

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2024

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That's What Christmas is All About, Charlie Brown



Each year, families gather to watch their favorite Christmas movies to help them get in the “spirit”. Some look forward to “Christmas Vacation”, maybe “It’s a Wonderful Life” or “Rudolph, the Red Nosed Reindeer”. But on December 9, 1965, “A Charlie Brown Christmas” first aired on television and has become a family favorite ever since. Who can forget Charlie Brown’s obsession with directing the perfect Christmas pageant or his little tree that toppled over with the weight of one ornament. His focus was on everything except what was most important... it wasn’t until Linus got up in front of all his friends and reminded Charlie Brown and everyone else (including viewers) what Christmas is all about...

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, ‘fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings and great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace good will toward men’ (Luke 2: 8-14). This is what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.”



This **IS** what Christmas is all about. Let us not forget that as we stress about buying the perfect gifts, baking all the goodies, decorating the house, the hustle and bustle of shopping, and all the parties. Instead, let us focus on what Christmas **IS** about... the birth of our Savior, the One who was born to save us all! Merry Christmas everyone!

ATTENTION : WORSHIP TIME CHANGE

DECEMBER 22 - SERVICE AT 10:30AM ONLY

All are invited to a St. John's Youth Musical

GOOD NEWS AHEAD...

The Signs of Christmas!

SUNDAY DEC 22 10:30 AM

Christmas Dinner to follow

Something amazing, something spectacular, something that God has promised you and me. It's something special, it's something glorious. Something has happened, so let's go see.

All are invited for a very special morning on Sunday, December 22 at 10:30am. Our youth will be presenting **"GOOD NEWS AHEAD... THE SIGNS OF CHRISTMAS!"** Following the program all are invited to stay for our Chicken Dinner... a church family tradition! Come and support our young people on this very special morning.

MUSICAL PRACTICE SCHEDULE

Please make sure kids (PreK – 8th Grade) are at practice and are on time. This musical replaces normal worship on Dec. 22, so we want to make it extra special for everyone.

SUNDAYS, DEC 1, 8 & 15 : 10:15 am to 11:30 am

SATURDAY, DEC 21 : 9:00 am – 11:00 am (Christmas Party follows to 11:45 am)

SUNDAY, DEC 22 : arrive at 9:45 am. Musical starts at 10:30 am



UPCOMING SEASONAL EVENTS

KEEPING MEMBERS INFORMED + INVOLVED



Christmas Party

MONDAY December 9 at 11:30 am

All women are invited for a Christmas celebration!

Bring a favorite appetizer, salad or dessert.

Lunch followed by some fun Christmas activities. Guests are welcome!

Please bring in non-perishable items to donate to Aitkin Food Shelf.

WORSHIP WITH US THIS

CHRISTMAS SEASON

Christmas Eve - 4:00 PM

Christmas Day - 9:00 AM

GUEST PASTOR:
PASTOR THOMSON



ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

YOUTH NEWS



CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

Following the final musical practice on **Saturday, December 21 from 11:00 am to about 11:45 am** all the kids are invited to a Christmas Party that includes fun activities and a gift exchange. Please bring a gift of \$5 or less with each child to exchange with another. Should be a fun day celebrating Christmas and all their hard work preparing for the musical.



CHRISTMAS TRADITION CONTINUES...

Join us for a special worship service on **Sunday, December 8** when our Sunday School kids hang their personalized ornaments on the church tree. Each ornament has the child's name and baptismal date printed on it. When they get confirmed, they receive their ornament to hang on their own tree at home. The kids will also be singing a song from the upcoming musical, "Good News Ahead... The Signs of Christmas". Additionally, our Bell Choir will perform during offering. Please have kids dressed in nice clothes at church by 8:45 am to run through the song.

MEAL PACKING DAY

What an amazing day together at the Outreach Program in Nisswa packing meals for Minnesota families. Volunteering families packed 4,752 servings of apple oatmeal and raisin oatmeal. This is a super fun experience for everyone who volunteers and a great way to serve others! Thanks to families for representing St. John's so well.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR



SLEDDING AT SCHULTZ'S

More details coming

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL

December 29 & January 5

Enjoy your Christmas Break

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but be an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

WE GIVE THANKS

Teens have found their weekly rhythm. School gets out at 3:20 pm and our confirmation students are over at church ready to begin classes at 3:30 pm. Some of the older ACT students walk over to do homework, chat with friends, and stare at their phones until ACT starts at 5:00 pm.

The highlight of our month was going to a church member's house and removing limbs and leaves from their yard. It was good to be put to work outside of the church property. The youth had good attitudes through the work.

Devotions have maintained the same Bible study, moving along at whatever pace the conversation leads us. Meals have been good and much appreciated.

There was a grocery bagging fundraiser at Paulbeck's Market deer opening weekend. Thanks to the teens who volunteered and the community who generously supports our efforts.

We were excited to host the Harvest Breakfast. Most of our teens were present and ready to serve the congregation. Thank you to everyone who stayed to eat breakfast and your generous donations to support our trip to the National Youth Gathering. Donations totaled \$1034.25! Thank you so much!

Included in this newsletter is an order form for Christmas Cookies. If you would like to order cookies, please return the form to Kara Crowther's mailbox by December 8.

Tony Flerlage



CHRISTMAS COOKIE BAKE SALE

As we prepare our hearts for the joyful celebration of Christ's birth, our ACT youth group is excited to announce our Christmas Cookie Bake Sale! This fundraiser will help us continue our mission of serving our church and community in the name of the Lord.

We have prayerfully put together an assortment of delicious homemade cookies, that will be lovingly baked to share the joy of the season. On the backside of this sheet you will find an order form listing the variety of cookies we are offering. By purchasing these sweet treats, you'll not only bring the spirit of Christmas into your home, but also support the work of our youth group as we grow in faith and service.

Please note, order forms must be returned by Sunday, December 8. You can place completed forms in Russ and Kara Crowther's mailbox. Although there will be no Advent services this year, the Christmas Cookie pick-up will proceed as scheduled - December 18 at 6:00 pm. For those who arranged pre-planned deliveries, these will still take place as discussed. If you are unable to attend, arrangements can be made for delivery.

Thank you for supporting our youth as they live out their faith through acts of service. May God bless you richly this coming Advent Season as we prepare for the coming of our Savior.

In Christ's Love,
St. John's ACT
Youth Group





Christmas Cookie

ORDER FORM



CUSTOMER INFORMATION

Name:

Phone:

| COOKIE (PER DOZEN) | COST | QTY | PRICE | TOTAL |
|---|--------|-----|-------|-------|
| Spritz | \$6 | | | |
| Molasses | \$6 | | | |
| Sugar Cookie Cutouts -Decorated | \$8 | | | |
| Dipped Pretzels (White or Brown Chocolate) | \$5/qt | | | |
| Cinnamon Rolls (1/2 Dozen) | \$8 | | | |
| Chocolate Crinkles | \$6 | | | |
| Snickerdoodle | \$6 | | | |
| | Total: | | | |

ORDER NOTES:

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO ST. JOHN'S ACT



Order must be returned by Sunday, December 8th.
Pick up will be Wednesday Dec 18th at Advent Supper 6 PM



PASTOR COVERAGE

God is at work at St. John's. Thank you to Pastor Thompson, Pastor Milo, Pastor Peterson, Pastor Biegner, Pastor Johnson and Pastor Worrall for helping us out in December and January. Please know that the below list is subject to change.

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES

- 11 / 28 Pastor Thomson (Thanksgiving)
- 12 / 01 Pastor Thomson
- 12 / 08 Pastor Biegner
- 12 / 15 Pastor Thomson
- 12 / 22 Children's Program (10:30 am)
- 12 / 24 Pastor Thomson (4:00 pm)
- 12 / 25 Pastor Thomson (9:00 am)
- 12 / 29 Pastor Thomson
- 01 / 05 Pastor Peterson
- 01 / 12 Pastor Milo
- 01 / 19 Pastor Thomson
- 01 / 26 Pastor Johnson

SHUT-IN VISITS

Pastor Thomson

VACANCY PASTOR

Pastor Thomson

239-276-9460

If you have any "Pastor" questions, please contact Paul Zenke at 218-927-4837.



PASTOR CALL UPDATE

We were excited to welcome Pastor Shive to St. John's in early November. Call Committee members had a chance to sit down with him to converse and he learned more about all we are doing at St. John's. He came to worship that Sunday and met other members, as well as toured the parsonage. Sadly, he declined the call, sharing that he would like to continue his work at his current church and that he feels it is in the best interest of his family to stay at their current location.

We then called on Pastor Stein from Beecher, IL who, when we initially called him to ask for an interview, shared that he was contemplating another call. He ended up accepting that call.

The committee will get together again in the coming weeks to re-evaluate what we've done thus far, review the church needs and goals, and determine next steps. We have excellent guest pastors sharing the Word of God with us each week and each have said they enjoy being here and will continue supporting us during this time. We are truly blessed in this time of transition.



PARSONAGE UPDATE

The parsonage project is taking shape and beautiful improvements are being made. Most noticeable when you first walk in are the beautiful custom cabinets in the freshly painted kitchen. New lighting has been installed, and we are nearly ready to install the sink faucet and appliances.

If you can help lift appliances into the kitchen, please contact Marv Baty. Help would be very welcomed.

Throughout the main level (kitchen, dining and living room) the new flooring and base boards are nearly complete and greatly improved the overall space. Six-panel doors have been installed throughout the main level and are beautiful!

A very welcoming archway from the front door into the house (which used to be two doors, as it was an apartment) has been completed along with the banister going up the stairs. The cross on the banister is a nice touch, too.

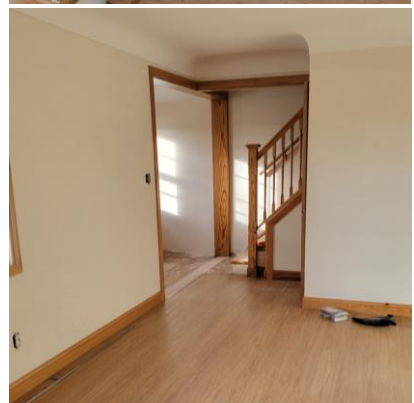
Thank you to all who have put so many hours into improving the parsonage for the next pastor. Thank you to those who have blessed this project by donating materials and money to make these improvements happen. Your generosity is not unnoticed.

There is still much to be done, and as discussed at that last Voters' Meeting the trustees are still in need of \$15,000 to complete this project. Please consider donating to this project to help us get it completed. Giving envelopes are still available in the fellowship hall.

WHAT'S NEXT? While there are things that still need to be completed on the current projects, the next big project is repairing/painting the back entry/laundry room space. Additionally, more support needs to be added to the basement to reinforce the new kitchen space.

Finally, we are moving to the upper level. Windows are being repaired, and we are adding some closet space and lighting. The original wood floors throughout will be sanded and stained.

Again, thank you to our wonderful volunteers who make this project happen. St. John's is truly blessed to have such a great team of talented volunteers!



Be in the Know

KEEPING MEMBERS INFORMED + INVOLVED

WHY AM I ASSIGNED TO A SERVICE GROUP? WHAT IS IT?

What does a service group do and why is my name listed in one (or why isn't it)? A church needs help from its members to run smoothly. As events come up, such as funerals, weekly fellowship or special events (Group 3), we are in need of people to help serve. All able members are assigned to a service group (Group 1 through Group 4). Groups are rotated to serve during these different events. The group chairperson will contact names from their group if they need help. For example, if there is a funeral you may be contacted to bring a dessert, set-up/clean-up, or serve. During Sunday fellowship, the group number responsible for that month is listed and we ask you sign up if you are able to serve a Sunday.



REQUESTING UPDATES

It's that time of year again. Please review your current information in the 2023 Annual Report. If you have any updates or changes to your information (contact number, spelling of names, address) and have not already contacted the church office, please call us at 218-927-3170 or email Greta at grets07@yahoo.com. Thank you for your attention in helping us ensure information accuracy.

USHERS NEEDED

We are looking at the service of ushering a little different in 2025. Being an usher is an easy, but important service in making sure each Sunday runs smoothly.

Instead of being assigned to a month at the beginning of the year, we will have a sign-up available on the bulletin board in the entry. We ask that anyone who has been confirmed (male or female) prayerfully consider signing up and helping us on a month or two of your choosing. It's important that our youth are mentored by our more experienced ushers to make this a positive experience for everyone. Thank you in advance for your continued support in worship.



Be in the Know

KEEPING MEMBERS INFORMED + INVOLVED



CONGRATS TO NEW CHURCH OFFICERS

Congratulations our newly elected officers and thank you to everyone who has served or continues to serve in a leadership role.

Officers for 2025 are: Paul Zenke (President), Luke Hamdorf (Vice-President), Teri Bati (Secretary), Debbie Schultz (Treasurer), and Gina Wold (Financial Secretary).

We welcome Brian Ruschmeier as a new Trustee. Scott Wold and Marv Baty continue to serve.

We welcome Tom Hawkins as a new Deacon. Jim Schendel, Dan Borseth, Jacob Redepenning and Scott Bartz are also on the Board of Deacons.

We welcome Janice Hawkins as a money counter. Beth Borseth, Lisa Flerlage, Paige Beaufeaux, and Elaine Wagner (Alt) continue to be counters.

We would like to thank Muriel Kingsley (Secretary), Marcus Marsh (Deacon), Pat Scott (Deacon), Shirley Renstrom (Money Counter), and Russ Crowther (Trustee) for their time of faithful service in office.

We appreciate everyone's service and commitment to making St. John's Church better place to worship.



CHURCH360°

ST. JOHN'S IS MOVING TO NEW MEMBERSHIP DATABASE

St. John's will be moving to a new, much better membership database in January 2025 – Church 360. While some of us have been busy entering in all our member information and learning the new system, the only thing members will really notice is the **NEW NUMBER on your giving envelopes**. Yep, new system means starting over with envelopes, so hopefully no one was super attached to their old number. Something to watch for, if you are used to putting your envelope number on your checks. Please get in any new updates to your address, birthday, phone number etc. as soon as possible so the database is accurate with most recent information.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Blessings on your special day!

| | | | | | |
|------------------|----|------------------|----|-------------------|----|
| Nicolette Neutz | 01 | Carolyn Pagels | 07 | Erica Smith | 22 |
| Richard O'Neil | 01 | Hayden Gully | 08 | Linda Levercom | 23 |
| Bryan Zenke | 01 | Marlene Linn | 10 | Ronald Christian | 26 |
| Harper Born | 02 | Larry Borgman | 12 | Deelia Emmons | 27 |
| Parker Espeseth | 02 | Finn Nelson | 13 | Wyett Schoer | 28 |
| Camden Hagman | 02 | Breckyn Williams | 13 | Sandra Bartel | 29 |
| Kathy Larson | 02 | Aaron Elmquist | 16 | Evyone Ruschmeier | 29 |
| Amelia Beaufeaux | 03 | Brian Sell | 16 | Lee Ann Christian | 30 |
| Hannah Slette | 04 | Amanda Rom | 17 | Ray Williams | 30 |
| McKenzie Wolf | 06 | Peyton Gully | 20 | Evy Olson | 31 |
| Kinzer Hill | 06 | | | | |
| Taya Hawkins | 07 | | | | |

**The birthdays listed are from our church records. Any mistakes are unintentional. Please notify the office of any mistakes, deletions, or if you do not want your birthday listed.*

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION COMMITTEE NEEDED



In 2026, St. John's will be celebrating its 100th Anniversary. It is time to start planning for it and we need to form a committee to start doing that. If you would be willing to serve on this committee, you can let Chairman Paul Zenke know. Thanks in advance for your work in making this day special.



FELLOWSHIP SERVERS NEEDED

Please consider helping with fellowship following worship in the new year. A sign-up sheet is hanging by the kitchen. Food should be simple, easy to eat, and can be bought at the store or homemade (NO NUTS PLEASE). If you are able to serve a Sunday, please sign up on the sheet posted in the fellowship hall. Thanks so much!



LUTHERAN WITNESS SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you would like a subscription to the "The Lutheran Witness" magazine for the new year, please inform the church office. We will need to add you to the list of subscribers. Subscriptions cost is \$27.65 for the year.