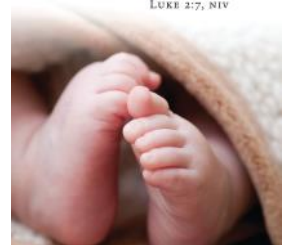




December, 2023

LUKE 2:7, NIV



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



Youth are Invited to Go Bowling

We're planning a bowling event for Sunday, December 3 for all kids, grade 5 and up. Meet at the church at noon. We'll head up to Bemidji Bowl on the church bus and return around 5:00 p.m. Cost is \$10 each. Friends are welcome!



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 10 and check off your name on the sign-up sheet. Thank you!

We're Looking for One or Two Santa's Helpers

"Toys for Boys and Girls and Tiny Tots" - Doug and Julie Kingsley have spearheaded St. Johns participation in this community project for several years. They would like someone (or a couple) to work with them this year. The intention would then be that the new person(s) would take over coordinating our church's involvement in subsequent years. Please consider talking with Julie or Doug to inquire about what the project involves.

What's On The Lutheran Hour

- 12/3 "Before They Call"
- 12/10 "Life After Landing"
- 12/17 "Community and Conversation"
- 12/24 "Of Entrances and Exits"

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."



† Baptism

11/19 Chase Edward Gartner
Brandon and Shannon (Deutsch) Gartner





Ladies Christmas Tea



All ladies are invited to a Christmas tea on Thursday, December 7 at 1:00 p.m. This is a brand new event that is taking the place of the annual Ladies Aid Christmas potluck. You don't need to bring anything but yourself!

Norquists and Friends Christmas Concert

This popular concert is scheduled for Saturday, December 9 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 12. 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 17 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 annual basket fundraiser. Place your bid on one of the many baskets displayed in the social hall. Proceeds from the baskets will go to the building fund. Bids will be taken until December 17 during Cookies and Carols.

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 17. 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 17.





Stewardship Review—October

Avg. Sunday Worship Attendance: **182**

Total Offerings: \$38,894	Total Offerings, October, 2022: \$32,977	Budget/Week \$10,807
Total Expenses: \$35,428	Total Expenses, October, 2022: \$32,361	Budget/Month \$46,831
Difference \$3,466	Difference \$616	

Avg. Weekly Offerings \$7,779	Total Offerings, year to date: \$377,893
Avg. Weekly Expenses \$7,086	Total Expenses, year to date: \$374,101
Difference \$693	Difference \$616

CNB Checkbook Balance as of 10/31/23: \$78,154	Our Healthy Balance Goal \$74,000
Less dedicated accounts - \$671	Raised so far \$66,067
Difference \$77,483	Still need \$7,933

Front Entry Payable **\$0**

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 KVRN Fargo-Moorhead Channel 15 and archived on www.mainstreetliving.com. Click on “North (Fargo)” under the picture.



December 3: Rev. Heath Trampe, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Minot, ND, presents the message: “Prepared for Christ!” based on Mark 13:24-27. *This Is the Life*: “Stable Boy” - A manger scene comes to life and tells the story of the first Christmas.

December 10: Rev. Richard Jones, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, Minot, ND, presents the message: “Comfort, Comfort for the People of God” based on Isaiah 40:1-11. *This Is the Life*: “Red Boots for Christmas” - A shoemaker learns the true meaning of Christmas.

December 17: Rev. Timothy Stout, St. Peter’s Lutheran Church, Sawyer, ND, St. Martin Lutheran Church, Anamoose, ND, and St. John Lutheran Church, Kongsberg, ND, presents the message: “The Lord Comes” based on John 1:6-8, 19-28. *This Is the Life*: “Christmas Is” - The shepherd in a Christmas play learns the importance of Christmas.

December 24: Rev. Matthew Harrison, President of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, presents the Christmas message. *This Is the Life*: “Christmas on Main Street” - The Christmas message at a mission brings a grandson and his grandfather together.

December 31: Rev. Philip Beyersdorf, St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, Minot, ND, presents the message: “Impatient Assumptions” based on Luke 2:22-40. *This Is the Life*: “Burden Made Light” - A housekeeper helps a family through the struggle of an increasingly sick child.



Voters Meeting Minutes November 19, 2023

Mike Poole called the meeting to order. Pastor Neubauer led the devotion and opening prayer. There were 42 voting members present. Motion by Jerry Grudem, seconded by Lori Griess and carried to accept Renee Ahmann, Pastor Chad Berg and Steve Jones as new voting members. Motion by Larry Hetrick, seconded by Joyce Juusola and carried to approve minutes from the June 6, 2023 voters meeting as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer's Report – Ginny Ranisate

Our income so far this year is \$396,084 and expenses are \$401,033 with expenses exceeding income by \$4,949. Last year at this time our income was \$398,043 and our expenses were \$408,357 with expenses exceeding income by \$10,314.

CNB Checking Account	70,516
Less Dedicated Funds	<u>- 1,144</u>
Available Funds	69,372

CNB Dedicated Funds Savings	36,382
-----------------------------	--------

LCEF Current Fund	111,023
Less Parsonage Proceeds	- 2,656
Less Healthy Balance	- 66,518
Less End. Fund Interest	- 2,163
Less T. Haberer Memorial/Interest	- 19,131
Less T. Haberer Trust	- 17,276
Less R. Haberer Memorial	- <u>0</u>
Available Funds	3,279

Front Entry Payable \$0

Motion by Jerry Grudem, seconded by Steve Schauland and carried to accept the treasurer's report.

BOARD REPORTS

Elders - Jerry Grudem

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

Evangelism – Connie Fondow

- "Breakfast in Bethlehem" is scheduled for December 2 at 9:00 a.m. Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers who are working hard to make the event a success. Please invite people to attend. Nativity sets are needed by November 30.
- We are participating in the Toys for Tots program again this year. Doug and Julie Kingsley have been organizing this project for several years and would like to hand the job over to someone new. If you're interested, please talk to them.
- Considering doing trivia again this year. Proceeds could possibly go towards a new sign.
- Connie has been working with Derek Ricke to start a children's church program for families with young children. Volunteers are needed. Please talk to Connie or Derek if you would like to help.

(Continued on page 7)



Sunday School News

Perfect Attendance—October

PK3 Elijah Williams
Kdg. Madelyn May, Ryan Williams
3rd Olivia May
6th Sophia Neubauer

November

PK4 John Ricke
Kdg. Martin Hahn, Madelyn May
2nd Layla Arndt
3rd Olivia May
5th Dylan May
6th Clinton Koch, Sophia Neubauer
7th Zach Harju

October Offering: \$53.75

November Offering: \$42.37

December Lessons

12/3 The Christmas Story—Part 1
12/10 The Christmas Story—Part 2
12/17 Christmas Program Practice
12/24 No Sunday School
12/31 No Sunday School



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

Baptismal Birthday

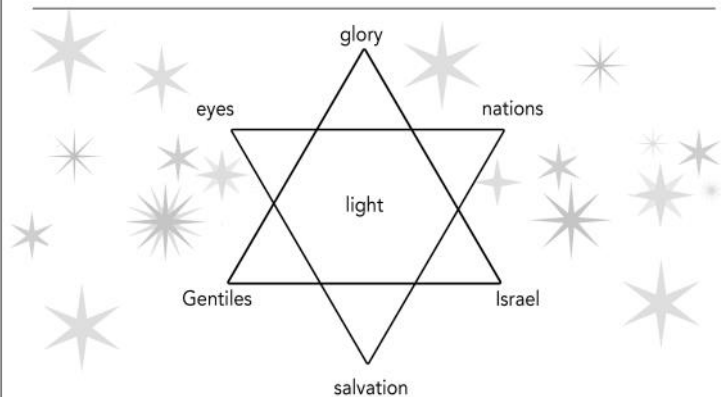
12/04 Alex Lof



SIMEON'S SIGHT

When Joseph and Mary brought baby Jesus to the temple, they heard a special prophecy from Simeon.

Directions: Using the star key, write the words in the correct spaces to complete Luke 2:30-32, NIV.



"For my _____ have seen your _____, which you have prepared in the sight of all _____: a _____ for revelation to the _____, and the _____ of your people _____."

Luke 2:30-32, NIV

Answers: eyes, salvation, nations, glory, Israel, Gentiles, light

Children's Christmas Program

The Sunday School Christmas program will be Sunday, December 17 at the 10:30 church service. Practices will take place on Wednesdays, November 29, December 6, and December 13 after school until 5:00 p.m. for all 1st – 6th grade Sunday School students. We plan to pick up children from the Century School on Wednesdays. Please let Staci Lee know if your child is attending and being picked up at the Century School. Text her at (218) 255-2403. Also, if your child has any dietary restrictions, please include that information as a snack is provided. There will be a dress rehearsal on Saturday, December 16 from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. for all grades.



(Continued from page 5)

Education – Lori Griess

Sunday School has an average attendance of 26 students per Sunday. Staci Lee is the new Superintendent. She is sending a monthly newsletter out to the families. The Children's Christmas program will be on December 17 at the 10:30 a.m. service. Practices will be held after school on Wednesdays starting November 29. The offering this year is going to Lutheran Island Camp for beach equipment.

Release Time has about 120 children attending. Bibles were handed out to the 3rd grade class.

Preschool enrollment is at 29. There are three or four openings. State inspection was held with no issues. We have four students on scholarship.

VBS attendance was higher than in the past. We had not planned for so many students which made things more of a challenge. Melissa Koch will serve as VBS director for 2024. We could use more volunteers next year.

Overall, we continue to look for help in all areas – teachers, subs, music, and crafts. Please check the bulletin board in the entry for areas that could use your help.

Young People – Pastor Berg

High school suppers have started again. We had a harvest festival at Pike's farm. Bowling is planned for December. Other activities are being planned. Isaac Knapp has been doing a great job assisting with youth activities. He and Pastor Berg are working on licenses to drive the bus. Planning has begun for the 2025 National Youth Gathering.

Church Properties – Randy Griess

Air conditioners were installed in the offices and the kitchen air conditioner was replaced. Heat tape will be installed on the roof. Parts have been ordered for the refrigerator. It will take one to two days to repair. Adding a canopy over the west door has been put on hold. Gary Jaskowiak has been hired to replace Mike Riewer as janitor.

Stewardship – no report.**Fellowship - Elayne Luiken**

Our board made Father's Day gifts and handed them out to the dads on Father's Day, June 16. We prepared and served a luncheon for the congregation for Pastor Berg's installation on Sunday, July 16. We hosted Crazy for Cribbage on Sunday afternoon, October 8. We may organize a weekly cribbage get together after Christmas. We facilitated New Member Welcome/Pastor Appreciation today.

Upcoming events:

We will oversee decorating the church for Christmas on Monday, December 27 at 9:00 a.m. Everyone is invited to pitch in. Our board will prepare and serve the breakfast for Breakfast at Bethlehem on Saturday, December 2. We'll facilitate Cookies and Carols on Sunday, December 17 between services. Cookie trays will be made up and distributed to our shut-ins. We will take down Christmas decorations on Monday, January 8 at 9:00 a.m. Doing a new pictorial directory was brought up. We need a coordinator. If you're interested, please talk to Pastor Neubauer or Ginny.

Public Relations – Derek Ricke

Since we haven't had anyone on this board for a while there's a learning curve for everyone. He has been surveying our outreach efforts from a public relations aspect. We've been doing some newspaper advertising and working on social media posts. Derek also commented on the work of the attendance committee and how to engage young families. A supper was hosted for some young families to gather information on what they need. One of the things brought up was that parents worry that young children can be distracting to other worshippers as well as the

(Continued on page 8)



(Continued from page 7)

parents. The outcome of this was starting Children's Church which Connie brought up earlier. She has been instrumental in organizing materials and plans. The children go out of the service right before the sermon for a faith focused activity. There were four children last week and nine this week. It would be great to have enough volunteers so each time would do children's church once every six weeks. If you would like to help, please talk to Derek or Connie. All the materials are prepared and ready to use.

Motion by Mike Netland, second by Larry Hetrick and carried to accept the board reports.

Pastor Neubauer's Report

Pastor Neubauer said his health has been improving and that everyone's prayers are appreciated. He has been leading Sunday Bible study which often focuses on questions from attendees. He is teaching the ten confirmands. Four will be confirmed in the spring. Next year, they will go back to having Pastor Neubauer teach 7th grade and Pastor Berg teach 8th grade. For Release Time he has the 7th and 8th graders in the first session and all the 3rd graders in the second session. Next year Pastor Berg will take 8th grade. The adult instruction class was finished with five new members joining the congregation. Pastor Neubauer started the Monday Message which is a weekly email highlighting announcements along with links to the video of the service. He also started a podcast, *Lightly Salted*, which has the readings and the sermon in audio form.

Pastor Berg reported that he has been assisting with Release Time and Confirmation. The Sunday morning High School Bibles study started in the fall learning about Martin Luther. Now they are going through Genesis. His first week here at St. Johns was spent as a counselor at Lutheran Island Camp since they were in desperate need of a male counselor. He is encouraging kids to attend the camp and is looking at a winter retreat. Wednesday morning Bible study began with a study about Noah and is now focusing on Christmas traditions.

Motion by Jerry Grudem, seconded by Steve Schauland and carried to accept the pastors' reports.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Needs and Wants Committee – Jerry Grudem gave some background on why the committee was formed and what they had discussed. He presented the possible projects that the committee had put together.

The projects were:

Option # 1 - Small Projects & Repairs to Property Budget - Budget \$10,000

- Refrigerator repair – repair gasket and shelf support - Kitchen
- Taller faucet for sink - Kitchen
- Electric outlets at serving counter - Kitchen
- Ventilation for Library
- Ventilation for Nursery
- Speaker for Kitchen
- Speaker for Nursery
- Electric outlet - Ladies Room
- Larger mirror west wall - Ladies Rm
- Refurbish or replace swings & benches - Playground
- Repair fencing – Playground
- New doors for cabinetry in Admin Office

Option # 2 - Paint and Carpet in Hallways and Fellowship Hall - Budget \$35,000



Option # 3 - Revise or Replace Outdoor Sign - Budget \$22,000 - \$31,000

Option # 4 - ABC Classrooms, East Hall Classrooms, Sanctuary Paint & Flooring - Budget \$67,000

ABC Classrooms Paint and Carpet

East Classrooms Paint and Carpet

Sacristy & Flower Room Paint and Carpet

Sanctuary:

Clean radiation cover

Paint concrete walls

Remove Pews

Change flooring under Pews - Seal VAT install LVP?

Modify Pews for wheelchair access

Reinstall Pews

New Carpeting

Option # 5 - Sanctuary Lighting Improvements – requires Consultant recommendations - Guess approx. \$10,000

Option # 6 - Audio Visual Improvements – need expert advice - Guess approx. \$25,000

Option # 7 - Sanctuary Revisions – Altar, Communion Rail, Pews – may need consultant. Need more definition to budget.

There were questions about the outdoor sign. If the voters approve any of the projects, committees would be formed to work out the details and present proposals to the voters. Ginny said that the Option 1 items were included in the proposed 2024 budget. Paper ballots were handed out. Derek Ricke and Steve Jones volunteered to tally the votes. While they were working on that, Mike went over the upcoming events and thanked the pastors and kitchen workers.

The results were:

Option 1	NO - 0	YES - 43	DELAY - 1
Option 2	NO - 6	YES - 25	DELAY - 13
Option 3	NO - 1	YES - 35	DELAY - 9
Option 4	NO - 3	YES - 24	DELAY - 16
Option 5	NO - 8	YES - 17	DELAY - 18
Option 6	NO - 2	YES - 29	DELAY - 14
Option 7	NO - 12	YES - 13	DELAY - 18

Avg. Priority:

Option 1 – 1.56

Option 3 – 2.64

Option 6 – 3.56

Option 2 – 3.77

Option 4 - 4.16

Option 5 – 4.92

Option 7 – 5.89

Motion by Larry Hetrick, second by Randy Griess and carried to approve the 2024 budget as presented.

(Continued on page 10)



(Continued from page 9)

Motion by Pat Nevala, second by Jerry Grudem and carried to authorize and establish a parsonage allowance for Pastor Neubauer in the amount of \$24,000 and for Pastor Berg in the amount of \$25,500 per year.

Shirley Potter pointed out that according to the statistical information on the voters agenda, worship attendance hasn't recovered to pre-COVID numbers. Pastor Neubauer said COVID brought permanent changes in many areas. One example is funerals. Now many people are moving to graveside services only or having a celebration of life meal at a restaurant. Dr. Helm said about 20-25% of our members don't attend worship. We also have several people on our membership roll that we don't have contact information for. The attendance committee is looking at how to address these issues.

Motion by Jerry Grudem, second by Steve Schauland and carried to adjourn. Closed with the Doxology.

Respectfully submitted,
Ginny Ranisate, Acting Secretary

Two New Committees Forming

As a result of the November 19 Voters Meeting, two new committees will be formed to finalize two building projects for approval by a special Voters Meeting.

New Digital Sign Committee – Looking for two or more members. If you wish to have input on a new sign design, volunteer to be on the sign committee by letting Jerry Grudem (218-252-2007) know you are interested.



Upgrade Sanctuary AV Committee – Looking for three or four more members. If you have expertise with AV, or simply wish to help improve the sound, live streaming, and visual screens for the sanctuary, please contact Jerry Grudem to let him know you are willing to help.

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)



Scenes from St. Johns



2nd graders in Paula Eischens' Release Time Class made Thanksgiving placemats.



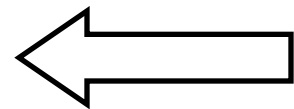
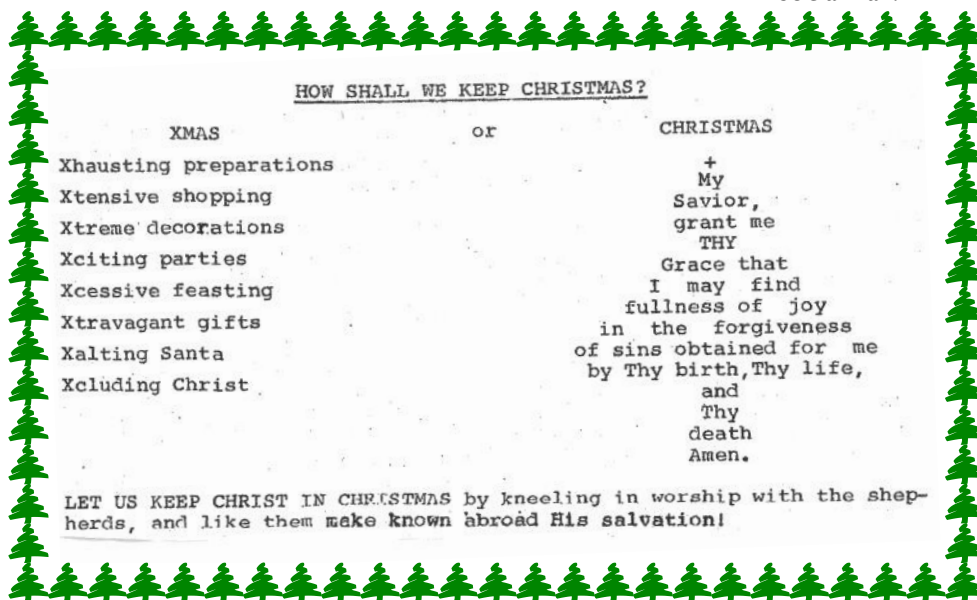
Thanks to Jacob Lof for constructing new benches for the fire pit area for his Eagle Scout project.



Thanks to the crew that came and decorated for the Christmas season. It looks beautiful!



Check out the Christmas cards for sale in the social hall.



Here's an item from the December, 1982 newsletter that's still timely today.

*Wishing you
a blessed and peaceful
Christmas season
as we celebrate the birth
of our Savior,
Jesus Christ!*



**St. Johns
Lutheran Church**

803 West First Street
Park Rapids, MN 56470

Phone: 218-732-9783

Fax: 218-237-9785

Website: www.stjohnspr.org

Pastor James Neubauer

Pastor Chad Berg

Pastor Larry Harvala



The Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod

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

Return Service Requested

Inside this issue:

<i>It's Time for Breakfast in Bethlehem</i>	1
<i>Advent Services—The Emperor's New Clothes</i>	1
<i>The Emperor's New Clothes Continues for Christmas</i>	1
<i>Youth are Invited to Go Bowling</i>	2
<i>Help Make Christmas Special for A Child</i>	2
<i>We're Looking for One or Two Santa's Helpers</i>	2
<i>What's on the Lutheran Hour</i>	2
<i>Baptism</i>	2
<i>Ladies Christmas Tea</i>	3
<i>Norquists & Friends Christmas Concert</i>	3
<i>Evening Guild Christmas Caroling</i>	3
<i>Cookies and Carols</i>	3
<i>Bid on A Basket</i>	3
<i>Luminaries Light Up Christmas Eve</i>	3
<i>Stewardship Review</i>	4
<i>Main Street Living</i>	4
<i>Voters Meeting Minutes</i>	5
<i>Sunday School News</i>	6
<i>Christmas Eve Luminary Form</i>	10
<i>Scenes from St. Johns</i>	11

