who serve on our preschool advisory board. These moms take extra time out of already busy schedules to ensure that our preschool is all that it can be. Last, but most certainly not least, we remember the CONGREGATION who supports us financially and spiritually. All of these people working together provide an early childhood education for many of the youth of Charles City. At St. John Christian Preschool, we not only offer opportunities for our little ones to learn their colors and their letters, but we are also teaching them about God's great love! THANK YOU FOR HELPING US DO THIS AMAZING WORK!

As we look to the New Year, we do have some preschool openings available, so please spread the word! Call 228-7274 for more information!

Blessed Beyond Wonder,

Whittney Franke



DECEMBER 2020 CALENDAR

MONTHLY:

1st Sunday of month 10:00 – 11:30: Drive through Communion

December 16 : Newsletter Deadline

BOARD MEETINGS:

Building & Grounds: Dec 1, 5:00 p.m. (Zoom)
 Council: Dec 8, 6:00 p.m. (Zoom)
 Communication: TBD 6:00 p.m. (Zoom)
 Deacons: Dec 13, 10:00 a.m. (Zoom).
 Family Board Dec 1, (Email)
 Finance Board Dec 3, 5:15 p.m. (Zoom)
 Parish Ed Dec 8, 5:15 p.m. (Zoom)
 Stewardship Dec 13, 11:00 a.m. (at Quade's)
 Youth Dec 10, 5:15p.m. (Zoom)

EVENTS OF NOTE

December 6th: Angel Tree Gifts to be returned

December 12th: Murray Baptism

December 16th: Virtual Hospice Tree of Life Ceremony

Christmas Eve – December 24th: Christmas Eve Radio Broadcast – 5:00 p.m./Online available in afternoon.

Drive through Communion – 3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

December 25th: Office Closed



DECEMBER BIRTHDAY CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
		Tony Lessin Dennis Niezwaag	Judy Hughes Arlene Thomas	Julie Begemann Bette Gullickson	Eugene Heitz	Jiles Lantz
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Gina McClintock	Jim Zirbel	Sierra Hinz	Judy Kelly Monte Waldorf		Judy Hauser Lorie Hoeft Amanda Keyes Connie Swant Kim Watkins	Tara Dean
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Carson Holm Donald Tieskotter	Carol Tyler	Tom Litterer	Austin Lacour Jason Walker	Bev Friend James Johnson	David Boehmer	Jill Connell Paul Van Ausdall
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Rhys Johnson	Ed Exline Hayden Heyer Nathan Korbel	Mary Jean Zilm	Lynn Hoeft	Marlene Huffman Natalie Keyes		Kynsie Eckhoff
27	28	29	30	31		
Danielle Reetz	JoAnn Knowlton	Hazel Hansen Susan Leeper	Donna Gambaiani Dorothy Rodda			