

THE MESSENGER

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, STERLING, IL
703 Third Avenue, Sterling, IL 61081 • 815.625.2634 • office@stjohnsonthird.org • StJohnsSterling.org • 

PASTOR'S POINTS

God's love is the best gift of all



With December having arrived, it seems as though everything is moving full steam ahead toward

Christmas and the new year. From as far back as I can remember, this time of the year has always felt so rushed and hurried. In fact, it's often made me wonder if folks really do have the opportunity to pause and reflect on the great gifts this season has to offer.

As a child, pause for me was when the Toys-R-Us holiday catalog came out. I would spend hours on a late Saturday afternoon flipping page after page, thinking of the various gift possibilities that the Jolly Old Elf might drop off at the house on Christmas Eve. Sure enough, in my dazed

wonder of toy land, either my mother or grandmother would remind me that the best gifts always came in small packages.

As I've grown, I've found myself reflecting more earnestly about how true that statement was. Many of the best gifts I've ever received in life have been the ones that arrived in simple fashion. No bows or ribbon or boxes or bags, as the Grinch so aptly pointed out in the writing of Dr. Seuss.

Being able to know the love of family and friends is ultimately one of the best gifts any of us can know in this life. It's a gift we cannot monetize or try to decorate, though I'm sure some have tried. How truly wonderful it is that the love of God arrives in such a simple way, too.

God's love for the world doesn't come in a nice and neat package, but rather the cries of a newly born child in the night. It is by the birth of our Lord Jesus that we find the pause we need and see that the greatest gift of all is small and delicate, both full of love



LUNCH/DINNER WITH THE PASTOR

If you have not done so yet, I strongly encourage you to call and pick a Thursday you'd like for meal and conversation. In a really neat way, this time is also becoming a bit of a spiritual discipline.

I hope that if you have not yet come out, that you please do call and set up a time. And if you already have, I'd love to eat and chat with you again. Until then, I'll be keeping you in prayer.

In peace, Pastor Jacob

and needing care and compassion, as well.

Amid the hustle and rush of this season, may we know the peace this gift of God brings, that all of our cares and concerns may melt away to the love our God has freely given to this world.

Blessings to you in Christ,

Rev. Jacob M. Lawlik

DECEMBER 2021

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Youth & Family Ministries news

SUNDAY SCHOOL & YOUTH GROUPS

For the safety of our families, all students and teachers are required to wear masks for all indoor activities and events.

Preschool through second grade and third through sixth grade Sunday school classes will meet from 10:45am (or after 9:30am worship) until 11:30am. The third Sunday of each month, these students will meet in the sanctuary for music time with Julie McCord.

This month we lead the children's Christmas worship on December 5th. Even if you missed rehearsals, please come; we have space for all! Due to the Christmas programs in December, junior and senior high youth groups will not meet after worship.

No Sunday School/Faith Formation December 26th or January 2nd for Christmas break.

ST JOHN'S CHILDREN & YOUTH CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

Join us December 5th during 9:30am worship. All St. John's Sunday School children and youth will be sharing the Christmas story in word and song. Students: Please arrive at 8:45am that day to get ready.

DECEMBER CHILDREN'S OFFERING

This month we continue to support Revs. Cynthia and Mark Rich, ELCA Missionaries to Tanzania. This is the last month of support for them. Thank you to our Sunday school and all of our St. John's families who have faithfully supported Mark and Cynthia for their work in Global Mission.

TRI-CHURCH CONFIRMATION

Confirmation for seventh- and eighth-grade students

meets from 7 to 8:15pm Wednesdays. **Beginning December 1st we will meet at Immanuel Lutheran in Rock Falls.** This year we are learning about Luther's Small Catechism, Luther and the Reformation, and other faith topics. The class is also writing their own version of the Lord's Prayer, which will be used during an upcoming worship service.

- December 15th: Mid-year review and Christmas fun
- December 22nd & 29th: No class; Christmas break

INTERESTED IN ACOLYTING OR ASSISTING IN WORSHIP?

If you have not been contacted but would like to be trained on acolyting, please contact the church office. Maybe your whole family would like to assist at worship (acolyting, ushering, helping with communion, reading the lessons, helping with altar guild etc.) If you want to give it a try, speak with Pastor Jacob or call the office. Thanks be to God for all worship assistants who help us to worship God.

UPDATES FOR VOLUNTEERS

LAST MONTH: Sunday School teachers, VBS volunteers, all children and youth ministry volunteers: We continue updating our volunteer applications for anyone who works closely with children and youth. This also includes updating background checks for volunteers who have not had a background check completed within the past three years. Our goal is to have all of our volunteers up to date by the end of the year. Thank you in advance for your patience as we work through this process together. Thank you to volunteers who have already turned in their updated forms! And thank you for helping us to create and maintain safe spaces for our young people and volunteers!



Thanks be to God for Jersey S., Martin F. and Brynna C. (l-r in photo above left). May God continue to guide them in faith. The people of St. John's give God thanks for our Confirmands and will continue to support them in their lives of faith. St. Paul celebrated Jackson M., Izzy B. and Paige R. on October 17th.



Last month our Confirmation class served in the community, packing Buddy Bags, free weekend food that goes home from school with children and youth in need.



Thank you to all who helped with Trunk or Treat on Halloween! We had a great turnout!



2022 YOUTH GATHERING NEWS

Current 8th through 12th grade students: We have officially registered for the ELCA Youth Gathering, July 24-28, 2022 in Minneapolis. **If you would still like to go, standard registration continues through January 21st.**

Standard registration deposit is \$140, due at the time of registering. Students who have already registered: Please make sure you pay the \$100 deposit (checks payable to St. John's Lutheran Church.) A minimum of \$50 is due now for the deposit. If you have received a Youth Gathering scholarship, the deposit is waived.

Based on the early registration rate, we anticipate the gathering will cost around \$1,000 per participant. We will continue to fundraise to offset the cost of this trip. Scholarships applications through the ELCA will remain open until funding runs out. Ask Gerad about the scholarships.

Our next "Getting Ready" meeting is Sunday, January 9th



Youth planning to attend the 2022 ELCA Gathering

(time and location TBD).

Sign up for the Gathering e-newsletter, G-News, and get the latest updates at elca.org/gathering, facebook.com/youthgathering, instagram.com/elcagathering and twitter.com/elcagathering.

YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTEERS NEEDED; APPS OPEN NOW

If you are a senior in high school this year, or older, and will be at least 19 years old by July 22, 2022, applications for servant

companions opened November 22nd. Please contact Gerad if you are interested in sharing a week of your time to help at the Youth Gathering. Your travel, room and board expenses will be covered. This is a great opportunity to serve, and to learn and grow in your faith. Our young adults who have volunteered for the gathering in the past have had life-giving experiences. For full details and to apply go to: elca.org/YouthGathering/Attend/Volunteer.

DEC. BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

1

- Julienne Draper*
- Olivia Stanley
- Shari & Tom Baker

2

- Michelle McCormick
- Bradley & Sonia Davis

3

- Alexis Gomer
- Jeremiah Kramer
- Mark Smith

4

- Aleena Kester
- Katherine Reed
- Alec Stewart

5

- Pat Henson
- Brantley Judd
- Preston Kibodeaux
- Betty Steinke*

7

- Willa Lehman
- Shawn Wolfe

8

- Kellen O'Connell

9

- Patricia Douglas
- Terence Hicks
- Josh Stanley

10

- Ava Lehman

11

- Bethany Schmitt

12

- Debbie Jamieson

13

- Laura Barthel
- Jerry Winger
- Jerry & Jackie McCormick

15

- Aydan Goff
- Donna Siebert
- Shawn Stallion

17

- Christopher Sotelo

18

- Larry Cooper
- Marci Fisher
- Dorothy Frey*
- Barbara Smith
- Martin Wade

19

- Shawna Kester
- Logan White
- Jerry & Mary Lou Baker*

20

- Tom & Nancy Breed

21

- Nancy Rasmussen
- Beverly Williamson*

22

- Holly Grim
- Kathleen Schmidt
- Alayna Wolfe

23

- Newell Cook
- Chance Perales

26

- Kirby Shipma
- John & Gayle Kellogg

27

- Veronica Schmitt

28

- Jackie McCormick
- Steve & Amy Grevengood

29

- Neil Anderson
- Brice Taylor
- Jim & Marilyn Henry

30

- Gay Elfline

31

- John & Myra Oelrichs



CHRISTMAS EVE MUSICIANS WANTED!

Please share your music with us!

Contact Dawn Zeigler by December 5th at dawn@stjohnsonthird.org or (815) 275-3775

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Pastor Jacob reported that more than 200 children attended Trunk or Treat, and the All Saints Day breakfast went well. November 14th was Pledge Sunday and things are looking promising.

Christmas Eve services will be at 3pm and 6pm at the church. No barn service this year.

Total General Account is at \$15,565.23 as of October 31st. No transfers were made in October.

St. John's will host a hot chocolate table in downtown Sterling for Sights and Sounds on December 3rd.

No changes to the current COVID-19 guidelines.

Two nominees are needed for Church Council. If interested, contact a council member or the church office.

Stewardship Committee needs to be revitalized. Council discussed lowering the amount of the budget from \$700 to \$500 as the full amount has not been used in a few years.

The Parish Nurse Committee is in need of new leadership. Contact a council member of Pastor Jacob if interested.

Missionaries Holderrich have fulfilled their time. The council voted to continue missionary sponsorship with new ELCA missionaries Daudi (David) and Kellen Msseemmaa, regional representatives in East Africa.

An increase in staff salaries was brought to the table. Treasurer Teri Holldorf will gather percent increases to present to the council for consideration.

*Indicates 80-plus-year birthdays and 50-plus-year anniversaries.

SAYING THANKS

Thank you to everyone who donated to Another Child Foundation. St. John's collected 13 pairs of shoes and 13 containers of disinfectant wipes. *Denise Carl*

Thanks to all that came and supported our All Saints Breakfast, which benefits the Self Help ladies. It was greatly appreciated. Peace and Blessings, *Adam's Rib*

On behalf of First Presbyterian Church and the Buddy Bag program, we would like to express our gratitude for your generous donation. This program is able to continue to help feed the school children of our community because of the generous hearts of folks like you. We have been able to provide weekend food bags to our children in need even through this difficult time of the pandemic. We know God is providing the means for us all to continue this cause. Thank you! Peace, health and love, *FPC and Buddy Bags*

Many thanks to our church family for the love and care that we have received after hearing word Michelle's mother (Samantha) had died unexpectedly this past October. Your prayers have meant so much to each of us. *The Gawlik Family*

NURSE NOTES

Suicide threat should be taken seriously

If you or someone you know is thinking, talking, posting on social media sites or texting about suicide, get help right away. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255) is available 24/7.

There are warning signs that a person is preparing for a suicide attempt or is at greater risk of suicide:

- Mood — Displays feelings of serious depression, moodiness or sadness. Shows little energy.
- Communication — Expresses feelings of being worthless or helpless. Talks about being a burden on loved ones. Researches, reads or writes about suicide or death. Withdraws from family and friends.
- Behavior — Engages in high-risk behaviors such as reckless driving or physical fights. Increases use of alcohol and illegal drugs.
- Plans — Plans and obtains the means to kill oneself. Buys a gun or stocks up on pills. Gives away possessions or sets affairs in order.

From the Mayo Clinic Health Letter. Submitted by Nancy Rasmussen, Parish Nurse.

Wanted: Red poinsettias for Christmas

Decorate St. John's Chancel for Christmas. You can order on the group order or purchase your own. If you purchase your own, please bring to the church **no earlier than December 22nd** and place a tag with your name on it. All poinsettias should be **RED**. Plants can be picked up after the 6pm worship service on Christmas Eve. Payment should accompany the form.

Make checks payable to St. John's Lutheran Church. Deadline to turn in form & payment is December 12th.



I/we want to order the following plant(s):

----- (#) Poinsettias at \$12 per plant.

----- Will purchase own and bring to church on December 22nd.

All poinsettias should be red. Please return this slip whether you purchase through the church or on your own.

BULLETIN INFORMATION

From _____
In honor of (living person(s)/occasion)

In memory of (deceased person(s))

As a gift:

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church is to continue discovering God's will for us in His kingdom through prayer, Bible study and building relationships.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Jesus is our Lord and Savior.
2. We make prayer, Bible study and dialog the center of our decision making.
3. We are willing to change as we discover God's mission for us.
4. We invite everyone. Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." ~ Matthew 28: 19a
5. We recognize and give thanks for our blessings.
6. We act for the discovery and fulfillment of God's mission.

COUNCIL AFFIRMATION STATEMENT

The Council affirms that ministry is a core tenant of our Mission and that established ministries will continue and the opportunity for expanding into additional ministries will be evaluated when presented. The Council fully understands the complex nature of ministry, but as long as God's people are willing to engage in good works, we will do everything in our power to support those ministries.

PARISH REGISTER

DEATHS

- None

WEDDINGS

- None

BAPTISMS

- None

MEMBERS RECEIVED

- None

MEMBERS REMOVED/TRANSFERRED

- None

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

- None

STAFF BIRTHDAYS

- None

WHO'S WHO AT ST. JOHN'S

PERSONNEL

- Rev. Jacob Gawlik, Senior Pastor
- Rev. Leo Patterson, On Call/Visitation Pastor
- Gerad Von Holten, Director of Youth & Family Ministries
- Rev. Mark & Rev. Cynthia Rich, Missionaries to Tanzania
- Dawn Zeigler, Minister of Music & Bell Choir Director
- Julie McCord, Praise Sunday Director
- Nina Peters, Office Manager
- Andrew Stutzke, Systems Administrator
- Kyle Morgan, Technical Director
- Mont Cessna, Facility Maintenance
- Stahr Media, Newsletter & Website
- Nancy Rasmussen, Parish Nurse
- Jan Klocke, council rep to Tri-Church

CONG. COUNCIL

- Andrew Stutzke, president*
 - Dave Geil, vice president*
 - Kandra Cook, secretary*
 - Teri Holldorf, treasurer*
 - Andrew Doughty
 - Jan Klocke
 - John Lichner
 - Chrissy Murphy
 - Shawn Wolfe
- *Exec Committee member*

CHRISTIAN ED

- Tammy Doughty
- Brian Luebke
- Chrissy Murphy

CONG. LIFE

- Denise Norman, chair
- Lois Anderson-Rowzee
- Michelle Gawlik
- Nancy Rasmussen
- Pat Redfield
- Jannet Taylor

ENDOWMENT

- Mike Doughty, chair
- Art Frey
- John Lichner
- Rhonda Stutzke
- Shawn Wolfe

FINANCE

- Teri Holldorf, chair
- Nancy Breed
- Druann Bushman
- Mike Doughty
- John Lichner

MEMORIAL

- Dave Geil, chair
- Brian Luebke
- Nancy Rasmussen
- Jannet Taylor

PERSONNEL TEAM

- Denise Norman, chair
- Lois Anderson-Rowzee
- Dave Geil

PROPERTY

- Dave Geil, chair
- Art Frey
- Tom Leesman
- Ken Smith

SOCIAL MINISTRY

- Vacant

STEWARDSHIP

- Jan Klocke, chair
- Nancy Rasmussen

WORSHIP ARTS

- Dawn Zeigler, chair
- Denise Carl
- Shawn Wolfe

WORSHIP TECH

- Anita Carl
- Dan Eads
- Charlene O'Connell

SJLC Activities ~ Dec. 2021

December Open/Close:
Teri Holldorf

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
SAVE THE DATE: THE CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING WILL BE JANUARY 23RD FOLLOWING WORSHIP.			1 6:00-Worship 7:00-Confirmation (Immanuel)	2 <i>Lunch/Dinner with Pastor Jacob</i> 7:00-Al-Anon	3 5:30-Sights & Sounds Christmas Walk (SJ serving hot chocolate)	4
5 <i>FISH collection</i> 9:30-Worship / Sunday School Christmas program <i>Acolyte: Blake L.</i> 10:45-Pastor's Bible Study 10:45-Sunday School	6	7	8 6:00-Worship 7:00-Confirmation (Immanuel)	9 <i>Lunch/Dinner with Pastor Jacob</i> 7:00-Al-Anon	10	11 9:30-Prayer Shawl Coffee Hour
12 9:30-Worship <i>Acolyte: Ryan M.</i> 10:45-Pastor's Bible Study 10:45-Sunday School	13	14	15 1:30-Parkway communion 2:30-Heritage Woods communion 3:30-Morningside communion 6:00-Worship 7:00-Confirmation (Immanuel)	16 <i>Lunch/Dinner with Pastor Jacob</i> 2:30-Regency communion 3:30-Citadel communion 4:15-Exec mtg 7:00-Al-Anon	17	18
19 Poinsettia orders due 9:30-Worship <i>Acolyte: Alicia L.</i> 10:45-Pastor's Bible Study 10:45-Sunday School	20 <i>Newsletter due</i>	21 6:00-Council mtg	22 6:00-Worship	23 <i>Lunch/Dinner with Pastor Jacob</i> 7:00-Al-Anon	24 <i>Office closed</i> 3:00-Christmas Eve Service 6:00-Christmas Eve Service <i>Acolytes: Andrew & Sarah D.</i>	25 Merry Christmas!
26 9:30-Worship <i>Acolyte: Brynna C.</i> 10:45-Pastor's Bible Study	27	28 6:30-NAMI group	29 9:00-Newsletter assembly 6:00-Worship	30 <i>Lunch/Dinner with Pastor Jacob</i> 7:00-Al-Anon	31 <i>Office closed</i>	

Bells Are Back In Swing

Please join us Tuesday nights for rehearsal! All ages 6th grade and up are welcome. Call, text, or email Dawn Zeigler by December 5 if you'd like to be a part of our Christmas Eve group. 815.275.3775 or dawn@stjohnsonthird.org



Card Shower for Betty Steinke

Please participate in a card and phone shower for Betty Steinke's birthday, December 5th! Her address is 1111 Farley Road, Sterling 61081 or phone (815) 632-0874.

Join Us To

Celebrate the Newborn King

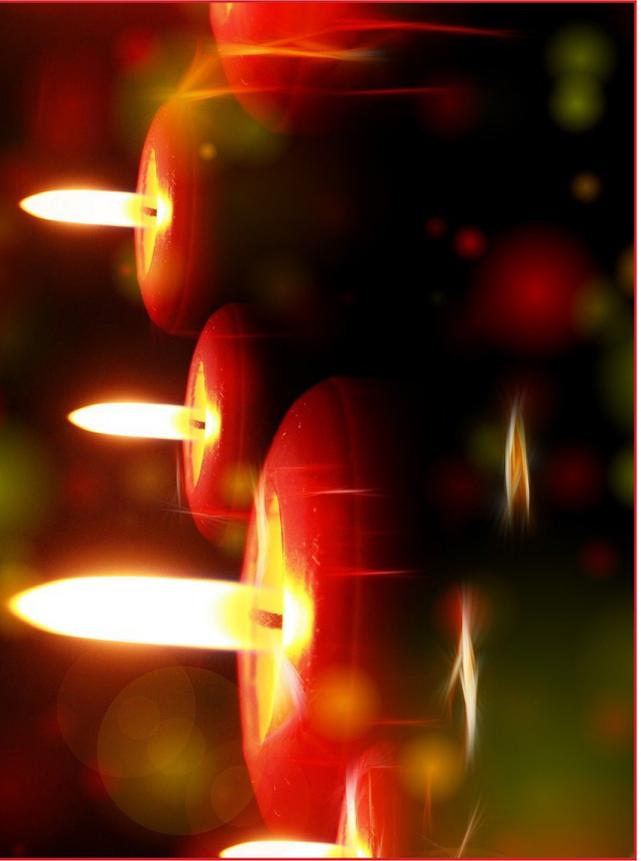
Christmas Eve Services

3pm & 6pm

Friday, December 24th

St. John's Lutheran Church
703 Third Ave., Sterling

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.



St. John's Lutheran Church
703 Third Avenue
Sterling, IL 61081

return service requested

The Messenger is a monthly publication of St. John's Lutheran Church, a church of the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Join us for worship at 9:30am Sundays and 6:00pm Wednesdays.

If you would prefer to receive The Messenger via email, contact the church office at office@stjohnsonsthrd.org.

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