

# St. John's News

December, 2019



Church: 507-433-2642

Pastor: Cell 320-336-8149

Church Office:

[stjohns@stjohnsaustincms.org](mailto:stjohns@stjohnsaustincms.org)

Pastor James Groleau:

[shepherd@jamesplace.net](mailto:shepherd@jamesplace.net)

St. John's Webpage:

[www.stjohnsaustincms.org](http://www.stjohnsaustincms.org)

Live Radio Broadcasts of Worship services every Sunday, 9:00 a.m. at KAUS AM 1480

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[www.stjohnsaustincms.org](http://www.stjohnsaustincms.org)



THE MISSION OF ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Through Jesus Christ, we

proclaim God's Word,

encourage one another in faith,

witness to God's love and

serve all people.

## Message from Pastor James

### What is Advent?

Advent is perhaps one of the most misunderstood seasons in the Church Year. We meet it every year and yet every year it seems like the world around us rolls straight through from Thanksgiving to Christmas. There is no waiting, we move straight to the joy and the celebration.

Of course this makes sense. Christmas songs, movies and traditions can bring light and cheer to our lives. Christmas is about the arrival of God among us, it is about celebration, hope, and joy. Advent is about waiting. One of those certainly sounds a lot more fun than the other, but Advent is what grounds Christmas in reality. The truth is at many times in our lives we are waiting. We are waiting for hope in a world that often feels full of uncertainty. We are waiting for love in places where we carry hurt and shame. We are waiting for our world to reflect God's dreams, for it to be a place of safety, freedom, peace, and justice for all.

Advent meets us where we are in the darkness and in the waiting, and reminds us that waiting is not a barrier to God. It reminds us that God acts in the waiting, in the mist of the mess and the broken. It reminds us that we do not look for a big, triumphant flash and flood of light that will neatly tie all our problems with a bow. We look for the little signs of love and peace, we look for the tiny baby born, a sign that at first glance looks like nothing out of the ordinary but is

truly an extraordinary sign of God's love for us.

In the book: "Home for Christmas: Tales of Hope and Second Chances," author Gregory Boyle writes, "Advent is about trading in the vindictive, disapproving god for the God who loves us without measure and without regret. This God does not share in the demonizing in which we all engage. Advent is about allowing ourselves the time to be reached by the tenderness of God and then reflecting that tenderness in the world."

This Advent we wait once again. Waiting can be a kind of holy slowing down. It's a way of seeing how we yearn for tenderness, for the kind of love that truly is unconditional. It's a way of seeing the ways we miss the mark, slowing down in our thoughts long enough to catch the judgments we often make without noticing. It's a way of slowing down so that we can practice that tenderness with those around us.

How can you engage in this time of pause, of holy slow down, in a season that is so busy? Maybe by inviting someone who might be lonely over for dinner or coffee. Maybe by taking the time to notice the need for God in the faces of those you walk past in the store. Maybe that looks like taking a few minutes each

morning to pause and reset with God before facing the day.

When we take the time to slow down and wait, we begin to see the extraordinary in our everyday mundane, the signs that what we celebrate at Christmas is still true today: God's tender love is here with each of us in each and every moment of our lives.

### **Praying the Psalms**

Back in September many of us started praying through the Psalms, one each day. Are you still praying them? I'd encourage you to continue. You'll notice that many of them speak of the enemy's attacks and lies. That is what Satan does, which is why he's called Satan. 'Satan' is a Hebrew word that means 'accuser.' He speaks lies before God, and in our ears, trying to tear us down. The Psalms speak of a Savior, our God, who will vindicate us and destroy the enemy. As we end the old Church Year we are reminded that Judgment Day will come for him, but as we start a new Church Year we are reminded that his demise comes because a Baby came, a Baby named Jesus our Defender, our Shield, and our sure defense. The Psalms are deep prayers. Prayers for this moment in our lives and for the deeper richer meaning with eternal ramifications. I pray your prayers fill you with that peace.

### **Advent and Christmas**

There are two times a year when invitations to church are easy: Easter and Christmas. With Christmas nearly upon us consider inviting people to our services. Our Advent services will explore, "What Child is This?" Who is

Jesus? Why did He come? Who am I to Him? What does He bring?

Our Sunday services will look at the ancient prophecies and promises, some nearly as old as Creation itself, and how they are fulfilled in wonder, power, strength and might, of Jesus Christ alone. We teach the children the Christmas message every year, then we also ask them to tell it back to us. The children's Christmas program will be that time when the young among us will take center-stage and learn to tell the Good New of Jesus to others. Sharing the wonder of salvation found in the love of God delivered by a Baby.

### **Helping Children understand the True Meaning of Christmas**

Have you ever heard of a Jesse Tree? A Jesse Tree is a way to help children understand the true meaning of Christmas. Jesse Trees are a very old Christmas tradition that first started in medieval times. They are used to help tell the record of the Bible from Creation to Christmas throughout the Advent season.

The name comes from Jesse who was the Father of the king David. In the book of Isaiah it says, "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him. The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD, and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give

decisions for the poor of the earth."

*Isaiah 11:1-4*

A 'shoot' is a sign of new life and new beginnings. Jesus was, as a human, a descendant of king David and as Christians we know and believe that Jesus is this new 'shoot from the stump of Jesse.'

The first Jesse trees were large carvings, tapestries or even stained glass windows put in Churches, but now Jesse Trees are used as an Advent Calendar. Each day through Advent a special decoration or ornament is hung on the tree to tell the record of God's salvation that is fulfilled in Jesus.

We will have ornaments available for families to take home, along with a little book that can be read to the children each day. This can be a great way help children see past the commercial Christmas to the real meaning: Jesus.

### **Outreach**

The POBLO initiative. What is POBLO? (poblo.org) It stands for People Of the Book Lutheran Outreach. POLO's primary focus, when it started, was reaching out to people lost in Islam, the Muslim religion. There are very very few practicing Muslims in Austin, so why bring POBLO here? POBLO brings a great deal of skills, experience and expertise in reaching the lost for Jesus. Those skills can be used, as they are elsewhere, to

bring anyone to the truth of salvation found only in Jesus.

The skills I want to hone and improve here at St. John's are in just that place. Our goal as a church should be reaching outside of our walls, outside of our comfort zone, to see the lost as those to whom we need to bring the love of Jesus. That should be our primary focus in all we do here. We are surrounded by so many who are walking in the darkness. Isaiah 9:2 states, "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. The light will shine on those who live in the land of death's shadow."

That light comes in the Gospel of Jesus. The Gospel is shared through God's Word along the avenue of relationships. Simple skills like hospitality, kindness and patience will do much to bring that message to others. POBLO can do much to teach us how to reach our lost neighbors and friends, and help us see the fruition of real growth in the Church.

True Church growth is not found in counting people and counting money. We'd all like to see our pews and offering plates more full, but how they are filled is

important. If the new people are simply those who have moved from another church to ours then The Church has not grown. We love our new members we are glad you are here and pray all we do here will be a blessing to you. However The Church grows when people are brought from the darkness into the light; when those who are outside of the Christian faith and outside of The Church come to that place where the small flicker of faith is fanned into flames foundationed on Holy Scripture.

I want St. John's, working along side Holy Cross and Our Savior congregations, to experience the awesome wonder that is found in the lost coming to faith. To see those infants in the faith (regardless of age) coming to the Font and in the waters of Holy Baptism become children of God. This is something that should be celebrated as it enlivens and bolsters our desire to see it all the more. Those who come should be welcomed and cared for as we help feed and strengthen that faith.

If we as a congregation are doing that, then we as a congregation are fulfilling Jesus' Great

Commission, "Wherever you go, make disciples of all nations: Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have commanded you."

I pray this new 2020 Church Year, beginning with the holiday (Holy Day) season, will deepen in you the desperate desire to see this happening all the more. I pray that this congregation will grow, feeding off of the love of God poured out, in water, on those lost souls. Souls, now no longer lost, being cared for and welcomed into our congregation as fellow faithful followers of Jesus who will lead us all safely home.

POBLO is the first of three initiatives I have planned for this 2020 Church Year to help us in doing just these things. May God grant us the wisdom and desire to do this well.

I'll explain the others UpWorks, and Ongoing Ambassadors for Christ, later.

Pastor James

### **Thank you**

I'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the congregation for their kind token of appreciation, as well as all the gracious cards and notes we've received. Your kindness and generosity in all that you contribute here at St. John's. I pray this new year will bring many more blessings to each of us as we continue our journey of faith together. Pastor James

### **Thank-You St. John's Friends**

Your "Pastor-appreciation" gift to me was presented recently by Tim Carlson representing the Board of Elders. The gift card came as a pleasant surprise, and I joyfully appreciate it. Thank you all so much. It is a blessing that our Lord has allowed me to continue doing some pastoral ministry-activities in assisting Pastor Groleau.

Gratefully your fellow-servant,

John Schleicher

## Daily Reading/Praying Challenge:

12/01 Psalm 63	12/24 Psalm 86	01/16 Psalm 109	02/08 Psalm 132
12/02 Psalm 64	12/25 Psalm 87	01/17 Psalm 110	02/09 Psalm 133
12/03 Psalm 65	12/26 Psalm 88	01/18 Psalm 111	02/10 Psalm 134
12/04 Psalm 66	12/27 Psalm 89	01/19 Psalm 112	02/11 Psalm 135
12/05 Psalm 67	12/28 Psalm 90	01/20 Psalm 113	02/12 Psalm 136
12/06 Psalm 68	12/29 Psalm 91	01/21 Psalm 114	02/13 Psalm 137
12/07 Psalm 69	12/30 Psalm 92	01/22 Psalm 115	02/14 Psalm 138
12/08 Psalm 70	12/31 Psalm 93	01/23 Psalm 116	02/15 Psalm 139
12/09 Psalm 71	01/01 Psalm 94	01/24 Psalm 117	02/16 Psalm 140
12/10 Psalm 72	01/02 Psalm 95	01/25 Psalm 118	02/17 Psalm 141
12/11 Psalm 73	01/03 Psalm 96	01/26 Psalm 119	02/18 Psalm 142
12/12 Psalm 74	01/04 Psalm 97	01/27 Psalm 120	02/19 Psalm 143
12/13 Psalm 75	01/05 Psalm 98	01/28 Psalm 121	02/20 Psalm 144
12/14 Psalm 76	01/06 Psalm 99	01/29 Psalm 122	02/21 Psalm 145
12/15 Psalm 77	01/07 Psalm 100	01/30 Psalm 123	02/22 Psalm 146
12/16 Psalm 78	01/08 Psalm 101	01/31 Psalm 124	02/23 Psalm 147
12/17 Psalm 79	01/09 Psalm 102	02/01 Psalm 125	02/24 Psalm 148
12/18 Psalm 80	01/10 Psalm 103	02/02 Psalm 126	02/25 Psalm 149
12/19 Psalm 81	01/11 Psalm 104	02/03 Psalm 127	02/26 Psalm 150
12/20 Psalm 82	01/12 Psalm 105	02/04 Psalm 128	<i>Ash Wednesday</i>
12/21 Psalm 83	01/13 Psalm 106	02/05 Psalm 129	
12/22 Psalm 84	01/14 Psalm 107	02/06 Psalm 130	
12/23 Psalm 85	01/15 Psalm 108	02/07 Psalm 131	

### December Birthdays for Shut-Ins

17 Jewell Weeks



Our shut-ins would appreciate a card, phone call or visit

DURING THE MONTH. A LIST OF ALL THE SHUT-INS IS ON THE BULLETIN BOARDS

### Ruby's Pantry in Austin

**Grace Lutheran Church** 2001 6th Avenue SE Austin, MN 55912

3rd Thursday of the Month Doors open at 4:00 pm Distribution 5:00-6:30 pm

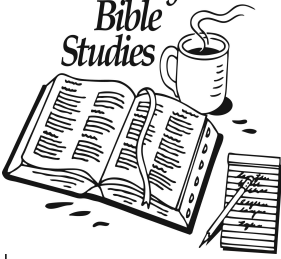
If you are interested in learning more about Ruby's Pantry or volunteering at a Pantry, please contact them.

651-674-0009

[goodnews@rubyspantry.org](mailto:goodnews@rubyspantry.org)

[www.rubyspantry.org](http://www.rubyspantry.org)

## Weekday Bible Studies



## Together in the Word

**Sunday:** Adult Bible class at 10:25 a.m. led by Pastor James

**Tuesday:** Women's Bible study at 1:00 p.m. led by Sandy Groleau, LCMS Lay Minister. All ladies are welcome.

**Thursday:** *Crossways* at 10:00 a.m. Study the entire Bible in two years. Led by Sandy Groleau, LCMS Lay Minister. New members always welcome.

**Thursday:** Men's Bible study at 5:00 p.m. - a topical study on wisdom from the book of Proverbs, led by Dave Ruhnke.

**Thursday:** Gray Matters meets at Perkins Restaurant at 7:30 p.m. Join them for a free-flowing discussion.

## Volunteer Schedule

### December Ushers

***Thank you  
to all of our  
volunteers  
who make  
our worship  
special.***

**Head Usher:** Randy Graff

Thursday evening: Clayton Petersen, Gene Pfeifer,  
Rocky Schammel

Sunday morning: David Grant, Eric Grant, Ethan Grant, Jonathan Grant

### December Communion Assistants

Dec. 01 – Dave Watkins

Dec. 15 –

### December Lectors

01 Larry Waters

08 Donna Bailey

15 Children's Program

22 Dick Heuton

29 Carol Schleicher

### Pastor James Office Hours

Monday	9-11:30 a.m.
Wednesday	9-11:30 a.m.
Thursday	9-11:30 a.m.

On Tuesday Pastor James is working at home but can be reached by phone: 320-336-8149

## **TEAM ST. JOHN'S WINS!**

In wrapping up this Fall, 2019, Stewardship Focus within our congregation, our St. John's Stewardship Board smiled and laughed as we reflected on our involvements at church, November 17, 2019. God must have smiled, too 😊

Before a snippet of "sights and sounds" from the day, we thank Pastor James for his help with every church-detail. Thank YOU, Pastor, for your wonderful and clear sermon, your "handing over" the Children's Message and Bible Class times to our Board, your microphones' helps, your additional "printing-tasks," AND for your overt support of what we did. Secondly, I must thank Pastor John for his help with every detail at home. (Peeling 5 dozen hard-boiled eggs isn't for everyone.) Lastly, we thank YOU who attended St. John's, either the Saturday night or the Sunday morning. Thanks for answering the Spiritual Gifts Questionnaire, and thanks for "owning your gift," as our "Kids—St. John's" showed us. We ALL smiled! Lastly, we THANK OUR GREAT GOD---Lord of life, spiritual gifts, weather, and believers' hearts. We praise YOU, for Your grace!

CHILDREN: "Blue (on the bracelet-gift) is for FAITH....Jesus." ----Kayveon  
(I asked "who" we can find with a birthday today.) "I have NO idea."----Quentin  
Larry Waters was found. "Happy Birthday" was sung by Natalie and Elizabeth.

ADULTS AND YOUTH: "I think we could introduce the NEW folks."---Jane  
(Joe and Ruby introduced themselves.) "We moved here from Arizona..."---Joe  
"I told Joe that we needed to be near the kids and a bowling alley..."---Ruby  
(Bible Study on dominant gifts in Bible people, with good guessing and reading.)  
"I think that the Apostle John and Ruth were probably 'Care-givers.'"---Miriam  
"I like to think that Paul and Jeremiah were 'Encouragers,' too."----Carol  
(Questionnaire was completed and each participant tallied his/her answers.)  
"Because I now know my dominant Spiritual Gift area, I have more confidence to help out in even other areas, that are not in my "comfort zone."----Pam  
"I'm freed-up to say "NO" to being asked to serve in an area that isn't my best, because I already will be serving in my dominant area." ----Thad  
"Knowing your gift now, St. John's needs Bell Ringers, Choir members, and helpers in CASE, besides Prayer Ministry pray-ers." AND "Focus on what makes your heart sing! All the rest will melt away.---from our Elder)----Carol

#### December Birthdays

03 Randy Graff  
04 Alexis Rickard  
05 Connie Gilsrud  
07 Kaaren Wuertz  
10 Christina Bergstrom  
10 Arianna Pineda  
12 Aaron Green  
12 Betty Hinks  
16 Ingrid Meyer  
16 Tammy Pfeifer  
16 Tibisa Thor  
17 Jewell Weeks  
18 Quentin Kewatt  
18 Ethan Wilking  
19 Donna Bailey  
20 Greta Anderson  
20 Parker Bracken  
21 Andrew Grant  
22 Nick Brandt  
25 Matthew Johnson  
27 Wesley Wradislavsky  
29 Jeremy Caron

#### Anniversaries

02 Gerhard & Lucille  
Wollenburg  
08 Robert & Donna Bailey  
26 Arnie & Pat Mulso  
26 John & Carol Schleicher  
30 Curt & Greta Anderson  
30 Beth & Daryl Saurer

**Prayer Ministry.** . . will be right after worship service by the organ. We pray for others... we pray for you. All remains confidential. Bring your special needs or hurts and we will petition the Lord with you. Questions? Feel free to call Carol Schleicher at 396-8420.

**TAKE IT TO THE LORD IN PRAYER.** DO YOU HAVE A PRAYER CONCERN OR THANKSGIVING? COMMEND IT TO THE LORD THROUGH YOUR OWN PRAYERS, BUT ALSO THROUGH THE LOVING SERVICE OF OUR PRAYER CHAIN. IF YOU HAVE AN ITEM YOU WOULD LIKE INCLUDED ON THE PRAYER CHAIN, PLEASE CONTACT MIRIAM LUEHMANN AT 437-7619 OR MIRIAM.LUEHMANN@ICLOUD.COM.

#### **FROGs (Faithful Retired Old Guys)**

IF YOU ARE RETIRED, JOIN US THE 1ST TUESDAY MORNING OF EACH MONTH (DEC. 2) AT 9:00 for coffee and donuts and sometimes a small project to help out around the church. See you then.

**St. John's Men's Breakfast Club** – Men of all ages from St. John's meet for a casual breakfast and conversation every 3rd Saturday of the month (Dec. 21) at 7:30 am, at Barley's Family Restaurant.

#### **Christmas Tea**



"The Gift"

Dec. 12, 2019

The Christmas tea committee has been busy planning another special tea this year. We would like to invite the women and young ladies of St. John's along with their guests to start your Christmas activities by joining us at St. John's in Schleicher Hall Thursday, December 12<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. We will have hot cinnamon tea along with tea time treats. The Christmas Tea will be a time to come and reconnect with your friends and Jesus the One whose birth is the reason for the season's celebrations. Secret Sister reveal will be a part of the program. If you plan on a gift for your Secret Sister bring it along with you. Sign-up sheets will be located on the bulletin boards in either entryway soon. There will be a small charge of \$5.00 per person attending which will be collected at the door that evening. We hope to see you there for tea, tea time treats and fellowship.

The Christmas Tea Committee



**Thank you** to everyone who gave a donation of coats and/or hats, mittens and scarves to our 2019 coat drive. We were able to provide a winter coat to 123 adults and 95 children in our community. We also gave out 210 hats, mittens, gloves and scarves, 13 pair of snow pants and 10 baby blankets. Many will be warm this winter because of your generosity!

St John's Board of Evangelism

Holy Cross Lutheran

Our Savior's Lutheran Brownsdale



The Secret Sister program allows you to be an encourager for a lady or shut-in of our congregation. You can encourage your secret sister in any way that your heart moves you, cards and notes of encouragement are perfect ways of doing this. Watch the bulletin for more details. God's blessings to all!

### Fellowship Opportunity

We have begun a fellowship opportunity - Lunch Bunch for those interested will go out to lunch together once a month. We will choose a new restaurant each month. Please sign up on the bulletin board outside the office or call the church office if you are interested. **December 9<sup>th</sup> we will go to Kenny's Oak Grill in Austin.** Check out the weekly News and Notes for details.

**We would also like to take an occasional day trip so bring ideas.**

**Rachel's Hope** is in need of volunteers! Do you have a desire to reach out to pregnant women and families with young children? Would you be able to share the mercy and love of Jesus by offering practical assistance in both word and action? Please consider helping families in our community with your God given talents and compassion. If you would like more information, please call or email Linda at Rachel's Hope. 437-7595.

[rachelshope1@rachelshope-mn.org](mailto:rachelshope1@rachelshope-mn.org)

### LWML NEWS



Thank you to all who contributed to our college student gifts. We had a nice amount to send them.

Time to get ready for celebrating our Savior's birthday. How special to be able to share our joy and worship together thru Advent and Christmas. I pray your family times together are a wonderful blessing.

On Tuesday, December 3, Service committee #1 and the whole congregation will be decorating the church. We hope everyone shows up to make the task easy. Cookies will be collected on December 9 and distributed to the shut-ins. If you want to donate money for fruit, please leave in the church office.

I pray you have a very joyful and blessed month. Sandy Grant



### Library Reading Program

Have you looked at the bulletin board across from the library? All those stars! One for every item checked out of the library. For the past six weeks, children & adults have been very busy using our library.

Thank you to every single person who participated in our reading program, and to parents for encouraging & helping their children to read more. A special thank you to the Sunday school staff for giving us library time each Sunday & for bringing the children to the library.

Prizes were given out on Sunday, Nov. 17<sup>th</sup>. Here are the top participants:

- Preschool-K - Elizabeth Amaya
- 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grades - Max Kramer & James Flerlage (tied)
- 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Grades - Eve Kewatt
- Youth - Zoe Kewatt
- Adult - Tony Flerlage

Please remember to return your books to the library. And continue to read all year long.

### Children's Christmas program

This year's Children's Christmas program is titled, "Journey to the Christ Child." An old fashioned Christmas pageant starring your favorite kids. All year long we teach the children God's message and God's plan. A plan that is fulfilled when Jesus, the Author of life, came down to earth as a little baby, to Mary and Joseph, to save the world. So come to support the children as they tell this awesome account on **Sunday December 15** at our regular church service time. Dress rehearsal will be Saturday December 14, from 9:00 – 11:00 am

### **Mark your Calendars!**

Holy Cross will have a St. Nicolas Fun Evening for Children on Friday, December 6, 2019 at 6:00 PM. Join them for a fun evening of story, activities, songs and gifts. It is one and half hour special event for children to learn the story of the saint who teaches us about Giving. This is a middle school and below Children's service and event with a special visit from St. Nicholas. Parents and families are encouraged to attend as well. A light supper will be served.

Holy Cross Lutheran Church  
300 16<sup>th</sup> Street NE  
Austin, MN  
(507) 437-2107

### **Special Worship Services**

Wednesday 11/27      Thanksgiving Day Eve      6:30 pm

Advent is a time of preparation for Christmas and the celebration of Jesus' birth.

Wednesday 12/4	Advent Worship Service	6:30 pm
Wednesday 12/11	Advent Worship Service	6:30 pm
Wednesday 12/18	Advent Worship Service	6:30 pm
Tuesday 12/24	Christmas Eve Service	6:30 pm
Wednesday 12/25	Christmas Day Service	10:00 am
Tuesday 12/31	New Years Eve Service	6:30 pm

# The 12 Days of Christmas: Unwrapping the Gifts

**by Terence Maher**

If you, like good king Wenceslaus, looked out on the Feast of Stephen—that's Dec. 26, for the record—you might think Christmas is over. On the Christmas Day evening news, local TV stations are already posting Christmas tree pick-up sites and times. Some trees hang around for a week to give a festive atmosphere to New Year's Eve and Day, then come down. On Jan. 2, Valentine's Day candy is in the stores.

That fits with the world's Christmas season, but the Church has something a little different going on. December is largely taken up with Advent. The idea is preparation, but not in buying presents and food. It's about a preparation of repentance for celebrating the coming of God in the flesh, Jesus, who will die to save us from our sins.

## **Christmas Isn't Just One Day**

The Church's celebration of Christmas does not begin with December and end on Christmas, with New Year's Day tacked on the end. In the Western Church, it begins on Christmas and continues until Epiphany. That day—Jan. 6—is when we celebrate the arrival of the Magi to worship Jesus. By tradition, these twelve days from Christmas through Epiphany comprise the Twelve Days of Christmas.

How did that happen? Nobody knows. Epiphany is a much older feast than Christmas, but it's largely forgotten by most, lost in the shuffle by many, and celebrated by a few. Now how did *that* happen?

### **The Original Christmas**

By the late fourth century, Epiphany was celebrated on Jan. 6. The earliest known reference dates from 361, and in those days the references indicate not just the appearance of the kings—*epiphany* is an English form of a Greek word meaning “appearance” or “manifestation”—but also the appearance or manifestation, the epiphany, of God, including His birth.

It's not that there wasn't Christmas. This is Christmas as well as a celebration of all the other events in the life of the young Jesus up to and including His Baptism and first public miracle at the wedding in Cana. In short, it's a big day.

## **Developments in the Western Church**

In the Western Church, events began to spin off from Epiphany. By the sixth century, Dec. 25 had become the celebration of Christ's birth. His Baptism was celebrated after Epiphany, so Epiphany itself focused on the arrival of the kings who, not being Jews, give it the significance of the appearance, or manifestation, of the Messiah to the Gentiles. Divisions cease. Jesus appeared not only as the Chosen One of Israel but the Lord of all nations.

## **Developments in the Eastern Church**

The same doesn't hold for the Eastern Church, where the day retained its original character. Many adopted Dec. 25 as the feast of Christ's birth but kept the celebration of His Baptism on Epiphany. There's the added complication that Jan. 6 in the older, Julian calendar (still used liturgically by the Eastern Church) is the equivalent of Jan. 19 in the Gregorian calendar used in the West. Confusing!

In the Eastern Church, the day is more commonly called the Theophany—the divine appearance or divine manifestation—and is considered the third most important feast in the church's calendar (Easter is first and Pentecost second). So, while there aren't Twelve Days of Christmas for our brethren in the Eastern Church, Theophany is more in line with the original intent of what we in the West call Epiphany.

## **And Then Came Vatican II**

To complicate matters further, after a millennium and a half of usage, Rome decided at its last council, Vatican II in the early 1960s, to make Epiphany a movable feast. Now it's no longer on Jan. 6 but on the Sunday after the first Saturday in January. So, if you were to listen to Rome, there aren't Twelve Days of Christmas in the West now either!

But for us Lutherans—those who seek to hold to the catholic (not Catholic), evangelical faith—we can look to our latest hymnal, *Lutheran Service Book*, and find that Epiphany is still happily listed as Jan. 6.

## **What Is Feast of Stephen?**

“Good King Wenceslaus looked out on the Feast of Stephen.” Now, if you think Epiphany got lost in the shuffle, what about this Feast of Stephen? It's Dec. 26, the day after Christmas.

Stephen is the first recorded martyr for the Christian faith. It is the custom of the Church to commemorate someone not on the day of his earthly birth but the day of his birth to eternal life (his death). So it only makes sense that the first person to have been born to eternal life by martyrdom for his faith is celebrated right after the earthly birth of Him who came to make eternal life available to us.

## **Who Is This Wenceslaus?**

Wenceslaus was a martyr for the Christian faith just like the first one, Stephen, on whose feast he looked out (according to his legend, at least). He served as the duke of Bohemia, now part of the Czech Republic, in the early 900s. He's called good because, despite his pagan mother, he kept the Christian faith of his grandmother, St. Ludmilla, who was herself converted by saints Cyril and Methodius, the “Apostles to the Slavs.” He was, according to tradition, a pious and prayerful Christian leader, killed at the hands of his pagan, power-hungry brother.

So what was Wenceslaus doing looking out on the Feast of Stephen? Tradition says that he spotted a man scrounging for food and asked his page where the man lived. In mercy, he then set out with his page to bring the man and his family aid. The page started faltering due to the cold and snow, but when he followed in Wenceslaus's footsteps, he is said to have found the ground warm to his feet.

## **How to Celebrate the Twelve Days of Christmas**

You can still follow in the good king's footsteps. John Mason Neale's carol says, “Therefore, Christian men, be sure, wealth or rank possessing, Ye who now will bless the poor, shall yourselves find blessing.”

That means that from Christmas Day onward, all the fun and festivities are just beginning! You have twelve more days to celebrate, so leave those decorations up, right on up through Twelfth Night (Jan. 5–6). Also, check with your pastor. Many churches have a special service each day of the Twelve Days of Christmas to commemorate Christ's Incarnation—His coming to earth in the flesh—for your salvation.

Simply put, the appearance or manifestation of God is just too big to contain in one day! That's why the Church doesn't. Instead, it extends the celebration of God's coming among us to twelve days, starting at Christmas. Don't let the world, the mall, or any calendar tell you any differently!

## **ST. JOHN'S CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING**

NOVEMBER 12, 2019

The November 12, 2019, meeting was called to order by President Vance Oelkers at 7:00 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dave Watkins, Curt Anderson, Lisa Flerlage, Pam Reistad, Beth Saurer, Lori Siegfried, Clayton Petersen, Darrel Bahn, Dale Siegfried, Vance Oelkers, Pastor James, Donna Bailey.

**OPENING PRAYER:** Pastor Groleau

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:** M/S/P to accept the secretary's report for October 8, 2019, as written.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Net Operating Income: \$(6,843.73). Net Increase in Designated Assets: \$6,049.89. Net Income (Loss) \$(793.84). M/S/P to accept the Treasurer's report, as written.

M/S/P to engage Paychex to handle our bi-monthly payroll and all related government reporting.

### **ELDERS' REPORT:**

Set schedules for Prayers and Communion Assistants

Discussed Member Contacts - will continue to reach out to active and inactive members

Pastor James enrollment in the PLI (Pastor Leadership Institute) will be postponed until Nov 2020

Working on Pastor Review and Self-Performance Appraisal.

The Elders acted on:

Changing church secretary's hours to 3.5 hours per day, Monday through Thursday, effective January 2020. This is a change from 3 hrs per day, Monday through Friday and is being done due to low administrative needs on Friday.

Approved changes in membership of:

Transfer out for Kristen Carlson to ULC (LCMS) in Minneapolis and Gloria Dirksen to New Life (LCMS) in Hugo.

Transfer in for Diane Waksdahl, Ruby Harris and Joseph Chiarelli

### **TRUSTEES' REPORT:**

The dormer on the roof over the east entrance is now in place. It is not yet completely finished, but is whether tight.

The electric work in the church attics is completed. The additional insulation will be added soon.

The clocks in the church and timers for the parking lot have been set for winter hours.

Some outside light bulbs have been replaced.

The snow removal from the sidewalks and parking lot has begun. Dave Bracken and Adam Meyer are doing this.

Dave Bracken had ask this fall for some help with the janitorial work. Stacey Rupe now shares nine hours of Dave's work time with him. This has allowed for some additional deeper cleaning to be completed.

Waste Management has raised their rates so we are working to get a different waste company.

### **BOARD OF EDUCATION:**

Hallelujah Harvest Festival: we served 204 meals and there were 139 kids. Thank you cards will be sent to the various businesses that made donations.

The Sunday School Christmas program will be during the Sunday morning worship service, followed by Jesus' birthday party on December 15. Treat and gift bags will be given to the Sunday School and CASE children.

The Sunday School kids put together 10 baby quilts and have been working on making Christmas cards for the shut-ins.

Youth Fundraiser: Saturday, November 23, the two boards and youth will meet at 11:00 to organize the wreath orders and have pizza. The wreaths will be distributed on Sunday, November 24. The youth will make about \$200 with the sale of the wreaths. Also on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, we will have youth plan activities for January, February and March.

### **STEWARDSHIP BOARD:**

Stewardship Sunday, November 17, will include Carol Schleicher leading congregational members through their own identification of God-given Spiritual Redemptive Gifts. This will be done after the church service. It will also include a special children's message, during the church service, at which time special bracelets will be given and explained to the children.

Stan has worked to expand the Scrip card program to include more vendors. Orders for cards from the additional vendors will be taken once a month starting on Sunday, November 17. The current vendor's cards will still be available every Sunday.

We plan to make the year 2020 offering envelopes available on December 4.

The board still has two empty seats unfilled.

### **YOUTH & FAMILY BOARD:**

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During December Lori will contact the Salvation Army about bell ringing and get a sign up sheet ready for any members/families who are willing to volunteer.

### **SOCIAL MINISTRY:**

Social Ministry met November 7, 2019. Kathy Carlson attended our meeting and gave us a review of the coat drive that was held on November 2, 2019. The coat drive went well and many left with warm coats, hats and mittens. Social ministry helped by assisting with the registration, serving cookies, coffee, cider and water. Next year we will have more cookies, 15 dozen wasn't enough and we will not have coffee. We will serve juice or lemonade. We served cider this year that was left from the Hallelujah Harvest Festival. The coloring pictures worked very well for the small children and the movie in the Choir room was popular. The food drive has gotten off to a very good start. People seem to like having the food bags visible on the front pews and the sign Pam made for Packing The Pews. Pam Waters suggested having children bring up food donations during the services in November when the offering is collected. Pam has been working on the bulletin board honoring our veterans. It is almost finished, she has a few more pictures that she needs to get. Kara Grant is working on the bulletin board outside the Youth Room. She is highlighting our youth. We talked about the Heritage, Happiness & Hope service. We would like to do two services in 2020, one in the spring and one in the fall. The shut-ins who came really seemed to enjoy it. Sharry Watkins is delivering the donated shoes for the Shoe Away Hunger campaign. We sorted and paired up the shoes. We delivered 27 pounds of pasta to the Salvation Army on 10-23-19. **EVANGELISM:**

We will have a church ad in “Path to Faith” which is put out this month by the Mower Co Shopper. Cost is \$95.00.

We would like to have a visitor pack for newcomers. It will have a church brochure and magnet as well as other information. We will need to find an appropriate place to keep the packs so that they are readily available. Perhaps have something in the bulletin to let visitors know about the pack if they are interested.

Coat drive - 218 coats were given out to approximately 106 families. It went very well to join with Holy Cross and Our Saviors Brownsdale in this outreach. We gave out information on the 3 churches as well as extra Portals of Prayer and extra Bibles. Next year we would like to provide children’s Bible storybooks or other literature to give out to the kids. Social Ministry was a big help as they provided and served coffee, juice and cookies and did the registration of participants. 44 families said that they would be willing to have a home visit. We will be calling these families and visiting them with a loaf of bread and information on our church. We would welcome any interested congregation members to help us with these outreach visits.

**PASTOR'S REPORT:** October work

Sunday Mornings – Bible Study We’ll be going through a series of Bibles studies I’ve compiled that will help us grow spiritually.

Thursday Evenings – Grey Matters We are going through a study titled, “God's Word in Every Season”.

Each Saturday & Sunday Worship Visiting Shut-Ins

Completing last class online for Outreach Conference on Church Revitalization and Church Planting by the National Mission Board.

Attended MNS board of Mission meeting Planning the 2020 Church Year with a theme of “Back to the Basics” Series of Bible Studies

Series of Reading challenges/programs

Advent / Christmas planning and rest of Church Year

Planning a November meeting with POBLO, Pastors Olana and Wessel and congregation members to explore better means and skills to reach out into the community.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Three of the church laptops run on Windows 7 and will need to be replaced or updated to Windows 10 by January 14, 2020. It will be looked into by Dale Siegfried.

We plan to clean out the youth room. We will search for people or groups who may want some things.

**ADJOURNMENT:** M/S/P to adjourn @ 8:20 p.m.

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

Respectfully submitted: Donna Bailey, Council Secretary

**St. John's Lutheran Church Financial Recap**  
**January 1, 2019 through September 30, 2019**

<b>Undesignated Assets</b>	<b>Balance 1/1/19</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Balance 9/30/19</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Cash	\$213,294.28	(\$9,540.34)	\$203,753.94	Undesignated Assets represent the funds available for general operating purposes.
Prepays/Other Assets	15,955.70	1,406.85	17,362.55	
Buildings & Land	3,096,411.00	0.00	3,096,411.00	
Liabilities	(12,799.70)	1,758.94	(11,040.76)	
<b>Net Operating Income (Loss)</b>		<b><u>(\$6,374.55)</u></b>		
<b>Designated Assets</b>				
Building Fund	106,706.68	6,105.43	112,812.11	Designated Assets represent all of the various funds that can be contributed to for the designated purpose.
Needy Family Fund	2,167.08	0.00	2,167.08	
Women's Ministry Fund	2,001.95	(43.15)	1,958.80	
Rachel's Hope Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Musical Equipment Fund	182.03	101.65	283.68	
Library Books Fund	412.89	(18.72)	394.17	
Choir Robes Fund	3,111.00	0.00	3,111.00	
Sunday School Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Memorial Fund	12,394.04	2,042.07	14,436.11	
Praise Band Fund	3,135.40	0.00	3,135.40	
Youth Fund	10,298.05	(3,344.54)	6,953.51	
Scrip Fund	12,385.83	2,357.19	14,743.02	
Sumner School Fund	8,894.23	(147.51)	8,746.72	
Endowment Fund	42,896.25	(1,579.95)	41,316.30	
<b>Increase (Decrease) in Designated Assets</b>		<b><u>\$5,472.47</u></b>		
<b>Net Income (Loss)</b>		<b><u>(\$902.08)</u></b>		

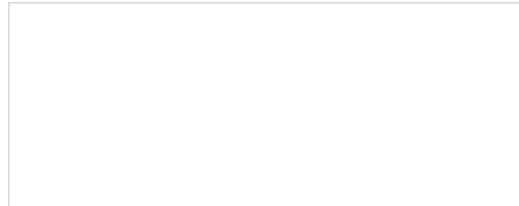


**December, 2019**  
**NEWSLETTER**



## ST. JOHN'S NEWS

Return Service Requested



**Snow Birds:** Please give the office your “snow bird” address and dates you will leave and return. Newsletters returned back to us cost us 70 cents.