



# **The St. Johns Servant**

**St. Johns  
Lutheran Church**

Park Rapids, Minnesota

December, 2022

## **It's Time for Breakfast in Bethlehem**

After months of planning, it's time for Breakfast in Bethlehem on Saturday, December 3 at 9:00 a.m. Breakfast will be served by Bethlehem townspeople. The Christmas story will be presented. View the nativity scene gallery. Kids can learn to play carols on the kazoo and create some Christmas crafts. Have your photo taken at one of the Bethlehem scenes. We will mail your photo to you! The event is free and open to all. We hope you'll attend and invite your friends!



## **Advent Services—Be Born in Us Today**

The focus for Advent service this year comes from a line in the Christmas carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem." Wednesday Advent services will be at noon and 6:00 p.m. A meal will be served by the Ladies Aid following the noon service. We will have a meal at 5:00 p.m. before the 6:00 p.m. service. Here's the service focus for each week.

11/30—*Bringing Blessing*  
12/7—*Bringing Renewal*  
12/14—*Bringing Guidance*

## **Come Worship Christ, the Newborn King**

Christmas Eve services will be held on Saturday, December 24 at 1:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. The 3:00 p.m. service will be live streamed. We will have one service with communion on Christmas Day at 9:00 a.m.



## **Important News for January**

The big news at the November Voters meeting was the decision to have one worship service on Sundays during January. Our worship service will be at 9:00 a.m. with communion on the first and third Sunday. Sunday School, coffee and Bible study will be at 10:15 a.m. You can read the details in the minutes on page 10.

**There's lots more Christmas happenings. See inside for details!**



## Cookie Making Collection

The Ladies Aid is hosting a Christmas cookie project for the local food shelf. You're invited to donate a package of dry (non-refrigerated) cookie mix, cookie cutters, cookie decorations, frosting, or holiday sprinkles. A collection box is available in the front entry way through Thursday, December 8. They will package the donated items in bright, colorful bags for distribution to our local food shelf on Friday, December 9.



## Help Make Christmas Special for A Child



We are participating in the Toys for Tots program again this year. Ornaments on the tree in the church narthex describe specific children; gender, age, and gift requests, and have a family number. Please take as many ornaments as you would like, but be sure to write your name, child gender and age, and the family number on the sign-up sheet so we know that gifts have been returned. Drop off unwrapped gifts, with the ornament attached, to the box by the tree at church by December 12 and check off your name on the sign-up sheet. Thank you!

## Luminaries Light Up Christmas Eve

The youth will be selling luminaries again this year. You may purchase (free will donation) a luminary in honor or memory of someone. Deadline to submit a form is December 18. The luminaries will be lit for our Christmas Eve services. Pick up a form at church or fill out the form on page 11 and return it with your donation by December 18.



### What's On The Lutheran Hour

- 12/4 "Paradise Restored"
- 12/11 "Beauty We Can't See"
- 12/18 "Gestures of Hope"
- 12/25 "A Shoot from the Stump"

Listen to the Lutheran Hour every Sunday on KPRM 870 AM at 9:30 a.m. or KTIG 102.7 FM at 5:00 p.m. on Sundays.

The Lutheran Laymen's League sponsors the program on KPRM each Sunday. If you would like to help sponsor the program your gift may be placed in the offering and earmarked "Local Lutheran Hour."

### † Baptisms

11/13 Riley Katherine Christensen  
Chelsie (Anderson) and Mike Christensen

11/20 Reeve Annamae Just  
Scott Just

### † Funeral

11/22 Elaine Hooker



## Ladies Aid Christmas Party



The Ladies Aid invites St. Johns ladies to a Christmas party on Thursday, December 8 at noon. There will be a short program, gift exchange (\$10 or under) and light lunch will be served. All are welcome!

## Norquists and Friends Christmas Concert

This popular concert is scheduled for Saturday, December 10 at 3:00 p.m. here at St. Johns. You won't want to miss this event. Previous concerts have received rave reviews. Freewill offering for the Local Lutheran Hour. The Lutheran Laymen's League members will serve treats following the concert.



## Evening Guild Christmas Caroling



Come and go caroling with the Evening Guild on Tuesday, December 13. We'll meet at the church at 2:00 p.m., go caroling and then return to the church for potluck appetizers.

It's always a fun event!

## Cookies and Carols

On Sunday, December 18 we'll gather in the fellowship hall during coffee hour to sing our favorite carols and indulge in our favorite cookies. Please bring a dozen or two of your favorite cookies or candy. The Board of Fellowship will make up gift packages of some of the goodies and deliver them to our shut-ins. Please plan on joining us in this yearly tradition here at St. Johns.



## Bid on A Basket



We have some great baskets for our 12th annual basket fundraiser. Place your bid on one of the many baskets displayed in the social hall. Proceeds from the baskets will go to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and School in North Fort Myers, Florida to help with recovery from Hurricane Ian. Bids will be taken until December 18 during Cookies and Carols.

## STAR TRIP

The Sunday School's annual Christmas program this year has a "Star Wars" flavor (and maybe even some Star Wars characters). It will be presented on Sunday, December 18 at 2:00 p.m. in the social hall. The Sunday School staff will serve cookies and hot chocolate following the program.





## Stewardship Review—October

Avg. Sunday Worship Attendance: **172**

Total Offerings: <b>\$32,977</b>	Total Offerings, October, 2021: <b>\$39,719</b>	Budget/Week <b>\$10,345</b>
Total Expenses: <b>\$32,361</b>	Total Expenses, October, 2021: <b>\$35,786</b>	Budget/Month <b>\$44,827</b>
Difference <b>\$616</b>	Difference <b>\$3,993</b>	

Avg. Weekly Offerings <b>\$6,595</b>	Total Offerings, year to date: <b>\$377,366</b>
Avg. Weekly Expenses <b>\$6,472</b>	Total Expenses, year to date: <b>\$385,266</b>
Difference <b>\$123</b>	Difference <b>- \$7,900</b>

CNB Checkbook Balance as of 10/31/22: <b>\$84,202</b>	Front Entry Payable <b>\$24,698</b>
Less dedicated accounts <b>- \$2,046</b>	
Difference <b>\$82,156</b>	

Our Healthy Balance Goal <b>\$74,000</b>
Raised so far <b>\$58,803</b>
Still need <b>\$15,197</b>

## Main Street Living North Programs for December

“**Main Street Living**” is a locally produced TV program that includes a 30 minute worship service led by participating pastors of the Minnesota North and North Dakota Districts of our LCMS, along with a 30 minute Lutheran Hour program (normally “**This Is The Life**,” along with occasional church-season specials). Programs are broadcast at **9:00 a.m. Central time** on FOX station KVRr Fargo-Moorhead Channel 15 and archived on [www.mainstreetliving.com](http://www.mainstreetliving.com). Click on “North (Fargo)” under the picture.



December 4: Rev. Heath Trampe, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Minot, ND, presents the message: “Peace? Are you kidding me?” based on Matthew 3:1-12. Lutheran Hour seasonal program: “Stable Boy” - A manger scene comes to life and tells the story of the first Christmas.

December 11: Rev. Philip Beyersdorf, St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, Minot, ND, presents the message: “The Work of the Great Physician” based on Matthew 11:2-11. Lutheran Hour seasonal program: “Red Boots for Christmas” - A shoemaker learns the true meaning of Christmas.

December 18: Rev. Craig Fenske, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Grand Forks, ND, (message to be announced). Lutheran Hour seasonal program: “Christmas Is” - The shepherd in a Christmas play learns the importance of Christmas.

December 25: Rev. Matthew Harrison, LCMS President, presents the Christmas message. Lutheran Hour seasonal program: “Christmas on Main Street” – The Christmas message at a mission brings a grandson and his grandfather together.



## Voters Meeting Minutes November 22, 2022

Dr. Rod Helm called the meeting to order. Dr. Helm read the church's mission statement and went over some of the events of the past year – Pastor Fondow's retirement as district president, Pastor Newton taking a call to Iowa, Pastor Harvala filling that void, active youth, Release Time, ABC, VBS. Finances are about the same. The PPC is concerned about Sunday School and church attendance.

Pastor Neubauer led the opening devotion explaining why he had chosen the slide for that day's worship service which was from the *Tree of Life* painted by a Haitian artist.

There were 53 voting members present and nine confirmands. Motion, seconded and carried to accept Al Broten, Patsy Broten and Mike Netland as new voting members.

Motion, seconded and carried to approve minutes from the June 7, 2022 voters meeting as printed in the newsletter. Motion, seconded and carried to approve minutes from the special October 16, 2022 voters meeting as printed in the newsletter.

### Treasurer's Report – Ginny Ranisate

Our income so far this year is \$398,043 and expenses are \$408,357 with expenses exceeding income by \$10,314. Last year at this time our income was \$380,544 and our expenses were \$395,708 with expenses exceeding income by \$15,164.

CNB Checking Account	84,927
Less Dedicated Funds	<u>- 5,296</u>
Available Funds	79,631

CNB Dedicated Funds Savings	35,107
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<b>LCEF Current Fund</b>	122,518
Less Parsonage Proceeds	- 18,548
Less Healthy Balance	- 58,825
Less End. Fund Interest	- 1,655
Less T. Haberer Memorial/Interest	- 19,937
Less T. Haberer Trust	- 19,147
Less R. Haberer Memorial	<u>- 1,046</u>
Available Funds	3,360

Front Entry Payable    \$24,698

Motion to accept treasurer's report, seconded and carried.

(Continued on page 7)





## Sunday School News

### Perfect Attendance—November

PK3 John Ricke  
 PK4 A.J. Phillips  
 5th Clinton Koch, Sophia Neubauer  
 6th Zach Harju  
 8th Max Harju

November Offering: \$40.53



12/09 Grace Hockett  
 12/15 Shae Halbasch  
 12/20 Rozaley Hall  
 12/24 Owen Christensen  
 12/30 Gavin Smith

### Baptismal Birthdays

12/04 Alex Lof  
 12/05 Zachary Harju



Directions: Find the words listed below. Then unscramble the intersecting letters to complete Luke 2:11, NIV.



#### WORD BANK

Shepherds  
 Child  
 Nazareth  
 Census  
 Baby  
 David  
 Mary  
 Travel  
 Town  
 Register  
 Born  
 Night

T	B	W	Y	A	Z	K	E	S	H	N	G	D	J	K
Q	O	Y	A	P	R	A	L	B	F	P	I	C	Q	L
N	R	W	X	B	E	Y	R	M	B	D	M	O	E	E
S	N	O	N	W	G	A	I	B	A	C	D	O	T	D
R	G	X	J	F	I	W	M	V	B	R	R	C	E	O
P	S	C	E	N	S	U	S	H	Y	U	Y	F	P	N
O	T	P	I	G	T	Q	C	N	T	G	M	U	S	T
O	A	N	D	B	E	C	H	I	L	D	N	Z	F	A
A	T	B	A	U	R	W	H	G	F	V	A	B	U	M
T	R	A	V	E	L	J	C	H	V	O	Z	G	N	H
F	B	Q	I	W	D	X	P	T	E	N	A	O	L	Q
Z	C	R	D	Q	S	H	E	P	H	E	R	D	S	V
R	U	V	Y	K	N	I	R	T	K	G	E	Y	I	R
K	V	A	Z	X	L	S	H	Y	T	P	T	J	S	K
L	L	E	S	M	J	Z	L	Q	R	U	H	V	W	X

"Today in the town of David a \_\_\_\_\_  
 has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."

LUKE 2:11, NIV

Answer: Savior

**No lessons this month as we're practicing for our Christmas program, **STAR TRIP**, which will be presented on Sunday, December 18 at 2:00 p.m. in the Social Hall followed by hot chocolate and cookies!**

**Details have been sent home with the students.**



*(Continued from page 5)*

## **BOARD REPORTS**

### **Elders - Jerry Grudem**

Elders continue to assist the pastors with their work here at St. Johns.

### **Evangelism – Connie Fondow**

The Board of Evangelism received a \$1,200.00 grant from LCMS Life Ministry. Individuals from St. Johns matched this amount allowing us to purchase items for 40 “Bless a Mom” bags which were assembled and delivered to the Pregnancy Resource Center in Park Rapids. Our thanks to all who participated in this project. We were able to express our care and concern to 40 families in the area who may be undergoing parenting or family life challenges.

Our “Breakfast in Bethlehem” event will be held on Saturday, December 3. We are planning for up to 100 congregational members, friends, neighbors, family members, and people from the surrounding area to attend. The board is very appreciative to many of our members who have so graciously agreed to assist us in this endeavor. Please remember to drop off your personal nativity scenes at the church office for the Nativity Gallery. If you are attending BIB, please be at the church a bit before 9:00 a.m.

The response from St. Johns members to an appeal for assistance at Good Shepherd Lutheran School in North Fort Myers, Florida after the devastation of Hurricane Ian was overwhelming. A door offering opportunity was made available after services on Sunday, November 13th. Subsequent donations were brought into the church office the following week. The total amount to be sent to Good Shepherd is \$5,100.00. God bless all of you who were called to provide these fellow believers with much needed help at this time. The proceeds from the Christmas basket auction, Sunday School offerings, and a future Trivia event will also be sent to Good Shepherd for their rebuilding and repair/replacement projects.

### **Education – Dr. Helm read Lori Griess’s report**

Preschool – 34 students attending - Eleven 3 year olds and twenty-four 4 year olds. Four families are utilizing the scholarship program. Of the children attending: 3 attend St. Johns, 2 are from other area LCMS churches, 3 are from Calvary, 3 from the Catholic church, 6 from Eastside, 2 from Faithbridge, and 10 with no listed church affiliation. October 24 there was an unannounced state visit. It went very well with no violations or changes needed.

Sunday School – Meet and Greet for Sunday School was August 21. Sunday School Rally was September 11. Connie Fondow has taken over the office duties as Sunday School Superintendent. Due to a shortage of teachers, this enables Shelley Lof to teach. Christmas Program is December 18 at 2:00 p.m. Practice is the three Wednesdays prior and the Saturday the day before. We will be serving cookies and hot chocolate following the program. Sunday School offering from the 2021 - 2022 school year has been donated to the Eagles Nest Healing Center for Veterans and Families.

VBS - Was held in the evening the week of August 7-11. Offering was donated to the Hubbard County Food Shelf. Due to the cost of the tent rental we will be looking at options for next year.

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**Release Time**—Began on Wednesday October 5. We still need subs. We have a total of 117 children attending. We lost about 20 from last year. Six changed schools, four moved out of town, two went to Calvary, and there are 10 less first graders this year. Thank you to Deb Anderson for joining our teaching staff this year and Kathy Henry for helping out wherever needed. Teachers returning this year include Sandy Phillips, Ruth Knaack, Paula Eischens, Laurie Kimball, Cheryl Breitbach, and Pastor Neubauer. Most of our teachers are teaching two different classes.

**Budget** - Budget was reviewed and minor changes made. Agreed to the proposed 5% wage increase for Mary and Kim as presented by the Board of Elders.

**Young People** – Covered under Pastor Neubauer's report.

**Church Properties** – Dr. Helm read Randy Griess's report.

Worked on budget for 2023.

Jacob Lof is planning to re-do the benches and fire pit area as his Eagle Scout project.

Replaced lights in front sign with timer/photo eye.

**Stewardship** – Pam Heeren

The board has updated the endowment fund scholarship amount to \$2,000 per year. This is available for students attending LCMS colleges especially those going into full-time church work. Copies of the information are available in the church office.

**Fellowship** - Elayne Luiken

The board handed out gift pens/bookmarks to the fathers on Father's Day.

The board hosted a going away reception for Pastor and Sarah Newton on Sunday, July 31.

We held the new member welcome/Pastor appreciation on Sunday, November 6 between services.

Planned today's semi-annual potluck. There was a round of applause and thanks to the board for the great potluck!

On Monday, November 28 our board will facilitate the decorating of the church for Christmas, starting at 9:00 a.m.

For Breakfast at Bethlehem on Saturday, December 3, at 9:00 a.m., our board is in charge of preparing the breakfast.

Cookies and Carols will be Sunday, December 18 between services. Members are asked to bring Christmas cookies or candy to share. We'll make up cookie trays to deliver to shut-ins.

**Public Relations**

Staff continues to cover public relations.





Motion, seconded and carried to accept the board reports.

### **Pastor Neubauer's Report**

Wednesdays are full. 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Release Time classes have been combined and are going through the book of Romans. Third grade Release Time continues to use the "My Bible" curriculum. There are 21 students in the class.

Wednesday noon communion services have continued. They will be replaced with Advent services through December but plan to do them again in January.

He mentioned this year's stewardship theme – Glorify God, Serve One Another, Be Generous in Every Way – and how this focus will extend into the new year. He encouraged everyone to look for volunteer opportunities such as shoveling on Sunday mornings.

Regarding youth activities, a trip to Pike's corn maze was organized with 24 adults and 33 kids attending. Everyone enjoyed the farm, maze, hayride, and food plus everyone got a pumpkin. Thank you to the Pikes for the fun event! A trip to Bemidji Bowl was held last Sunday with 24 kids and three adults attending.

The Wednesday high school group is going strong. They prepare most, if not all, of the meal, set up and clean up. The tables are set in a square so everyone can see and talk to everyone else. They start with a prayer and then share highs and lows from the week. Last week they had a Thanksgiving meal with 26 attending.

Thank you to Pastor Harvala for joining our staff. It is great to have him here!

Membership changes: Motion, seconded and carried to accept into membership Jean Mertz by transfer from Friendship Celebration Lutheran, Meridian, ID and John Moench by affirmation of faith from Gethsemane Lutheran (WELS), Omaha, NE.

Dr. Helm mentioned that we are thankful for Pastor Neubauer's successful heart surgery and hoping for a good outcome with knee replacement on December 28.

Motion, seconded and carried to accept Pastor Neubauer's report.

### **OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

The 2023 budget was presented. Derek Ricke asked about gaps between budget and expenses. Dr. Helm responded that we have looked at that. Pastor Neubauer's comment was that some items were "squishy" and the budget is more of a spending guide. Jerry Grudem said the voters are approving that the congregation can spend up to those amounts but if something else arises, it needs further approval. Motion made, second and carried to accept the budget as presented.

*(Continued on page 10)*



*(Continued from page 9)*

Motion, second and carried that St. Johns Evangelical Lutheran Church, as a standing resolution to remain in force and effect until such time as amended or revoked, hereby authorizes and establishes a parsonage allowance for Pastor Neubauer in the amount of \$24,000 and for a second pastor in the amount of \$24,000 per year.

The Parish Planning Council will serve as the board nominating committee.

Call Update – We have submitted our request for a seminary candidate to the District Office. Pastor Fondow told the assembly that the call documents should be submitted as soon as possible as the Placement Director/Committee will start interviewing candidates in December and this gives them more information about us. The call committee will continue to meet to address attendance and how to engage more members.

Motion, second and carried to the nominate the following for synodical offices: Rev. Matthew Harrison as Synod President, Rev. Peter Lange and Rev. Lee Hagen for first vice president and Rev. Nabil Nour and Rev. Paul Dare for Great Plains regional president.

Discussed online attendance and adding an online form so we know who is attending. Melissa Koch noted that some people do check in with the online comments. Can we look at engagement analytics from Facebook and our website? Anneliese Du Toit commented that the online service is wonderful! Renae Olson asked if we could determine when people are watching, live or later. Joyce Juusola asked if you could still comment even if you don't have a Facebook account. No one knew for sure. Discussed having a volunteer to respond to comments and make sure the live stream is working correctly. Pastor Neubauer said he is looking into going with a paid live stream service at a cost of about \$500/year. due to issues with Facebook Paula Eischens asked about YouTube. We started with Facebook because it was the easiest to set up. Melissa Koch said the school's IT person does their permissions for YouTube. We would love to have an IT person! Ginny went over how to access the members only portion of the website. Contact her if you'd like to set this up.

Worship times – The elders have discussed switching to one service, especially during January. Motion by Jerry Grudem, second by Martin Steffel and Russ Brown to modify services times in January to worship at 9:00 a.m., coffee, Bible study and Sunday School at 10:15 a.m. Pastor Neubauer noted that attendance is usually lowest in January, around 180 people total per Sunday. The sanctuary will comfortably hold 350. One service in January would lighten the load for Pastors Harvala and Fondow who have agreed to cover these during Pastor Neubauer's recovery from knee surgery. One service would give the 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. attendees an opportunity to join together and get to know each other. Brad Dahn asked if one month was enough time to gauge how one service affects attendance, especially if it's during our lowest month and suggested that at least two months would be better. Connie Fondow asked if offering less worship opportunities conflicts with our intent of trying to get more people to attend. Paula Eischens commented that sometimes a step back is a step forward and that change can shake things up. Tim Ranisate said the primary reason for the change now was to lessen the load on the pastors. Ginny Ranisate asked if the Sunday School teachers had been asked their opinion – no, just talked to Board of Ed Chair, Lori Griess. Sunday School teacher, Tori Harju said she thought they would be receptive to the change. Darlene Wallick said we won't know how it works unless we try it. Terri Benham asked if the noon service would continue – yes. Pastor Fondow asked about the intent of the change and if it lines up



with our mission statement. How to evaluate if the change is effective. Renae Olson said one service would bring two different groups together. Al Broten said it may cause us to lose some people. Tim Ranisate said COVID had caused attendance to drop and some people haven't returned. Elayne Luiken asked if the elders had talked with the pastors about if two services were a hardship – only discussed with Pastor Neubauer. Jerry Grudem said he originally felt that one service was not a good idea but changed his opinion and thought January was a good time to try it. As the motion stands, we would go back to two services in February. Terri asked what happens with people who don't come regularly show up at 8:00 a.m. or 10:30 a.m. We will do our best to inform members about the change. Tori asked when there would be communion – probably on first and third Sundays. Pastor Neubauer said his brother-in-law's church went to one service during the summer and back to regular services in the fall. They lost people that never came back. Cheryl Robatzen told him that while she was gone for six months, her church in Pensacola went to one service and she wasn't aware of it. Pastor Neubauer also said that the 10:30 a.m. service can be very empty and it's hard to sing when everyone is spread out. Worship is more encouraging with fuller pews. Need to decide now so information can be placed in December newsletter to let members know if we change. Dr. Helm called the vote. Motion passed unanimously.

Tim Ranisate encouraged people to sign for ushering.

Dr. Helm went over the upcoming events.

Motion, second and carried to adjourn. Closed with the Doxology.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Ranisate, Acting Secretary

### Christmas Eve Luminary Form

Please write your name as you would like it to appear in the booklet:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Freewill Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Paid: Yes No

I would like my Luminary: In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_ In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**St. Johns  
Lutheran Church**

803 West First Street  
Park Rapids, MN 56470

Phone: 218-237-9783

Fax: 218-237-9785

Website: [www.stjohnspr.org](http://www.stjohnspr.org)

*Pastor James Neubauer*

*Pastor Larry Harvala*



The Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
Park Rapids, Minnesota  
Permit No. 6

**Return Service Requested**

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