

THE GOOD NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER

2022



ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH

The office will be closed
December 26th!

St. John Books will close
December 29th at 3:00 p.m.

“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
khoeft@stjohncharlescity.com

Worship service broadcasted on
KCHA FM 95.9 at
9:00 a.m. on Sunday

St. John Christian Preschool
641-228-7274

Preschool Director: Whitney Franke
wfranke@stjohncharlescity.com



Pastor Russ Leeper:
rleeper@stjohncharlescity.com

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

Business Manager: Rhonda Schmidtke
businessmanager@stjohncharlescity.com

Music Director:
Melanie Johanningmeier
mjohanningmeier@stjohncharlescity.com

Youth & Family Coordinator:
Laurie Heidebrink
lheidebrink@stjohncharlescity.com

Custodian: Jamie Carolan
jcarolan@stjohncharlescity.com

Pastor Russ Leeper :

Recently, I was thinking about the church where I was baptized, Trinity Lutheran Church in Waterloo. And I realized that the last time I was there was at my grandmother's funeral in 2010.

It was a sad occasion, but it was also good to get together with a side of the family that rarely gathers. Many cousins were there that I hadn't seen for a long time and it brought back memories of the old days ... especially Christmas! It was so much fun when we all got together at Grandpa and Grandma's house on Christmas Eve. The adults sat upstairs playing cards while we kids took over the basement playing our own games and snooping through Grandma's piles of "old stuff" (something that I can reveal now only because Grandma has gone to be with Jesus). Then, after dinner and presents, we'd bundle up and head off to midnight service at Grandpa and Grandma's church. I loved that church! It was the place where I was baptized, the place where I first attended Sunday School, and the place where I first heard about Jesus. I remember sitting on the hard, wooden pews there during worship and hearing the pastor say, "Christ died for us," but through my young ears I was certain that he was saying, "Christ died for Russ." I thought that was cool.

But at Grandma's funeral in 2010, as I walked around that church, I was completely lost. Some parts of the building had been changed and other parts just didn't look familiar anymore. I wandered around trying to find my old Sunday School classroom, but I couldn't locate it. It made me sad to realize that these very important moments and places of my faith existed in memory only now. I couldn't go back to them. They were gone. In the 5 years I've been at St. John, I've given many tours of our building to people who grew up at St. John but hadn't been back in a long time. I've seen the same look of nostalgia mixed with loss on their faces, too. It's real.

As I talked with cousins at Grandma's funeral, I realized how much they, too, had changed since we were kids. We're related to each other, but we don't really know each other anymore. They all had kids that were older than we were when we played together in Grandma's basement. Grandma's gone, too, and eventually that house was sold. It's hard to let go of the things we love, hard to give up the past, hard to say good-bye to the people and situations that have been very important to us.

The Christmas season can be a time of mixed feelings. We joyfully cherish our memories of Christmases past while at the same time feeling grief over what and who we've lost. December can be a rough month for some.

But Advent and Christmas are ultimately about reminding us that our hope and joy comes not from where we've been, but where God is leading us: Mary saying "yes" to God's calling, Joseph obeying a dream to trust God, shepherds going where God's angels sent them, magi watching for God's sign and following when they saw it, and a centuries-old promise being fulfilled ... a child who would save his people ... not in the past, but in the future.

Loss is always difficult. But as we face this month, we remember that through it all, our true hope and true joy is not in the past. It comes from trusting our God who leads us into the future. And because of the Christ Child, that future is a bright eternity with all the people we've lost. May you have comfort and joy to you this Advent and Christmas season.

Peace, Pastor Russ



Special Congregational Meeting

Sunday, December 4, 2022, we'll have a shortened communion service at 9 AM, followed by a special congregational meeting at 9:30 AM to vote on a proposed Lift Project (more details are coming). Because the final Christmas Program rehearsal and the Children's 25¢ Store are both happening that morning, we will need to be done by 10 AM.

At the January 2022 Annual meeting council was asked by the congregation to look into possible costs of an elevator or lift system. Council began conversation on several locations and options were explored along with costs. The best option that physically worked with our building and made sense for accessibility to offices, parish hall, basement and parking lot was to put a lift or elevator where the current church office is now and to shift the church office to where the current work room is. Due to estimates for an elevator unit spanning the basement to the top floor and needed construction costs to complete that project coming in at an excess of \$400,000, the council shifted our focus to a platform lift system option.

A platform lift system and construction that goes from the parking lot to the main floor and the basement would cost approximately \$150,000. To go up to the third floor, a second lift would be required in the future, so construction on this project will allow room for a second lift to be added if that is an option the congregation wants to consider in the future. After responding to the original request at the January 2022 Annual meeting, the council is bringing the platform lift project to the congregation for a vote on Dec. 4. If the congregation votes to move forward with the lift project, the church council recommends that in order to get to the \$150,000 needed for the project we pay for it as follows:

- \$80,000 from Memorial Fund which currently sits at \$160,454
- \$45,000 from Kroneman - Capital Improvement Fund which currently sits at \$218,057
- \$20,000 from Sylvester Fund which are previously dedicated funds for this project
- \$1,188 from the Lift Fund
- \$4,000 raised from the 150th Anniversary Celebration

Cost estimates/quotes for the project include:

- Vertical Platform Lift: \$43,940
- Wedeking Electric Bid: \$9,622
- Randall Construction: \$67,625
- Artura Architecture: \$4,000
- Recommended contingency funds (19%): \$23,785.53
- TOTAL: \$148,972

We have applied for some grants that could bring in over \$10,000 and any additional donations we receive for the lift project would decrease the amount of money taken out of current funds. Please join with fellow St. John members on Dec. 4 at 9 AM for worship followed by a special congregational meeting to make this decision.

Josh Johnson
Council President

COUNCIL NOTES...

November Council Highlights:

- Continuing to gather ideas of how our Council can continue to build our vision for God's Love in Action, we look forward to building off of the ideas presented at further council meetings.
- Council has been working with the Synod office to put a plan in place after approving moving forward with a call for a 1/2 Time Pastor. Based on the information collected and feedback from the NE Iowa Synod office, Pastor Steve Brackett, presented us with the option to join a Collaborative Learning program where we contract with students in training to fulfill our pastoral needs as they work through their education. We will be hosting a candidate on Nov. 20th and the council will meet in December to determine next steps.
- At the request of the congregation at the January 2022 Annual Meeting we wrapped up discussion on installing some type of lift system. Council is bringing the proposal to install a platform lift system to a congregational vote on Dec. 4th. More details can be found throughout our church communications.
- We have officially hired Rhonda Schmidtke for the Business Manager opening! We appreciate Karol Carpenter's work as Interim Business Manager these past several weeks, which has helped us prepare for the new hire!
- Continued forming a Nominating Committee as we look to replace council and board members who are stepping off our boards after various years of service.

Thank you and please let us know if you have any thoughts, questions, concerns, etc.
-St. John Lutheran Church Council

Our Generosity in October 2022

Your offerings to St. John were shared beyond our walls in October in the following ways:

8% of our regular October offering (\$2838.20) went to support the mission of the larger church.

2% of our total offering goes to support our community needs. The October recipient was The Coats For Kids program that our congregation hosts in the fall for families needing winter coats., we were able to support their mission with a \$973.06 check.

The 8% Thank Offering which is given quarterly will be determined at the end of this quarter in December.



Meet our new Business Manager, Rhonda Schmidtke!

I was born and raised in Charles City and have been a member of St. John for over 20 years. I have 3 wonderful sons who all live in the area. I enjoy riding mules and camping in my free time and also coach YMCA swimming in the winter. I am employed full time as the City Clerk of Marble Rock.

Rhonda's dedicated office hours will be on Fridays, and she can be reached other times through the church office. The December newsletter (out November 29th) will have more information about Rhonda!

IN DECEMBER...



Mark your calendars for Saturday, December 3rd to come help the Deacons decorate the church for Christmas! We will start at 9:00 a.m.

All are welcome!



THE 25 CENT GIFT STORE FOR KIDS
will be December 4th! Store hours are 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Donations of gently used Christmas themed items, craft items, or toys are needed! You can bring your donated items to the St John.

The Sunday School Christmas program will be on **December 11, 2022, during the 9:00 a.m. worship service.** Pre-K - 6th grade (& some 7th graders as well!) will be presenting "The Evening News Hour" A cookie reception will follow in the Parish Hall.

Christmas program prelude:

Any youth interested in playing a piece during the prelude at the Christmas program on December 11th, please contact Melanie at 641-228-3397!



Music Sunday will be December 18th during the 9:00 a.m. Worship service! Treats and coffee will be served in the Parish Hall after the service.



If you would like to donate to the **Poinsettias** for Christmas, call the office at 641-228-3397

Christmas Eve

St. John will have two worship services on Christmas Eve:
4:00 p.m. Candlelight service &
6:30 p.m. Candlelight service

Dartball at St. John

Dartball is a team activity at St. John. Matches are played at St. John and other participating churches. For more information call Dennis Sande at 319-389-7998. A full schedule can be picked up in the St. John office.

Matches start at 7:00 p.m. & dates are:

Dec. 7th at St. John vs. Pleasant Hill
Dec. 14th at Pleasant Valley
Jan. 4th at St. John vs. Baptist
Jan. 11th at Pleasant Hill

**Angel Tree gifts are
due back by December 4th!**

Adult Bible Study will begin again in January 2023, at 10:15 in the Chapel

We will be taking a closer look at the Bible readings for that Sunday. It's a chance to go deeper in the scriptures for that week and have conversation about them.

After Worship Social Time! Coffee & a treat are served in the Parish Hall each Sunday! If you would like to volunteer to bring the treats, there is a signup on the treat table!

"Frosty days and ice-still nights,
Fir trees trimmed with tiny lights,
Sound of sleigh bells in the snow,
That was Christmas long ago.
Tykes on sleds and shouts of glee,
Icy-window filigree,
Sugarplums and candle glow,
Part of Christmas long ago.
Footsteps stealthy on the stair,
Sweet-voiced carols in the air,
Stocking hanging in a row,
Tell of Christmas long ago.
Starry nights so still and blue,
Good friends calling out to you,
Life, so fact, will always slow...
For dreams of Christmas long ago."
- Jo Geis, *Christmas Long Ago*

Altar Flowers & Radio Broadcast 2023

**On the glass case in the Narthex
are the 2023 signups for Altar
flowers and radio broadcasts!**

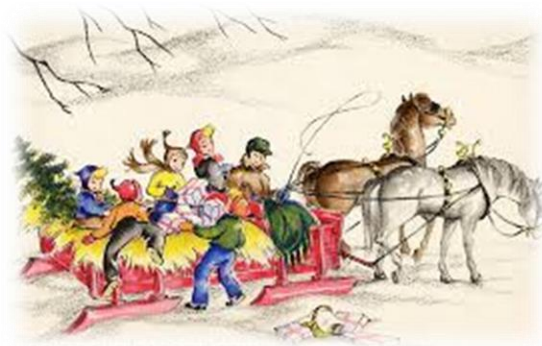
The radio broadcast is enjoyed by many of our St. John members who cannot watch it on YouTube or attend in person.

Wednesday Night Supper

Menus will be published weekly in the bulletin and on the frontpage of the St. John website.

Cost: \$5.00 for adults

Children through 12th grade free thanks to Kans for Kids



People's Page...

December birthdays of our members who are 80 & older!

12/2 Arlene Thomas
12/3 Bette Gullickson
12/11 Judy Hauser
12/11 Connie Swant
12/19 Paul Van Ausdall
12/21 Ed Exline
12/22 Mary Jean Zilm
12/28 JoAnn Knowlton
12/30 Dorothy Rodda
12/30 Donna Gambaiani



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

Dec. 23, 1961	Gary & Janice Dana
Dec. 26, 1960	Lawrence & Doris Hibbs
Dec. 29, 1971	Mark & Ann Kabele
Dec. 31, 1960	Kip & Judy Hauser
Dec. 31, 1952	Larry & Donna Stewart

With Sympathy, the funeral of...

Elaine Ruth Eckebrecht, 11/7/22
Verla June Kamin Heller, 11/18/22
James "Jim" Dale DeVore, 11-22-22



Memorials were given in memory of...

Shirley Ann deMerritt Kreimeyer Ripley: Ruth Farmer, David & Teri Nelson, Elizabeth Peterson

Bea Pennington: Larry & Gayle de Buhr

Tom Craig Winterink: Leon & Jan Mulford, David & Sue Ayers, Dennis & Jan Brinkman, Nora Springs Insurance Agency, Stewart Realty, Arthur & Patricia Aaron

James "Jim" Dale DeVore: Arlene Thomas, Greg & Kendra Buenger, Don & Shirley Holm, Peg Poppen

Verla Heller: Leon & Jan Mulford, Kurt & Kathy Hoeft

Mitch DeGues: Don & Shirley Holm

Pastor Leeper & everyone at St. John,

Thank you so much for performing Zeke's baptism. We are grateful to everyone for taking the time to make it such a wonderful day. As we stood in front of the congregation, we could feel their love and support for our baby and our family. Thank you for the Bible for Zeke and the baptism candle. We will do our best as his parents to be good teachers and examples of faithfulness as we prayed for during his baptism. Also, thank you for Susan for taking pictures of our family after the service with our camera. Wonderful job! ☺ Thank you for helping us bring our child up in the faith of Jesus Christ and as a part of the St. John family! *Scott & Sarah Kendall*

A message from the people of Messiah Lutheran Church...

So happy to read of your great celebration! Many of us have personal connections to St. John and love to visit at various times. What a blessing St. John Lutheran Church has always been to the members and to our community! We celebrate the 150 years with our love and prayers!

Youth & Families...

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

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

We have an awesome group at the After School Program this year! We have 20 kids enrolled! How great is that?!? 😊 This program is for 4-year-olds attending preschool through 5th grade students. It's never too late to join us! We could use some donations of crackers and juice if anyone feels called to donate.

FAMILY BOARD

Thank you to everyone that donated to our **25¢ Gift Store** for children. This will be a great opportunity on December 4th for parents to bring children to purchase gifts for siblings, parents, and grandparents. The "Store" will be open at 11:00am - 12:30pm for our St. John kids and the public.

The Family Board offered a Reverse Advent Calendar at the Advent Event on November 30th. If you would like a copy, check with Kathy or Laurie or the St. John Facebook page.

PARISH EDUCATION BOARD

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

The **Sunday School Christmas Program** will be on **December 11, 2022, during the 9:00 a.m.** worship service.

The PreK- through 6th Graders (with help from a few 7th Graders) will be acting out the Nativity in a skit called "The Evening News Hour."

(The snow date will be January 8th at 9am.)

There will be NO Sunday School on December 18th or 25th or January 1st. We will resume on January 8th.

CONFIRMATION

We will be taking a break from classes on Wednesday, December 21st. This is an opportunity for the confirmation students to do some service of their own choosing.

YOUTH

The Youth will be holding a **Reception on December 11th at 10:00 am** in the Parish Hall. Plan on bringing the whole family here after the Christmas Program for a treat!

Acolytes for December

Bryce Walker, 12/4

Jonah Devore, 12/4

Ellie Lantz, 12/11

Katlyn Parson, 12/11

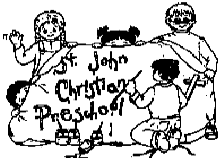
Emma Prichard, 12/18

Ben Hammond, 12/18

Christmas Eve

Erin Gassman & Donaven Sande, 4:00 p.m.

Hailey Wilkens & Blake Dean, 6:30 p.m.



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 twenty-eight 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 Kk, Ff, and Aa. 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 16 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 4-year-old friends with their very own Bibles on Wednesday, November 2nd. It is always such an EXCITING day! We then ask each of our friends to bring their Bibles back to preschool on Wednesdays 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!

We would also like to remind everyone that the preschool still sells Kwik Star gift cards. Please stop down or call if you are interested in purchasing a gift card (228-7274.) The preschool receives 5% of the card's face value.

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 assistant teacher/paraeducator and Foster Grandma Cindy Kinney, and myself, we have a church staff who supports us on every level. Pastor Russ Leeper, who comes down to read the Bible story; Jamie Carolan and Julie Heddens who 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 Karol Carpenter keeps track of all of our financial transactions. Our preschool is also greatly impacted by the two 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 2022 Schedule...

Sundays: 9:00 a.m. Worship in Sanctuary
Communion is the 1st & 3rd Sunday
10:05 a.m. Education Hour

12/3/2022 9:00 a.m. Help Deacons decorate for Christmas
 12/4/2022 **9:30 a.m. Congregational Meeting**
 11:00 a.m. 25 Cent Christmas store
 for kids
 12/6/2022 6:00 p.m. Stephen Ministry
 12/7/2022 7:00 p.m. Dartball at St. John
 12/11/2022 9:00 a.m. Sunday School Christmas program
 10:00 a.m. Cookie reception in Parish Hall
 12/14/2022 7:00 p.m. Dartball at Valley
 12/18/2022 **Music Sunday!**
 12/21/2022 **Newsletter Deadline**
 9:00 a.m. Do Day Quilters
 12/24/2022 **Christmas Eve**
4:00 p.m. Candlelight service
6:30 p.m. Candlelight service
 12/25/2022 **Christmas Day - No Worship**
 12/26/2022 **Office Closed**

Board Meetings:

Building & Grounds 12/6/2022 6:00 p.m.
 Council: 12/13/2022 6:00 p.m.
 Deacons: TBD
 Family Board: 12/14/2022 7:00 p.m.
 Finance Board 12/12/2022 5:00 p.m.
 Parish Ed:
 Stewardship: 12/20/2022 2:00 p.m.
 Youth Board: 12/11/2022 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday Night Schedule

3:30 p.m. After School
 5:00 p.m. Supper
 6:00 p.m. Confirmation
 6:30 p.m. Tone Chimes
 7:00 p.m. Trinity Choir

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

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