

# THE GOOD NEWSLETTER



2023

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](http://www.stjohncharlescity.org)**



Find & like us on Facebook!

Subscribe to the E-Skinny by  
emailing Toni at  
[office@stjohncharlescity.com](mailto:office@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](mailto:wfranke@stjohncharlescity.com)



Pastor Russ Leeper:  
[rleeper@stjohncharlescity.com](mailto:rleeper@stjohncharlescity.com)

Beth Hurt, Intern  
[beth@stjohncharlescity.com](mailto:beth@stjohncharlescity.com)

Office Secretary: Toni Hicks  
[office@stjohncharlescity.com](mailto:office@stjohncharlescity.com)  
Office Hours: 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Business Manager: Rhonda Schmidtke  
[businessmanager@stjohncharlescity.com](mailto:businessmanager@stjohncharlescity.com)

Music Director:  
Melanie Johanningmeier  
[mjohanningmeier@stjohncharlescity.com](mailto:mjohanningmeier@stjohncharlescity.com)

Custodian: Jamie Carolan  
[jcarolan@stjohncharlescity.com](mailto:jcarolan@stjohncharlescity.com)

## Pastor Russleper

### Blue Christmas

One of my vivid childhood memories from this time of year is of being sprawled out on the living room floor, looking at our illuminated Christmas tree, and listening to our humongous RCA console stereo playing the Elvis Presley Christmas album:

*I'll have a blue Christmas without you*

*I'll be so blue just thinking about you*

*Decorations in red on a green Christmas tree*

*Won't mean a thing, dear, if you're not here with me*

As a kid, I don't think I really understood those words. I had never experienced the kind of loss that Elvis was singing about ... the kind of loss that makes what's supposed to be the happiest time of the year into one of the saddest times of the year.

Now, at age 57, I hear those words so differently. Rather than just an innocent, childhood memory, I think about all the people I know who will be struggling with the Christmas blues this year because someone they love is gone. You might be one of those people. If you're having a blue Christmas, my heart goes out to you. Know that you're not alone. Even though being sad at Christmas time can feel so isolating, I can assure you that there are many others around you who are going through the same thing.

That's why this year Intern Beth, my wife Susan, and I are putting together a *Blue Christmas Service*. This is a Christian tradition that happens on December 21st, the longest night of the year, and is about comforting those who are grieving and struggling to find joy and hope during the Christmas season. It's a safe space for us to gather together in God's presence, being honest about the reality of grief and the fact that healing takes time. It will be a quiet and contemplative service with candles and no expectations. You can sing or not sing ... cry or not cry ... participate or just listen ... it's up to you and whatever you need. Either way, you will be in the company of people who care about you and the God who loves you ... no matter how you feel.

**Our *St. John Blue Christmas Service* will be Thursday, December 21 at 5:30 PM. Everyone is welcome.**

Whatever you're going through this Advent and Christmas season, I pray that God's peace, which surpasses our understanding, will accompany you on your journey and give you light, even in your darkest nights.

Peace,

Pastor Russ

## **Of Note...**

We had a great response to Consecration Sunday on October 29th! These are the results from that day. Thank you to all who have faithfully responded, so far. Estimate of Giving Cards are still coming in. It's not too late! If your electronic giving is changing and you have set it up through the business office, our business manager will make the change for you, starting in January 2024. If you have set up your own electronic giving through the website or the app, you will need to make the change for yourself. If you have any questions, please contact Rhonda Schmidtke at 641-228-3397. Thank you!

### **Statistical Report on Consecration Sunday Results**

A total of **93** giving units (husbands and wives or single persons) completed *Estimate of Giving Cards* this year.

A total of **68** of these giving units increased their financial commitment above their last year's amount.

A total of **93** giving units present to fill out *Estimate of Giving Cards* today committed a total of **\$ 251,337.92** .

Based on last year's giving records, we can expect to receive **\$ 232,352.85** during the coming year from people who have consistent giving patterns during the past twelve months but are not present today.

Based on the average total of loose offerings during the past three years, we can expect to receive **\$ 4779.15** during the coming year from that source.

Church income from non-donor sources such as interest, rentals and fees:  
**\$ 1697.89** .

This gives us a grand total of **\$ 498,031.79** anticipated income for the next year.

The total income for our general operating budget during the last twelve months was  
**\$ 470,600.19** .

Next year, we can expect our operating budget income to increase by  
**\$ 26,044.66** .



**Northern Lights Alliance For The Homeless**  
307 North Monroe Ave - Mason City, IA 50401

**New Beginnings House Of Hope**  
202 - 1st St NW - Mason City, IA 50401

Jesse Germundson  
Executive Director  
641-423-5920

Do Day Quilters,

On behalf of Northern Lights Alliance for the Homeless Shelters please allow us to take this opportunity to thank you for your generous donation of 53 quilts.

NLAHS provides services to assist our clients in putting life's pieces together while seeking permanent housing. NLAHS 501c3 non-profit. Our purpose is to support the increasing number of men, women, children and veterans that have fallen into a homeless situation. Connecting those individuals to resources and financial assistance to get them back on their feet.

We are able to continue our programs for the homeless because of generous donations from supporters like you.

Sincerely,

Jesse Germundson  
Executive Director

We, the "Do Day Quilters" thank you for your support, enabling us to continue our ministry of sewing quilts for the less fortunate. The recipients receive the quilts when they leave the shelter. Your donations of cotton material, batting and crochet thread are greatly appreciated.

Anyone is welcome to join the quilters. We meet the first and third Wednesday of each month from 9am to 12pm in our church basement.

## The Northeast Iowa Food Bank—Mobile Food Pantry

(Serving upwards of 200 families, individuals, and seniors in need.)

*Charles City*

*1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month*

*5:00 pm – 6:30 pm*

- Youth Enrichment Building at the Floyd County Fairgrounds
- Roughly 40 volunteers are needed from 4 – 7 pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wed of each month to set up, pack food, distribute food, and clean up.
- The time commitment is small yet has a tremendous impact for those in need.
- All ages of volunteers are welcome!
- Contact Jen Burton at 641-220-1769 for more information.

### **Mobile food pantry needs your help**



The Charles City mobile food pantry is an equal opportunity provider.



Delivery of food from the Northeast Iowa mobile food pantry by the St John bus is off to a wonderful start! This is a greatly needed service in our community because there are many people that qualify for food from the pantry but have mobility or transportation limitations and are unable to come to the fairgrounds to pick it up. Unfortunately, the St John bus is at its capacity and cannot fit anymore deliveries. There are many people on the waiting list. We are in need of people that can deliver food with their personal vehicles. The mobile food pantry is held the first Wednesday of the month at the Floyd county fairgrounds. Delivery vehicles will be loaded up at 6:00 pm. Deliveries are limited to within a 5 mile radius of Charles City. If you are interested in helping, call Jen Burton the mobile food pantry coordinator at 641-220-1769. Depending on the size of your vehicle, 2-4 households worth of food will likely fit in in a personal vehicle. Even if you are not able to deliver every month, we still can use your help. You do not need to be a St John member to help, anyone can help.

Thank you for your support of this ministry!

### **Wednesday Night Suppers: Volunteers Needed**

We would like to form multiple teams of four (4) to prepare and serve the meals on Wednesday night.

*We currently need team members for February.*

For questions or to volunteer contact:

Shirley Holm @ 641-330-8336 OR Sandie Quade @ 641-330-1850

**After Worship Social Time**  
**has been an enjoyable way to reconnect**  
**with each other!** Coffee & a treat are served  
in the Parish Hall each Sunday!  
**We still need volunteers to bring the**  
**treats!!**

### **St. John Helping Hands...**

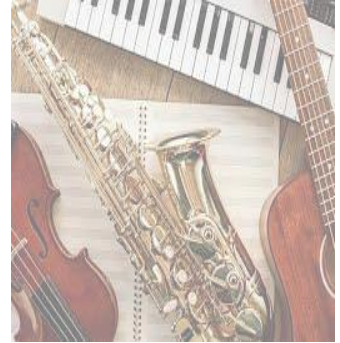
If someone needs help with in-town transportation, light household chores, changing a lightbulb, etc. call St. John at 641-228-3397 & help will be arranged for you!



*Christmas Decorating*

**Board of Deacons Invites**  
**YOU!!**  
**Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>**

If any kids are interested in providing prelude music, please contact **Melanie** by Dec. 3.



We would love to feature the kids on piano or other instruments



*Kid's 25 cent Gift Store*

**December 3rd**  
**11:00a.m. -**  
**12:30p.m.**  
**In the Parish Hall**

**Donations of gently used Christmas items, crafts or toys are needed!**

## Family Board

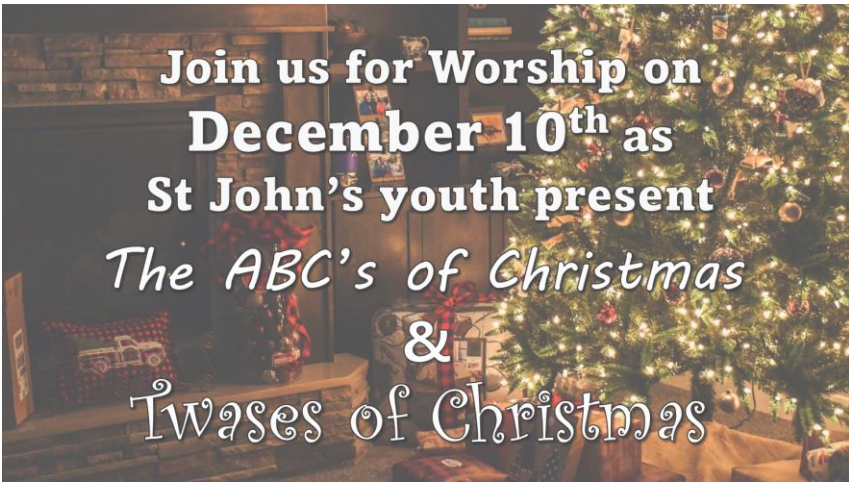
### “Advent Activity Take and Make”

The supplies, except glue and tape, will be provided in the Advent activity kit. Example: bake Christmas cookies, decorate a gingerbread house, visit a nursing home...

Please put your name on the back of the attendance slip or contact the church office to sign up for a kit.

**Pick up kits: December 3rd in the Parish Hall**





**Music Sunday:**  
**Sunday, December 17, 2023**

**Come and join us for a service of music and word.**

**"Rejoice, Your Light Has Come"**  
**featuring: Trinity Choir, Kids Choir, Tone Chime Choir, and other special music.**

*Blue Christmas Service*  
*December 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30pm*  
*Gentle service of expression and reflection for those who are grieving, experiencing loneliness or loss this holiday season.*

Donating *blood* brings people *home* for the *holidays*

**LifeServe**  
Your Blood. Your Hospital. Your Neighbors.

**Charles City Community Blood Drive**  
Messiah Lutheran Church  
705 3rd Ave. | Charles City  
**Friday, December 22**  
12:30 PM - 5:30 PM

Text: LIFESERVE to 999.777 | Call: 800.287.4903 | Visit: [lifeserve.info/schedule](http://lifeserve.info/schedule)

**75 YEARS SAVING LIVES**  
**LifeServe** BLOOD CENTER  
YOUR BLOOD. YOUR HOSPITAL. YOUR NEIGHBORS.

# GriefShare®

Join us to find help and encouragement after the death of a loved one. At GriefShare, you'll find understanding, guidance, relief, and a safe place to navigate the challenges of grief. Each meeting consists of an educational video about a grief topic, as well as time to share with others in a confidential setting.

GriefShare will meet on Tuesday evenings at 6:30 for 1 ½ to 2 hours. We will begin on Tuesday, January 23 and finish the 13 week session on Tuesday, April 16. Any adult from the community who has experienced the death of a loved one is invited to join us for this healing and hopeful experience. Go to [GriefShare.org](http://GriefShare.org) to register or call the church office at 228-3388.

## **Stephen Ministry**

We all go through tough times. In the midst of these times, it can be extremely helpful to have someone come alongside us to give understanding and encouragement – to provide stability, hope, and Biblical principles to help us get through the storm. That’s what a Stephen Minister is able to provide. Here at St. John, we have compassionate individuals who are trained to help us when encountering loss, grief, relationship challenges, and many other challenges that can throw our lives into a tailspin. A Stephen Minister is a caring individual who can confidentially help us navigate these times. If you’re interested in becoming a Stephen Minister, contact the church office and a Stephen Leader will get in touch with you to provide more information. We’re planning Stephen Minister training starting after the first of the year.

## **Stephen Minister Training**

Stephen Minister Training will be happening at St. John on Tuesdays from 6:00 to 8:30 PM, starting January 16, 2024. The deadline for signing up is January 2nd. If you are interested in being a Stephen Minister or would like to learn more about it, please contact the church office and we will get you in touch with one of our Stephen Leaders.



## People's Page...

### Acolytes for December 2023

3 Cooper Holm

Ian Hallett

10 Cooper Holm

Graham Hansen

17 Cooper Holm

Graham Hansen

24 Ben Hammond

Brady Hanson

### December birthdays 80 & older!

Bette Gullickson 12/3

Judy K. Hauser 12/11

Connie Swant 12/11

Carol L. Tyler 12/14

Beverly Friend 12/17

Paul Van Ausdall 12/19

Edwin D. Exline 12/21

Mary J. Zilm 12/22

JoAnn C. Knowlton 12/28

Donna Gambaiani 12/30

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

Gary and Janice Dana 12/23

Lawrence E. and Doris E. Hibbs 12/26

Mark and Ann Kabele 12/29

Carl C. (Kip) and Judy K. Hauser 12/31

Larry and Donna M. Stewart 12/31

## 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-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 the letters Pp, Ii, and Nn. 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 Wednesday, November 1<sup>st</sup>. 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!

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 substitute, Brittany King, parent volunteers, Foster Grandma 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 keeps our preschool so sparkling clean that even visitors comment on how amazing our preschool looks! Toni Hicks is quick to answer our phone when we are tied up with our little ones and Rhonda Schmidtke keeps track of all of our financial transactions. Our preschool is also greatly impacted by the 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 2023 Schedule...**

<b>Sundays:</b>	<b>9:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Worship in Sanctuary</b>
		<b>Communion is the 1st &amp; 3rd Sunday of the month</b>
12/2/2023	10 a.m. to 4 p.m.	Deacons: Christmas Decorating
<b>12/3/2023</b>		<b><u>1st Sunday of Advent</u></b>
	<b>9:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Worship &amp; Communion</b>
		<b>Preschool Sings</b>
		<i>Sunday Morning Schedule</i>
	<b>During Sunday School</b>	<b>Christmas Program Rehearsal</b>
	<b>11:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Kids 25¢ Store</b>
		<b>Pick up Advent Kits</b>
12/4/2023	6:00 p.m.	Cub Scouts
12/5/2023	5:30 p.m.	SM Meeting
12/6/2023	9:00 a.m.	Do Day Quilters
	5:00 p.m.	<b><i>Wednesday Night Schedule</i></b>
12/7/2023	8:00 a.m.	Foster Grandparents
12/8/2023	5:00 p.m.	Girl Scouts
<b>12/10/2023</b>		<b><u>2nd Sunday of Advent</u></b>
	<b>9:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Christmas Program Service</b>
		<i>Sunday Morning Schedule</i>
	<b>2:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Kids Recital with Vicki Hoffman</b>
12/11/2023	6:00 p.m.	Cub Scouts
12/12/2023	11:00 a.m.	Compassion Fund Meeting
12/13/2023	5:00 p.m.	<b><i>Wednesday Night Schedule</i></b>
12/15/2023	5:00 p.m.	Girl Scouts
<b>12/17/2023</b>		<b><u>3rd Sunday of Advent</u></b>
	<b>9:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Music Sunday Service &amp; Communion</b>
		<i>Sunday Morning Schedule</i>
12/18/2023	6:00 p.m.	Cub Scouts
<b>12/20/2023</b>	<b>9:00 a.m.</b>	<b><i>Newsletter Deadline</i></b>
	9:00 a.m.	Do Day Quilters
	5:00 p.m.	<b><i>Wednesday Night Schedule</i></b>
<b>12/21/2023</b>	<b>5:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Blue Christmas Service</b>
12/22/2023	5:00 p.m.	Girl Scouts
<b>12/24/2023</b>		<b>4th Sunday of Advent/Christmas Eve</b>
	<b>9:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Worship</b>
		<i>Sunday Morning Schedule</i>
	<b>4:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Worship &amp; Communion</b>
	<b>6:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Worship &amp; Communion</b>
<b>12/25/2023</b>	<b>Christmas Day</b>	<b>Office Closed</b>
12/26/2023		<b>Office Closed</b>
12/27/2023	9:00 a.m.	Do Day Quilters
	5:00 p.m.	<b><i>Wednesday Night Schedule</i></b>
<b>12/31/2023</b>	<b>9:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Worship</b>
		<i>Sunday Morning Schedule</i>

**Sunday Morning Schedule**

<b>9:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Service</b>
<b>10:05 a.m.</b>	<b>Youth Hour</b>
<b>10:05 a.m.</b>	<b>Spark Sunday School</b>

**Wednesday Night Schedule**

<b>3:30 p.m.</b>	<b>After School Program</b>
<b>5:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Supper</b>
<b>5:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Kids Choir</b>
<b>6:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Confirmation</b>
<b>6:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Tone Chime Choir</b>
<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Trinity Choir</b>
<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Dartball</b>

<b><i>Board Meetings:</i></b>		
Family Board:	11/29/2023	5:30 p.m.
Deacons:	12/2/2023	10:10 a.m.
Building & Grounds:	12/6/2023	6:00 p.m.
Finance Board:	12/12/2023	5:00 p.m.

**Dartball**  
 Contact Dennis Sande at  
 319-389-7998

# December Birthdays!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26 Beverly Selvig's birthday	27 Steven Barr's birthday Lydia Johnson's birthday	28 Sandra Marth's birthday	29 Dick Lacour's birthday	30	1 Dennis Niezwaag's birthday Tony Lessin's birthday	2 Judy Hughes' birthday
3 Julie Begemann's birthday Bette Gullickson's birthday	4 Eugene Heitz's birthday	5 Jiles Lantz's birthday	6 Gina McClintock's birthday	7	8 Sierra Hinz's birthday	9 Monte Waldorf's birthday Judith Kelly's birthday
10	11 Connie Swart's birthday Kimberly Watkins' birthday Amanda Keyes' birthday Lorie Hoelt's birthday Judy Hauser's birthday	12 Tara Dean's birthday	13 Carson Holm's birthday Donald Tieskotter's birthday	14 Carol Tyler's birthday	15 Thomas Litterer's birthday	16 Austin Lacour's birthday Jason Walker's birthday
17 Beverly Friend's birthday	18 David Boehlmer's birthday	19 Jill Connell's birthday Paul Van Ausdall's birthday	20 Rlys Johnson's birthday	21 Nathan Korbel's birthday Heyden Heyer's birthday	22 Mary Zilm's birthday	23 Lynn Hoelt's birthday
24 Christmas Eve Mariane Huffman's birthday Natalie Keyes' birthday	25 Christmas Day	26 Kynsie Eckhoff's birthday	27 Danielle Reetz's birthday	28 JoAnn Knowlton's birthday	29 Susan Leeper's birthday Hazel Hansen's birthday	30 Donna Gambaiani's birthday
31 Adam Ferch's birthday	1 Barbara Tommingo's birthday	2 Bruce Howden's birthday Patrick Lumley's birthday	3 Elizabeth Gassman's birthday Teresa Knecht's birthday Wallace Schilling's birthday	4 Laura Marth's birthday	5 Ledger Hicks' birthday Ryan Hallett's birthday Richard Olesen's birthday	6