

Matthew 2:1-12 - In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah,
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.' "

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. 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. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

January really is a whirlwind in the church year. We barely finish singing Christmas hymns before we're plunged into the Baptism of Our Lord and then Epiphany. But Epiphany is not just a date on the calendar—it's a revelation, a moment when the curtain is pulled back, and God shows us something we could never discover on our own.

The Magi (Three Wise Men) arrive from the East—outsiders, Gentiles, people with no claim on the promises given to Israel. They follow a star, not a scroll. They come with questions, not answers. And yet they are the first to kneel before Jesus and call him king. That alone should stop us in our tracks. Before the shepherds understand, before the disciples are called, before Jesus preaches a single sermon, the nations come to him.

This is Matthew's way of saying: "Pay attention. God is doing something bigger than you imagined."

And then there is Herod—frightened, threatened, clinging to power. The contrast is striking. The Magi travel with joy and expectation; Herod trembles with fear. The Magi open their treasures; Herod closes his heart. The Magi bow in worship; Herod plots violence. Epiphany reveals two things at once: the light of Christ and the shadows that resist it.

But the moment that matters most is when the Magi finally arrive. Matthew says they were "overwhelmed" with joy. Not polite happiness. Not mild interest. Overwhelmed. They kneel before a child who cannot yet speak, and they recognize in him the presence of God.

We use the word "epiphany" to describe an aha moment—a sudden clarity, a realization that changes everything. For the Magi, the aha moment was that God had come in flesh, not for a select few, but for the whole world. For us, Epiphany is the invitation to rediscover that truth again.

Because let's be honest—we do yawn at it sometimes. We've heard the story so often that the shock wears off. God became human. God walked among us. God chose vulnerability, poverty, and humility. God came not to the powerful, but to the searching. Not to the insiders, but to the outsiders. Not to the throne room, but to a small house in Bethlehem. If that doesn't shake us awake, we might need our own epiphany.

The Magi remind us that faith often begins with a question, a journey, a longing. They remind us that God draws people from every corner of the earth. And they remind us that when we finally encounter Christ—whether in Scripture, in worship, or in the face of a neighbor—the only fitting response is joy, generosity, and worship.

Epiphany is God's way of saying: "Look again. I am here. I am for you. I am for the whole world." Amen.



Thank you

SO MUCH!

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for the wonderful treats and holiday gifts you shared with my family and me. Karen and I are touched by your thoughtfulness; your love was truly felt during this special season. Wishing you every blessing as we head into the New Year together.

In Christ, Pastor Tom



Parish Planning Council Members:

Executive Director	Nancy Passehl	(608) 219-1936
Assistant Exec Director	Marv Hupp	(608) 370-2657
Secretary	Audrey Luetscher	(608) 332-6665
Treasurer	John Brennan	(608) 469-8786
Evangelism Board	Gwen Ringelstetter	(608) 643-6922
Fellowship Board	Cathy McAlexander	(402) 689-5196
Lay Ministry Board	Josie Fentress	(608) 963-8662
Member-at-Large	Mary Weeks	(608) 370-4999
Parish Education Board	James Newman	(608) 512-7623
Properties Board	John Ballweg	(608) 220-3894
PR and Social Concerns	Melani Wheeler	(608) 963-9540
Stewardship Board	Anne Klinkner	(608) 393-6453
Women of ELCA	Eunice Yanke	(608) 643-8289
Youth Board	Charlie Kruchten	(608) 604-5875
Youth Member-at-Large	Kendra Frey	(608) 370-3915

The Staff:

Please call the church office first when possible **(608) 643-2439**

Pastor: Tom Kreis tom@stjohnssaukprairie.org

Pastor: Sally Williams sally@stjohnssaukprairie.org

608-643-7810 **(home)**

Director of Music: Ruellene Seymour

ruellene@stjohnssaukprairie.org

Youth Director: Penny Johnson penny@stjohnssaukprairie.org

Custodian: John Hines john@stjohnssaukprairie.org

Office Staff: Angie Updike office@stjohnssaukprairie.org

Sunday School Superintendent: Dale Clason
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St. John's Lutheran Church: (608) 643-2439

www.stjohnssaukprairie.org

Like us on Facebook at St Johns Lutheran Sauk Prairie

*Mission Statement: Christ, our strength and refuge,
calling us to serve*

St. John's Lutheran Church
100 Oak Street
Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin 53578



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Christ,
our strength
and refuge,
calling us
to serve



Sauk Prairie Area Food Pantry

Food, paper products and cleaning supplies may be brought to the table in the gathering area at any time. These items are distributed to many families in the Sauk Prairie community. The food pantry always needs:

- Toilet paper
- Condiments (especially ketchup and mayonnaise, jelly)
- Baking mixes (such as muffins and pancakes)
- Box meals (e.g., Hamburger Helper)
- Canned meals (e.g., spaghetti, ravioli, etc.)
- Baking supplies (white and brown sugar, flour, oil)
- Diapers – sizes 4, 5 and 6

Thank you for sharing with others.



Birthday Greetings

We hope you take a moment to send greetings to the following people who have birthdays in December. The day is in parentheses.

Marge Erlandson (4)
1425 Hemlock St
Sauk City, WI 53583



Melvin Lohr (4)
S9591 Church Rd.
Prairie du Sac, WI 53578-9717

Merilyn Marti (6)
S9604 Center St.
Prairie du Sac, WI 53578-9729

Diane Zins (9)
400 20th Street
Prairie du Sac, WI 53578

Arlene Foell (18)
7343 Tetiva Rd
Sauk City, WI 53583-9709

Carol Benson (19)
713 Madison St., Apt. 111
Sauk City, WI 53583

	Women of the Church News	
	<u>Lydia Circle</u> Combined Circles Meeting, Thursday, January 8, St. John's fellowship hall	10:00am
	<u>Martha Circle</u> Combined Circles Meeting, Thursday, January 8, St. John's fellowship hall	10:00am
	<u>Ruth Circle</u> Combined Circles Meeting, Thursday, January 8, St. John's fellowship hall	10:00am
	<u>Sarah/Mary Circle</u> Combined Circles Meeting, Thursday, January 8, St. John's fellowship hall	10:00am

We will not have our regular individual Circle meetings in January. Instead, we are looking forward to ALL CIRCLES MEETING TOGETHER on THURSDAY, JANUARY 8 2026, at 10:00 a.m. All women of St. John's and any guests are invited to this event. First of all, we will have food and coffee. We are asking everyone to bring whatever you would like to share...such as left over Christmas cookies, cheese, fruit, chips, crackers...any finger food you have on hand. Sarah/Mary Circle will be taking care of serving and clean-up. We are happy to say that Pastor Tom has consented to lead our Bible Study. After that, we will have our special Candlelight Memorial Service, honoring all members of St. John's who have passed away during 2025. Also, any members who have lost loved ones during 2025 are invited to light a candle for their loved ones, even if they were not members of St. John's. This service is always very impressive.

Our Thankoffering Service was on November 23rd was extended to December 14th. The total amount received for 2025 was \$311. This money goes to the National WELCA organization and provides funds for many very important programs.

The Christmas Cheer recommendations of \$200 each to Hope House and Special Olympics were approved by all the Circles.

Our PENNIES FOR POVERTY FUND will go to 6:8. The coins will be counted at the end of December with the total reported for February news. We are very grateful to all who contributed to this very worthy cause.

Martha Circle is visiting Special Friends during December and January.

Be sure to read the Special Prayer for Peace found in this Visitor.



Wanted: Mobile Meals Delivery Volunteers!

St. John's has committed to delivering meals the weeks of January 19-23 and January 26-30. We need two volunteers every weekday. One should plan to drive his/her car on the route, and one should plan to "run" the meals to the houses. Meals are ready for pickup at the Sauk Prairie Hospital near the employee entrance (**see the new map on the kiosk) between 11:20 and 11:30 a.m. Total delivery time is usually one hour. Routing and delivery instructions are provided when you pick up the meals. This is a very rewarding volunteer experience.

If you are available to help, please add your name and phone number to the schedule on the kiosk.



Milestone Ministry: Baptism Anniversary

All children of God who were baptized in 2025 are invited to take part in a special Baptism Anniversary celebration on Sunday, January 11 at either service. Please mark your calendars and invite your congregational sponsors to attend worship with you and your children that day. An email letter of invitation was sent in December. We look forward to celebrating with you!



With Sincere Sympathy

We offer our condolences to Janet Anderson, Sheila Anderson, Shawn Anderson, Shanalee Carden, the extended family on the death of Janet's daughter and the girls' sister, Sherry Anderson.

We also grieve with Rich and Kris Frey and their families on the death of Rich's brother Marvin.



St. John's is a proud supporter of Just Bakery of Dane County. By purchasing baked goods through Just Bakery, we are supporting the neighbor in need of hope. Look for the Just Bakery table on January 18 in the fellowship hall between services with their wonderful baked goods.

Welcome Angie Updike

We are delighted to welcome Angie Updike to our team as the new Office Coordinator. Angie will officially begin on January 5 and with a few days of overlap with Aletha and Jackie starting the end of December. Please stop by to introduce yourself and give Angie a warm welcome as she begins this important role in supporting the life and work of our church community. We will have an official installation in early 2026. Welcome, Angie!

thank you

Dear St. John's Family,

Thank you for your patience, kindness and support over the last seven months as the Office Administrator. The grace given as I took over from Linda's many years of work (both visible and behind the scenes) was appreciated. Please continue to offer this same grace to my replacement, Angie Updike, in the new year. It has been a pleasure to work with you.

~ Aletha Ballweg

SPECIAL PRAYER

We invite you to pray for peace on the 20th day of each month. On January 20th, please repeat the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, Comfort of our hearts,
I ask You to bring peace into the world of humanity, to eliminate all armed conflicts and the suffering caused by them, and to give the people of this planet abundant harmonious love for one another so that together we can prosper and be happy.

In deep gratitude, I thank you for the coming peace.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Thank You!

This Christmas season felt like it was full of extra kindness and generosity showered upon my family and me. You fill our hearts with joy! Thank you very much!

~Pastor Sally, Jeff and Molly Williams



New Member Exploration

Are you ready to make St. John's your church home? We invite all visitors and those interested in membership to join our upcoming orientation class! If you know someone looking for a new church

home, please pass this invitation along.

We have set the following dates for our new member process:

- New Member Orientation Class: Sunday, January 25th, at 9:15 AM (between worship services).
- New Member Welcome Sunday: Sunday, February 1st, at the 8:00 AM worship service, followed by a reception in their honor.

Look for more detailed class information soon! Please contact Pastor Tom if you are interested in joining, simply learning more about the possibility of joining, or are unable to attend class on the 25th - tom@stjohnssaukprairie.org or 608-643-2439.

Fellowship News

Thank you to everyone who has contributed goodies for our Sunday coffee time. If you want to add to what is being served, feel free to bring your item and add it to what is being served. If you would like to donate all of the treats for a Sunday (whether homemade or purchased) please contact Cathy McAlexander (402-689-5196) so that we can plan accordingly.

We made the switch from Styrofoam cups to paper coffee cups earlier this year in an effort to reduce our carbon footprint (at a cost of \$100 per 1000 paper cups as opposed to \$40 per 1000 Styrofoam cups). Thank you for your continued generous donations during the fellowship hour that help offset this added expense. We continue to invite church members to bring their reusable /travel coffee cups to use during coffee time.

The sign up for 2026 to volunteer to serve our church family during coffee/ fellowship time can be found on the kiosk . What a wonderful way to demonstrate the gift of caring for others.

The Fellowship Committee will have a Kitchen Cleaning Day on January 15, 2026 from 9:30 until we are done. Please join us as we prepare our church kitchen for another year of serving our members.



Baby Congratulations

Jamin and Amelia Carlson welcomed daughters, Anita Marie and Jori Jayne to their family on December 12. They join their sister Violet at home. Jeff and Laurie Carlson are the grandparents and Jayne Carlson is great-grandma.



Dear Friends in Christ,

A number of folks asked if I would share my Advent 2 sermon with them, so I thought I would share bits and pieces of it here. May we gather together this Christmas Season and New Year and make hope what we do.

Hope is what we do. Hope is wrapped up in what we make real. Hope isn't what we think. Hope isn't what we feel. Hope isn't even what we imagine is possible. Hope is what we do in the face of suffering, pain, and injustice. Hope is what we do in the face of depression's dull weight or grief's harsh sting. Hope is what we do.

This comes from the book, Hope: A User's Manual by MaryAnn McKibben Dana. She's quoting Mitri Raheb, Palestinian theologian. "Hope is what we do" comes from Mitri.

My Christmas wish, so to speak, is hope will too. That hope will start to feel more and more familiar as we "do" it together.

Hope is not created just because we light the Advent wreath. It's not because of the blue we wear on our bodies or drape over our furniture in the sanctuary. Hope exists in what you are doing.

John the Baptist was kind of weird. A little feisty, fiery. And I think we need to embrace that. Maybe we try to relate to the sweet, baby Jesus at Christmas time a little too much instead of the provocative, justice hungry Jesus who is demanding us to follow suit.

I invite you to channel your inner John the Baptist. Maybe you didn't know you had an inner John the Baptist! I think we all have one inside of us - a do-er of hope.

I invite you to think about what you are doing in your life right now that brings about the hope promised to the world in Jesus Christ this Advent season. And then please share it with one another.

We all need a little more hope.

Peace,

P.S. Please note the updated dates for my extended time away from pastoral responsibilities: January 25 – February 21.



Offering Envelopes

The 2026 offering envelopes are ready for you to take home. If you give your offering electronically you will not have envelopes on the tables. If you want envelopes, or if your name was missed, please call the church office (643-2439) or email aletha@stjohnssaukprairie.org and we will gladly give you envelopes.



Thank You

Thank you to all the many hands that helped with our candles for the Christmas Eve services. Those who helped set up the candelabra, those who put fresh candles out for each service, those who helped to put the candelabra away at the end of the evening and especially those who kept an eye on the burning candles to save us from a fire during our services. It takes many volunteers to create such a beautiful service, and we thank you all for helping.

St. John's Staff

Winter Weather

How will you know if St. John's is closed for worship services and Sunday School? You can call the church office (608-643-2439) after 7:00am; the answering machine message will state the times of service or the news that the church is closed. You can also look at our Facebook page. If you have any doubt about road conditions and your ability to maneuver, don't risk a fall or an accident. Please stay home and join us via ZOOM.

Sunday School News

Sunday School Christmas Program

Thank you to the Sunday School students on a fantastic program. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Sunday School offering project which is being designated to the Sauk Prairie Area Food Pantry. A heartfelt thank you to Dave Sweeney, JoAnnah Sorg, Dale Clason, and Penny Johnson for organizing our Sunday School Christmas program, along with our amazing teachers and helpers and tech lead Ellen Jorgensen for all their

help with the students. We will resume classes after Christmas break on Sunday, January 4 at 9:15am.

Sunday School Offering Project

Our offering for the 2025-2026 Sunday School year is being designated for Sauk Prairie Area Food Pantry. A nutritious diet is important to a child's health. Foods high in protein and vitamins help keep tummies full and immune systems strong.

Offering and items will be collected every Sunday we have Sunday School. Students are welcome to give each week or as they are able. EVERY gift counts. It's not the amount we give, but the reason we give we are God's Helping Hands.

There will be a basket to put donations in by the Children's Library.

Adult Education

We hope you will continue to join us on Sundays in January to explore the book of Revelation. New attendees are always welcome and we'll catch you up! On Sunday, January 25 we will shift gears to talk more about White Christian Nationalism and the idea of rapture with Rev. Peter Heide. His announcement is as follows:

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM: HOW IT AFFECTS YOU

At Synod Assembly last May, members of St. John's, PdS, were among those who presented a resolution that all congregations of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin commit to study the issue of Christian Nationalism in the coming year. The congregations in our synod approved this action unanimously. Well, the coming year has arrived. You are invited to come discuss how Americans currently tend to exhibit Christian Nationalism.

In the recent past, the Adult Study group here at St. John's has considered patriotism, nationalism, and the ELCA Social Statement, "Civic Life". Attendees report that these discussions are informative and worthwhile. They have considered how to apply our Lutheran Christian teachings to living out our faith within our society.

In this next class we will consider the movement from the 1950's through 2025. Some of the topics we will be covering are ceremonial deism, misreadings of the Book of Revelation, Blitz litigation and legislation, strategies for controlling power, and the Seven Mountain Mandate.

Whether you are a Democrat or a Republican, whether you are conservative, liberal or middle-of-the-road, this class should help

you become a more informed voter. If you are 18 (or going to be 18 in November 2026) or somewhere on your way to being 118, you are invited to join our time of learning and conversation. The class will meet weekly from January 25 through February 15, at 9:15 a.m., just in time to prepare us for Ash Wednesday, February 18.

Middle and High School News

Thank You for Supporting the Caring Tree

St. John's Confirmation students and adults shared their time and energy to support families who otherwise would struggle to share in this joyous time of year, when they went shopping to fill 55 tags for the Sauk Prairie Caring Tree. Students were very successful at finding just the right gift for youth-in-need. It was wonderful to see our St. John's students recognize the small gesture of selecting a toy, art kit, or even basic clothing for other kids their own age, sharing God's love within our community.

Christmas Carol Success at Maplewood

On Wednesday, December 12th, St. John's confirmation students and members of the Senior Choir had a wonderful experience when they sang Christmas Carols at Maplewood Nursing Home and The Pines Assisted Living. They sang traditional songs and spread cheer to the residents. Afterwards, students shared hot cocoa and treats to celebrate the holiday season with the confirmation classes.

Volunteer Help Need for Wednesday Night Meals

St. John's offers a fellowship meal before each confirmation class (5:30-6:00pm). All St. John's adults are asked to help volunteer to set-up, clean-up or donate desserts. Please sign-up using the binder in the church kitchen, to fill the many empty spots or contact Donna Nelson for more information. Thank you!

Worship Jobs for Confirmation Students

The Feb–May session of Worship Jobs for confirmation students opens at the end of January. Each student is required to register for at least three jobs during this season. “Tech” jobs count as well but have a different sign-up. Confirmation families should review their email messages for links to sign-up.

PARISH PLANNING COUNCIL MINUTES

DATE: December 2, 2025

Present: Nancy Passehl, Sally Williams, Charlie Kruchten, Gwen Ringelstetter, Marv Hupp, Tom Kreis, Mary Weeks, Audrey Luetscher, John Brennan, Melani Wheeler, Josie Fentress, Cathy McAlexander, Anne Klinkner, John Ballweg, James Newman, Kendra Frey

Absent: Eunice Yanke

Call to Order/Opening remarks:

Meeting was called to order at 7:12 p.m. by Nancy Passehl. Nancy P asked for approval of the agenda. Motion to approve was made by Marv Hupp and 2nd by Charlie Kruchten. Motion carried. We are having an abbreviated meeting tonight due to earlier presentation of the RIC program. The devotion was held due to time constraints.

Secretary Minutes:

The November 4, 2025, minutes were submitted online by Cathy Yanke. A motion to approve the minutes was made by John Ballweg and 2nd by Cathy McAlexander. Motion carried

Treasurer report:

The committee reviewed and discussed the November 2025 Treasurer report submitted by John Brennan.

November Report numbers

Current Month Income	Current Expenses	Current Balance	YTD Income	YTD Expenses	YTD Budget
\$36,115	\$43,574	\$498,742	\$495,290	\$573,109	\$3452

We are transitioning from QuickBooks to ICON for our accounting & Payroll systems. We are contracting with Prairie Bookkeeping to accomplish & maintain this program. Automating our systems will reduce time needed from our bookkeeper & our treasurer.

We want to thank Bruce Fritsch for all his hard work. This is a challenging role. We are thankful for everything he has done, filling in, in roles from snow removal, grounds & always working to solve

our many questions that come up. I am very thankful for his guidance in my first year as treasurer.

A motion to approve the financial report was made by Josie Fentress , 2nd by _Mary Weeks. Motion carried

COMMITTEE REPORTS - SEND TO SECRETARY E-MAIL

Evangelism: Gwen Ringelstetter

- Working on a photographer for new members for Feb 1,
- Graduation kits
- Starting discussion about a directory

Fellowship: Cathy McAlexander

- We invite our church family to share their abundance of cookies, candy and other goodies for Fellowship time on December 28.
- We will have a kitchen cleaning day in January.
- A reception for new members CD will be held February 1, 2026.

Lay Ministry: Josie Fentress

Linda-gave us details on hymnal rebinding. \$26.50/hymnal or \$14.50/greater than 200 hymnals. Grimm Book Binders

- Suggestion was to get shelves for under the pews (\$105 each) so that the hymnals lay flat. Will look at possibly gluing the hymnals ourselves, as we do not use them very often,
- Gina-late service is the hardest to get ushers for. 3rd Sunday is Youth Sunday
- Ruellene-all music is planned for Christmas. Christmas Eve services will be at 1:00, 3,5 and 7:30.
- Patty- needs one communion assistant for each service
- Donna-4 people are doing homebound communion
- Kim-will be in charge of ordering flowers
- Cheryl-trouble getting greeters at the back doors
- Old Business-will continue linking online signups in the future.
- Safety and risk management committees continue to meet.
- Congregational meeting was held on Nov 9th. & new members approved
- PPC Board was installed on Nov 16th
- ecumenical service will be at the UCC on Wed night, Nov 26th.

- New Business-Christmas Eve candle set up will be after late service on Sun, Dec 21st. Tear down after 7:30 Christmas eve service

Parish Education: James Newman

- The Sunday School Christmas program is Sunday December 14th at the 10:30 service. The Sunday School time between services will be the dress rehearsal.
- In November our confirmation students have been peeling potatoes for the Sauk Prairie Thanksgiving meal, making gifts for our Sunday School students, and have visited Maplewood. In December they are shopping for the caring tree and caroling.
- Adult ed just finished up two classes on having hard conversations with family and friends.

Properties: John Ballweg

Recently completed maintenance tasks include:

- Cleaned leaves out of the gutters
- Cleaned up & bagged leaves from the church grounds
- Shampooed carpet in front of the communion rail
- Contacted Justin Frosch to confirm he's all set to remove snow for us again this season
- Replaced broken window in the Youth room

Upcoming maintenance tasks we'll be focusing on:

- Inspect/evaluate one ceiling fan in the sacristy that appears to have a loose blade
- Meet with Hellenbrand Water on December 5th to evaluate leak on the water softener
- Work on Bunn coffee makers to determine why the larger unit doesn't fill completely when making a large batch of coffee.

PR & Social Concerns: Melanie Wheeler

- Discussed Gun Safety/take back Connie Henry working with Police Dept and Jackie Frosch. Book (Gun Violence 101) will be in library after read by this board. We decided that only one copy was needed ,as not good book for a book club.
- Just Bakery in full swing. Asking members what they like to see sold and what NOT
- Roger Seymour would like us to assist with a monthly spaghetti dinner - all in favor.

Stewardship Board: Anne Klinkner

Vanco Options Update

- A QR code for general contributions has been added to the weekly bulletin. The website has an enhanced giving tab with a link to the different giving options for St. John's in the narrative section for online giving. Anne will check with Aletha to see if there is a set of instructions for using it that can be included in the Friday Notes at some point. If there is not a set already, one can be developed using screen shots.
- Thank you, Todd Wyttenbach, for serving as chairperson for the past year.
- Todd presented a draft of the monthly themes , focusing on Mission, for the 2026 Stewardship Display in the Narthex . The January theme will be local outreach and benevolence. February will focus on youth. Cathy will send Todd a list of what each board does so the monthly themes can be personalized to St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Women of the ELCA : Ruth Dresser/Eunice Yanke

- Pennies for Poverty offering will be collected for the remainder of the year in connection with the convention but sent to 6:8
- Thankoffering service will be Sunday, November 23rd . We will continue to collect for this until December 14th .
- The offering goes to the National WELCA organization and provides funds for World Hunger, global ministries and other very important programs.
- Christmas Cheer (\$200 each) will be given to Hope House and the Special Olympics.
- No individual Circle meetings in January. Instead, all Circles will be meeting together on January 8 . Pastor Tom will lead the Bible Study.
- Martha Circle will visit Special Friends in December and January.

Youth Committee: Charlie Kruchten

No report

Member at Large: Mary Weeks

Shirley Kelter, UCC parishioner, is leading prayers for Peace, every Thursday at 6:30 pm during Advent

Youth Member at Large: Kendra Frey

Just ended the 1st Trimester & getting ready to start the 2nd

Pastor/Intern Reports

Lead Pastor Tom's report:

- Working with the Bishop's office, Wartburg Seminary, and Luther Seminary about the possibility of calling an intern for late next summer and currently filling out the application. After several phone calls and emails, I will be submitting the application for Wartburg Seminary. If an intern is not available from Wartburg, we would be available for an intern from Luther Seminary or another ELCA-affiliated seminary.
- While I was sick for a few days in November, I appreciate Pastor Sally's covering for me, especially on Sunday, November 9th.
- I am working on annual reviews for staff and will schedule meetings in December with staff to review them.
- I am currently calling a few of the referrals Icon Systems has provided. Icon Systems will replace our current accounting system, QuickBooks.
- Past practice has been, if school is closed due to weather conditions, church activities are cancelled. Pastor Tom is considering having One service, at 1030 am on "bad weather" Sundays to allow for snow removal & safety. Zoom will always be another option.

Pastor Sally's report:

- The ecumenical Thanksgiving service was great! We are grateful for our gracious hosts, First United Church of Christ. We hope to continue to increase our ecumenical partnerships in the community this year.
- I am currently working on the adult education and visit schedules for while I'm gone in January/February. Please let me know if there are other areas of concern you would like me to address. I am very grateful for the gift of this time being away.
- Thank you to our Parish Ed Board, and especially Penny, for all of the extra hours and energy she's putting in to get our kids caroling, Caring Tree Shopping, Christmas Program (12/14 @ 10:30), etc.!

- Safety team will meet again in the near future to talk about Youth Safety with Penny.

Old Business:

RIC (Reconciled in Christ) was presented & briefly discussed this evening

John Brennan discussed the new accounting system / ICOM-CMO

New Business:

Anne Klinkner, Stewardship Board, has requested a One-year reprieve for reviewing the Administrative manual. This will accommodate time for the filling of the office position.

James Newman made a motion to approve the request & 2nd by Melani Wheeler. Motion carried.

Pastor Tom discussed the need to update the church phone system to allow for more modern conveniences. If the office secretary is unable to answer the phone & Pastors are with someone it is difficult to separate out calls or leave messages. He will be discussing options with Rhyme.

Due to Aletha's departure 12/31, the Secretary's position is being posted outside of St John's to allow a wider choice of applicants.

Next meeting is Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 6:00 pm. Devotion will be given by John Brennan. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mary Weeks and 2nd by Anne Klinker. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:59 pm. with the Lord's Prayer lead by Nancy P.

Respectfully submitted by Audrey Luetscher



Happy January Birthday!

The day is in parenthesis.

Our Youngest:

Rylan Gorsuch (4)

Harvey Pickett (31)

Our Sunday School Students:

Molly Philo (6)

Knox Kruchten (7)

Kellan Robarge (12)

Clare Kaderavek (12)

James Johnson (14)

Maddie Keller (18)

Cole Haug (23)

Lincoln Wasserberg (27)

Emma Naggs (27)

Brantley Dean (27)

Cadence Schwartz (30)

Brielle Schell (31)

Our Youth:

Kaden Ballweg (2)

Jordan Signorile (7)

Noelle Small (13)

Douglas Jolicoeur (15)

Parker Pape (18)

Declan Ryan (23)

Sophia Hanson (29)

Nicholas Keyser (31)

College and Career-age Young People:

Andrew King (31)