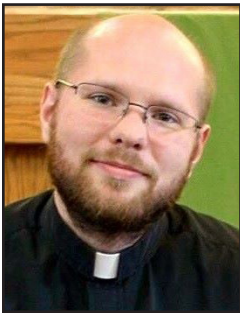


THE MESSENGER

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, STERLING, IL
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PASTOR'S POINTS

Epiphany people



"When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw

the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." (Matthew 2:10-11, NRSV)

Epiphany is a special time of year and one that can often be forgotten in the post-Christmas and pre-Lent scramble. For many, the epiphany that may come to mind is the story of the Wise Men or Magi who come bringing gifts for the Christ child. Yet this story so often gets folded into the larger Christmas story, and we miss that it is so much more than just a story of gift giving.

The word epiphany it turns out is

a verb that means to appear or to reveal. More than just a time of gift giving, Epiphany is all about God being revealed among the whole of humanity. During Epiphanytide, the time between Christmas and Ash Wednesday, the faithful recall the stories of how Christ has been revealed to all peoples. It also serves as a time for the faithful to actively participate in the sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ.

It can be very easy to fall into passivity as Christians. To go about assuming that we have nothing to worry about since Jesus has already done everything for us. As if our baptism serves merely as a get out of hell free card we are so eager to use at the end of our game of life (or is that monopoly?)

Truth be told, as Christians we are called to be Epiphany people. The ones who are eager to catch a glimpse of Christ revealed among us, but more than just to watch for it—rather to actively search for and



share the experience with those we meet.

Throughout the Epiphanytide we'll encounter various stories of how encountering Christ changes people and how in those experiences the love of God abounds. By God's grace may our own hearts be open to the Gospel, that in hearing again the story of faith we too might be eager to watch for Christ revealed among us and share this good news as Epiphany people.

Christ is with you,

Rev. Jacob M. Lawler

JANUARY 2024

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Youth & Family Ministries news



WONDERFUL TIMES AT THE LOMC MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT

This year's Fall Retreat had 52 youth participants from 8 different congregations throughout Northern Illinois. St. John's youth formed a group with youth from Immanuel and Bethel. Together we had 8 youth attend the event, three of whom were attending from St. John's.

NOISY OFFERINGS

January's noisy offerings will go to Granny Rose Animal Shelter in Dixon. During winter months, the greatest number of pets are found abandoned and in need of support and a loving hope. Monies collected will help ensure God's creatures are not left out in the cold.

SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

- 1/7: Lesson 5-Jesus Baptism
- 1/14: Music & Popcorn
- 1/21: Activity-College Care Kits
- 1/28: Lesson 6-The Disciples



SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Sunday School Students were eager to share the Christmas story during the Sunday School Christmas Program on December 17.



LSSI HOLIDAY HOPE CHEST

Sunday School youth helped purchase Christmas gifts for children that were sponsored by the LSSI Holiday Hope Chest.



Thanks be to God for Buddy Bags!

YOUTH SERVICE NIGHT

Youth from St. John's, St. Paul and Immanuel gathered at Wesley United Methodist Church for a Youth Service Night on November 29 to help assemble Buddy Bags.

SAYING THANKS

St. John's Lutheran Church,
We want you to know how much we appreciate your generous donation towards our Thanksgiving assistance program. It's amazing to have people like you in our community! You are truly appreciated!

We want to wish you a Happy and Blessed Holiday Season!

-Sterling Township

Many thanks to our Church Family for their Christmas cards, well wishes, and goodies during this past Christmas season. They are all greatly appreciated. Best wishes to each of you in this new year and may you have had a very merry Christmas.

With love,

Pastor Jacob, Michelle, and the kiddos

NURSE NOTES

Preparing legal documents

Discussing issues surrounding serious illness and death is never easy. But preparing advance directives will ensure your loved one's wishes are understood and carried out.

An advance directive is a document that provides legal instructions about preferences for medical care if someone is not able to make decisions independently. Advance directives guide choices for health care providers and caregivers if a person is terminally ill, seriously injured, in a coma, in the late stage of dementia or near the end of life.

Types of advance directives include:

- **Power of attorney (POA)** — This document gives one or more people, known as agents or proxies, the power to act on your loved one's behalf. Specifically, a medical or health power of attorney gives a chosen person the authority to make medical decisions for your loved one. This is critical for situations when your loved one cannot speak for themselves.
- **Living will** — This document spells out medical treatments your loved ones would and would not want in treatment or to be used to be kept alive. It also expresses preferences for other medical

decisions, such as nutrition, pain management or organ donation.

- **Do not resuscitate (DNR) order** — This advance directive instructs health care providers about your loved one's preferences on the use of life support measures such as resuscitation and intubation.

When drafting these documents, speak to your loved one's health care team about values and preferences and how those things might impact medical decisions in light of a health condition and its expected progression.

Advance directives need to be in writing. Each state has different forms and requirements for creating legal documents. Depending on where you live, a form may need to be signed by a witness or notarized. You can ask a lawyer to help you with the process, but it's generally not required.

Once directives are finished, be sure to keep the originals in a safe but easily accessible place. Give copies to your loved one's health care team and all health care agents.

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

MITTEN TREE UPDATE:

WITH THE CONGREGATION'S GENEROUS SUPPORT, THE SOCIAL MINISTRY TEAM DELIVERED 16 SCARVES, 34 HATS, AND 71 PAIRS OF GLOVES TO THE UNIT #5 DISTRICT OFFICE THE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS. THESE ITEMS WILL BE SHARED AMONG THE BUILDINGS IN STERLING AND DISTRIBUTED BY THE SCHOOL NURSES TO CHILDREN WHO DO NOT HAVE ADEQUATE WINTER CLOTHING. THE FOLKS IN THE DISTRICT OFFICE WERE VERY APPRECIATIVE OF OUR EFFORTS. GREAT JOB, ST. JOHN'S!



Food Pantry Sunday!

The Congregation Council has once again designated the first Sunday of each month as Food Pantry Sunday. A receptacle will be available for donations. We stopped focusing on this during the pandemic and have not resurrected the practice of intentionally making donations. Considering the increasing need in our

community we would like to increase our community involvement once again. All non-perishable food items are acceptable and welcome.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

1

- Rick & Patricia Douglas
- George & Linda Guerrero*

2

- Abigail Johnson

3

- Ryan McCord
- Jannet Taylor*

4

- Derek Bushman
- Jake Wolber

5

- Tammy Stewart

6

- Jeanne Kuba*

9

- Paige Holland
- Jason McCord
- Neil & Linda Morehead*

10

- Becky Puckett

11

- Brian Lehman
- Shawn & Karen Wolfe

12

- Gary & Jane Dettman
- Glenn Keime*
- Mark Megli
- Andrew Stutzke
- Kyle Winebrenner

14

- Robert Richardson
- Matt Stanley
- Aaron White

15

- Cara Goff
- Corey Olson
- Noah Tupper

16

- Brynna Carl
- Evan Karrow
- Zachary Schmitt

19

- Alec Gallegos
- Michael Miller

20

- Sarah Doughty
- Brianna Razo

21

- Ronald & Julie McCord

22

- Janet Carl*
- Michael Jackley

23

- Newell & Kandra Cook
- Rebecca Verhulst

24

- John Oelrichs

25

- Richard Caudillo
- John & Paige Holland

26

- Julie LeFevre

27

- Fisher Potts

28

- Kathleen McFalls

29

- Dennis & Patrice Redfield*

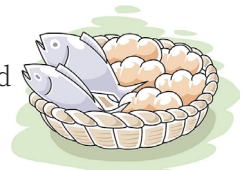
31

- Kathleen Sciacero
- Jackson Strehlow

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

VOLUNTEER & DONATE

- The Loaves & Fishes Breakfast Program at First United Methodist Church, Sterling, is in need of donations and volunteers. Checks can be made out to Loaves & Fishes and mailed to First United Methodist Church, 501 Broadway Ave., Sterling, IL 61081. Sign up to serve meals by calling Lois Heerdt at (815) 626-4773 or Paul Gould at (815) 499-2041.
- The PADS shelter has transitioned to year-round access and volunteers are needed. Contact Administrative Director Myles Newberry at (815) 626-2210 or mylesnewberry.PADS@gmail.com.



COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

PASTOR'S REPORT

- Deaths:
 - Ralph Oelrichs died Wednesday November 22, 2023
 - Services were held at Schilling Funeral Home Thursday, November 30, 2023
 - Geraldine Byar died on Sunday, December 3, 2023
 - Services were held at McDonald Funeral Home - Sterling Saturday, December 9, 2023
- November 22 Wednesday Night Worship included a Thanksgiving Eve Gathering for those who desired time for prayer and Thanksgiving amid family gatherings.
- November 26 Sunday School youth helped purchase Christmas gifts for children that were sponsored by the LSSI Holiday Hope Chest.
 - Many thanks to those who helped support the LSSI Holiday Hope Chest this year.
 - Thanks also to the youth and families who helped purchase the gifts.
- November 29 was a Youth Service Night. Youth from St. John's, St. Paul and Immanuel gathered once again at Wesley United Methodist Church for a Youth Service Night on November 29 to help assemble Buddy Bags.
- On December 14 St. John's was host for the LSSI annual Holiday Open House.
 - This informative event included refreshments, speakers, and fellowship for those who participate in a variety of LSSI programs.
 - Thanks to the hard work of LSSI and their partnership with NAMI they had over 60 persons participate in this year's event.
 - Thank you to members of St.

- John's who were present to support the event.
- December 17 was the Sunday School Christmas Program.
 - Many thanks to the teachers, adult helpers, and students for their work preparing for this year's program.
- Back in November, Moving Beyond the Page (the St. John's book discussion group) started a discussion on *Open Secrets: A Memoir of Faith and Discovery* by Richard Lischer.
 - The group continued its lively discussion in December and discussed other book possibilities for the new year.
- Final details for the 2023 Christmas Eve Barn Service are coming together.
 - Thank you to those helping with setup at Copper Bit the afternoon of December 23.
- Looking ahead:
 1. January 11-Special Council meeting with Pr. Josh Ebener
 2. January 14 St. John's is hosting the combined confirmation class
 3. January 21-Congregational visit and presentation with Pr. Josh Ebener
 4. February 11-Transfiguration of our Lord
 5. February 14-Ash Wednesday
 6. March 24-Palm Sunday
 7. March 28-Maundy Thursday
 8. March 29-Good Friday
 9. March 31-Easter Sunday

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

- Wording change for November-withdraw from ELCA instead of transfer. A motion was made to approve the November Council Meeting Secretary Report. Motion approved.

FINANCE REPORT

- A motion was made to approve the Finance Report for November. Motion approved.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

SOCIAL MINISTRY:

- A motion was made to receive \$200 from the Thrivent Choice Dollars for Birthday Buddy Program. Motion approved.

OLD BUSINESS

- Survey is going to be tabled until we meet with Pastor Ebener.
- Insurance Policy: Staying with Church Mutual for another year.
- Appointment 2 year council term Marci Fisher. Motion was made and approved.

NEW BUSINESS

- Approval \$7500.00 November Transfer. A motion to approve made and approved.
- Special meeting- Pastor Ebener Jan. 11th.
- Open/Close Schedule was sent around for council members to sign up
- Special Offering:
 - January- Buddy Bags
 - February- Rock River Hospice
 - March- LOMCMotion was made and approved.
- Special Offering Synod- Motion was made to send \$500 to the Synod for a special offering from Thrivent. Motion approved.
- Election of officers-
 - President- Dave Geil nominated Paul Wolfe for president. Second was made by Denise Norman.
 - Vice President- Denise Norman nominated Dave Geil. Dave Geil was elected by ballot.
 - Secretary- Dave Geil nominated Denise Norman. Second by Lois Rowzee.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

St. John's is a Lutheran family striving to build relationships that will serve our community and God's World

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

- Geraldine Byar, 12/3

WEDDINGS

- None

BAPTISMS

- None

MEMBERS RECEIVED

- None

MEMBERS REMOVED/TRANSFERRED

- None

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

- None

STAFF BIRTHDAYS

- Andrew Stutzke, 1/12

WHO'S WHO AT ST. JOHN'S

PERSONNEL

- Rev. Jacob Gawlik, Senior Pastor
- Rev. Leo Patterson, On Call/Visitation Pastor
- Daudi & Kellen Msseemmaa, Missionaries to East Africa
- Dawn Zeigler, Minister of Music & Bell Choir 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

- Paul Wolfe, president*
- Dave Geil, vice president*
- Denise Norman, secretary*
- Larry Kradle
- Marci Fisher
- Rhonda Stutzke
- Karen Wolfe
- Chrissy Murphy
- Lois Rowzee

*Exec Committee member

CHRISTIAN ED

- Michelle Gawlik
- Chrissy Murphy
- Jan Klocke
- Denise Carl
- Mont Cessna

STEWARDSHIP

Vacant

PERSONNEL

- Denise Norman, chair
- Lois Anderson-Rowzee
- Rev. Jacob Gawlik
- Dave Geil

FINANCE

- Nancy Breed
- Druann Bushman
- Mike Doughty
- John Lichner
- Dave Geil

FUNERAL

- Dave Geil, chair
- Linda Geil, chair
- Druann Bushman, chair

MEMORIAL

- Dave Geil, chair
- Rev. Jacob Gawlik
- Brian Luebke
- Nancy Rasmussen
- Jannet Taylor

PROPERTY

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

WORSHIP ARTS

- Dawn Zeigler, chair
- Denise Carl
- Karen Wolfe
- Shawn Wolfe

SOCIAL MINISTRY

- Paul Wolfe
- Shari Baker
- Marsha Keime
- Larry Kradle
- Denise Norman
- Lois Rowzee
- Amy Smith
- Gary Smith
- Sharon Zinanni

WORSHIP TECH

- Anita Carl
- Dan Eads
- Charlene O'Connell

CONG. LIFE

- Denise Norman, chair
- Lois Anderson-Rowzee
- Michelle Gawlik
- Nancy Rasmussen
- Pat Redfield
- Shari Baker

SJLC Activities ~ Jan. '24

January Open/Close:
Shawn Wolfe

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 Church Office Closed	2	3 6:00-Worship	4 6:30-Moving Beyond the Page 7:00-Al-Anon	5	6
7 <i>FISH collection</i> 9:30-Worship <i>Acolyte: Brynna C.</i> <i>Asst.: Mike Doughty</i>	8 6:00-Men's Group 6:00-Finance Committee mtg	9 3:00-Healthy Families Meeting	10 6:00-Worship	11 4:15-Exec mtg 7:00-Al-Anon	12	13 10:00-Social Ministry Meeting
14 9:30-Worship <i>Acolyte: Martin F.</i> <i>Asst.: Teri Holdorf</i>	15	16 6:00-Council mtg	17 1:30-Parkway communion 2:30-Heritage Woods communion 3:30-Morningside communion 6:00-Worship	18 2:30-Allure of Sterling communion 3:30-Citadel communion 6:30-Moving Beyond the Page 7:00-Al-Anon	19 <i>Newsletter items due</i>	20
21 9:30-Worship <i>Acolyte: Noah R.</i> <i>Asst.: Shawn Wolfe</i>	22	23 6:30-NAMI group	24 6:00-Worship	25 7:00-Al-Anon	26	27
28 9:30-Worship <i>Acolyte: Sarah D.</i> <i>Asst.: Denise Norman</i>	29 9:00-Newsletter Assembly	30	31 6:00-Worship			

MOVING BEYOND THE PAGE

Join us for faith, fellowship, and book study on January 4 & 18 at 6:30 pm in the church library. We'll be discussing *God Words Broken* theology for broken people. Copies will be available upon request. Please speak with Pastor Jacob.



January Special Offerings

The special offerings for the month of January have been once again designated by the Congregation Council to be donated to the Sterling Buddy Bag Program. The need for this community food program becomes more pronounced with each passing month. Sterling Buddy Bags is a program that provides food for kids to take home on Friday afternoons. The food is simple, nutritious and something children can prepare without too much effort. The program is supported by community churches, public schools, and the Illinois Coalition for Community Services (ICCS). Pastor Jacob has shared many stories of his contact with this groups including a youth who shares his buddy bag on the weekend with several of his cousins. Most of us have plenty of food on our tables but that is not the case for many families in our community. Please consider a generous donation to support this ministry and the growing need of families in our community.

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@stjohnsonthird.org.

St. John's Lutheran Church
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