

December
2018

NEWS FOR ALL

SUNDAY WORSHIP

9:00am

Sunday School
9:15am—10:00am
(during the school year)

Holy Communion
1st & 4th Sunday

PASTOR

Gail Sowell
Office Hours: 9am-1pm
Tuesday-Friday
(*And by appointment*)

SECRETARY'S HOURS

Monday-Friday
9:00-1:00

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Items for print **MUST** be submitted by the 20th of the preceding month.

Pastor's Ponderings



Thanksgiving. I know, Thanksgiving has already come and gone; I'm writing this on Black Friday. But we're gearing up for Advent, the season of expectant waiting for Jesus, both the newborn baby and the risen Savior. And while we *give thanks* to God for the salvation he offers us, I want to remind you that, at least in our time and place, the Christmas season is also a time of *giving*: *giving* out of the *thanks* we owe to God. So here are some suggestions as you're "making your list, checking it twice."

How much did you spend on your Thanksgiving dinner? Whether you provided the entire meal or contributed a portion of one, would you be willing to give that amount to our Sunday School's collection for the ELCA Good Gifts project?

Have you purchased your raffle tickets yet? At only \$20, each ticket offers the possibility of winning \$1000 or another cash gift. Give a ticket to someone, or someones, on your gift list, and support our goal of sending \$10,000 to Puerto Rico for relief from last year's hurricane. (I still have 30 tickets in my office that you can either sell or buy!)

Realizing how blessed we are to be safe from fires and floods and hunger, send a gift to Lutheran Disaster Relief or Lutheran World Hunger Appeal. If you make your checks out to me, designating which fund you're supporting, I'll include that in my year-end giving for each of these organizations—I'll need your gifts by Christmas Day, please. I'll copy your check and give it to our Financial Secretary, who can record it on your giving statement for tax purposes.

Somewhere in this newsletter is a small piece called "Reverse Advent Calendar." It's a suggested list of foods that can be collected, one day at a time, to be given to a food pantry for Christmas. There are hungry people who rely on Circle of Joy—what a lovely gift that would be!

If you're healthy and able, donate blood during Advent. The need is crucial! Contact a local blood center and give the gift of life.

Part of the Lutheran Communion service includes the words "not as we ought, but as we are able." Because God has given us everything, we *ought* to give freely and generously. Most of us are "able" to give more than we do. At this holy season, I invite you to prayerfully consider giving to one of these needs, or any other you support.

Reverse Advent Calendar: each day add an item to a box.

On Christmas Eve donate the contents to a food bank.

- 12/1--box of cereal
- 12/2—peanut butter
- 12/3—stuffing mix
- 12/4—boxed potatoes
- 12/5—macaroni and cheese
- 12/6—canned fruit
- 12/7—canned tomatoes
- 12/8—canned tuna
- 12/9—dessert mix
- 12/10-jar of applesauce
- 12/11-canned sweet potatoes
- 12/12-cranberry sauce
- 12/13-canned beans
- 12/14-box of crackers
- 12/15-package of rice
- 12/16-package of oatmeal
- 12/17-package of pasta
- 12/18-spaghetti sauce
- 12/19-chicken noodle soup
- 12/20-tomato soup
- 12/21-canned corn
- 12/22-canned mixed vegetables
- 12/23-canned carrots
- 12/24-canned green beans



Reflections from Rose **Here we are in Advent, with all its ANTICIPATION . . .**

This is certainly a BUSY season. Preparations for church and family celebrations, balanced with quiet times to spend in worship, reflection, and communing with the One without whom there would be nothing to celebrate, or anticipate with hope-filled JOY!

Luke 21: 25-36 was part of my quiet time this week. Although I've read this many times before, it struck me a bit different this time. Especially verse 34. Jesus is speaking and instructing His followers to watch for signs that would indicate He's getting ready to return. Jesus says "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly..." I had to GOOGLE *dissipation*. The definition I received was "a process in which energy is used or lost without accomplishing useful work". Hmm...I think I've experienced that. Funny, (or not) that this type of activity could keep me from watchfully anticipating what God is doing or getting ready to do. I've been reflecting much on this lately. *I pray a blessed Advent and Christmas season for you and that DISSIPATION won't get in the way!*





St. John Family News!

We lit 48 candles in loving remembrance of dear ones we wanted to honor this year on **All Saints Sunday**. Nancy Leffel, Lorraine Kralcik, and Leonard Leffel were especially noted as members who passed away from our presence this past year.

We also had a special time of dedication of our Cemetery Directory Gazebo.

Sunday, November 11th we honored and expressed our **thanks to our Veterans**.



There was also a special time of asking God's blessing on the beautiful Handmade Quilts created by the Quilters of St. John. **25 Quilts** were delivered to the **Women's Shelter in Wausau**. *Many thanks to those who help provide needed supplies that enable the Women to continue their warm ministry of caring!*



THRIVENT has also contributed to these community outreaches through **Action Team Project Seed Money**.

Opening of Deer Season was right around the corner too, so we prayed for **God's blessing and protection over our deer hunters too!**

Blessing upon Blessing !



It was our JOY to celebrate the Holy Baptism of **Elias Daniel Heidmann** on November 11th too. He was born to Cody Heidmann and Heidi Leffel-Heidmann on June 26, 2018. His sponsors are Skylee Manecke and Corina Dickman. Welcome Elias and blessings to all!

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The **Thanksgiving Eve worship** was held at St. Stephen this year. 50 people attended, and we enjoyed warm fellowship around pie and coffee after the service. Thanks to the Mill Church of Edgar who provided wonderful music, and to St. Stephen for their planning, preparation, and warm hospitality for this community time of giving thanks!



RAFFLE for PUERTO RICO Continues!

Partnering for Puerto Rico is our joint fundraiser with St. Stephen to raise \$10,000 to help meet the enormous needs that remain following last year's hurricane. There will be only 500 tickets sold, costing \$20.00 a piece. Drawing will be held on Dec. 16th. 1st prize is \$1000, 2nd Prize- \$500, 3rd—5th \$100, 6th—9th-\$50. **Get your tickets TODAY from any member of St. John/St. Stephen!**

*Proceeds go to Lutheran Disaster Relief in Puerto Rico, you need not be present to win. A POTLUCK will be enjoyed by all who attend the drawing at **11:30am***

St. John members are asked to bring a dessert or salad,
St. Stephen members are asked to bring a main dish.



Gazing Ahead



We'll be decorating the Christmas tree Sunday, Dec. 2nd.

Families are invited to bring an ornament from home to put on the tree. We invite ALL to be involved in our ADVENT ANTICIPATION at St. John! The Women will add the Crismons.



Of course, we're ALL anticipating the **Sunday School Christmas program** which will be presented on **Sunday, December 16th** during the service. They've already been practicing and want to encourage parents to make every effort to have their kiddos here for these last practices.



The Women's Annual Cookie Walk and Bake Sale will follow the service on December 16th. They invite ALL to bake/bring and buy for a delightful assortment of holiday treats to enjoy in your home. *Thanks!*



The St. John & St. Stephen Joint Community Mission Project comes to a close December 16th. We will distribute the collection of SOCKS & MITTENS with the Circle of Joy on December 19th. **WANTED:** 2 Volunteers to help distribute these gifts on Dec. 19th at the Edgar Village Hall.

There is a tote in the Narthex to receive your donations of winter socks & mittens. *Thank you to ALL for your warm generosity!*



From Your Church Mice

Merry Christmas! Well, not yet, I guess we should say "Blessed Advent!"

This is a really special time of year for all your Church Mice! We love to watch as the Christmas Trees are set up and decorated, and listen to the children practicing their Christmas Programs. We love all the crumbs that are dropped, all the good smells of Christmas cookies and breads and cakes and, oh my, I'm so hungry I can't wait till Sunday! We love the Christmas music (even though we don't hear much of that until Christmas Eve), and the collections of "good gifts" and socks and mittens and giving trees. We can't wait for the Women's Salad Lunch before Bible Study on December 11 and the Cookie Walk on December 16, and we heard there might even be caroling one Sunday after worship!

All your Church Mice (Tully and Merry Twinkle and Miri and Frederick) wish all of you a very blessed Christmas! See you next year!



Women of the ELCA

Next Bible Study—Tuesday, December 11, at 1pm. (at St. Stephen).
It will be preceded by a wonderful Salad Luncheon.
(Bring a dish to pass!)

Next General meeting—Sunday. March 10, at 10:10am.
Next Funeral Group to serve is Group #2



MUCH appreciation to those who participated in the **Thankoffering** this year.

The gift collection for **Operation Christmas** which goes to Homme Youth & Family Services in Wittenberg will be **ending December 9th**. We'll be delivering the gifts during the week of the 10th-14th. *If anyone will be going to Wittenberg and would be interested in making this delivery, please talk to Sharon Schumacker or Vicky Finke.* Many thanks to those who have generously given. A tote remains in the narthex to receive your donations.

Cookie Walk & Bake Sale



Your delicious **cookie and other baked goods donations** would be much appreciated for the upcoming **COOKIE WALK and BAKE SALE on Dec. 16th**. Help would also be appreciated with setting up and overseeing this much anticipated annual event!

2019 St. John Women of the ELCA Yearbook!

Information has been gathered, and the 2019 Yearbook for the St. John women of the ELCA will be going to press SOON. If you have any changes in contact information, get them to Vicky Finke ASAP!



*Ladies' Salad Luncheon
and
Bible Study Event
at St. Stephen Lutheran
Church Edgar,
on Tuesday, Dec. 11th
NOON—2:00PM*

LADIES you are invited! to a Special Christmas Salad Luncheon begins at NOON. Please bring a dish to share. BIBLE STUDY begins around 1pm (after lunch).



JOIN US!

We usually share in a delightful time of singing our favorite Christmas Hymns/Carols/Songs before we part company.

FYI—St. John Lutheran Church, ELCA is now part of **WAOW's automated CLOSINGS and DELAYS** information network. If there is a need to cancel worship services due to weather, keep your eyes on **channel 9** to receive confirmation of cancellation.

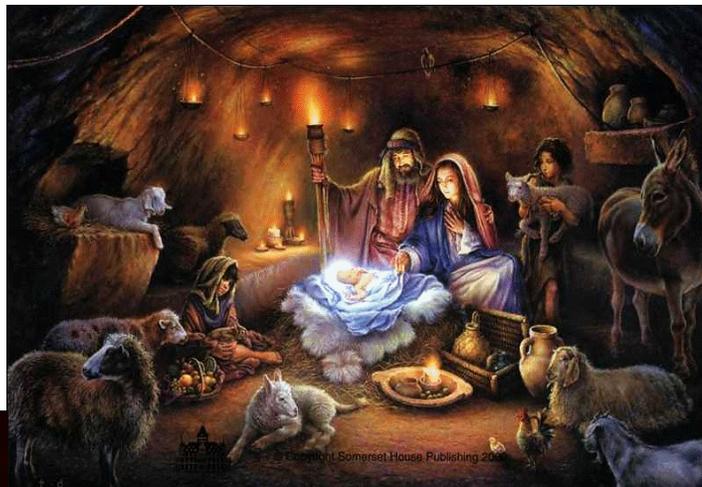


A Quick Peek Ahead

The **Christmas Eve** services will be at
4pm—Candlelight Worship
at St. John

6:30pm—Musical Prelude

7:00pm—Candlelight Worship
At St. Stephen



Blessed CHRISTmas
JOY to ALL!



Christmas Day services will be at
9am at St. John (*Communion*)
10:30 at St. Stephen.

A NEW YEAR is right around the corner. The **Annual Meeting** is on January 20th.

Annual Reports from Ministry leaders will be **due** to the secretary on **January 8th**.



Elizabeth Bartsch

Administrative Assistant to
the Bishop of the NW Synod

Here's something to think about in 2019–2020 . . .

THE PASSION PLAY TOUR 2020 IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MARTIN LUTHER

Come and join me as we travel to Germany and Austria and visit major Martin Luther sites, encounter the **Dachau Concentration Camp**, and visit **Sound of Music sites**, historic **castles**, and **beautiful landmarks**. The highlight will be experiencing the **unique Passion Play** performed by villagers every ten years.

As we travel with tour guide, *David Harper*, we will be deeply rooted in the stories of these cities, discovering the history that has shaped the villagers and residents in and around the Bavarian Alps for hundreds of years.

Passion Play organizers require a \$300 deposit, due by March 10, 2019 to secure your spot. Package price of \$5,192 (per person, double occupancy) includes airfare from Minneapolis, 11 days private tour coach transportation, 10 nights in superior tourist class / first class hotels, most meals and tour destination admission fees. Final payment will be due January 8, 2020.

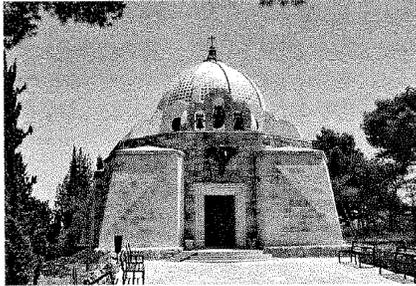
*From the
Secretary*

It has been my privilege to get to know Elizabeth through spending time with her at "Soul Support" events and through day-to-day contact through Emails and other Synod Communications. She is the "nuts and bolts" that keep things running smoothly in our synod at the administrative level. Liz has exuberant faith and is a real person of encouragement. I would enjoy learning and traveling with her. I have more information in the office if you're interested! Rose

"This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and 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 heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.

Bishop's Christmas Message 2018

Dear Friends of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin,



I'm writing this the day after I get home from my first ever trip to the Holy Land. My husband Randy and I decided that after three decades as pastors we should make a pilgrimage to all the places we've been preaching about for so many years. I was excited to see Bethlehem, Jerusalem, the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Temple Wall, and Athens, Corinth and Rome and all the other landmarks of our Spiritual Geography. I was especially excited to see Bethlehem.

While I was in Bethlehem, I heard Pastor Lori Ruge-Jones, a gifted story teller recite from heart, Luke 2, the Christmas story. We were in a beautiful chapel on the site where according to tradition; the angels announced to the Shepherds the good news of Jesus' birth. Imagine these familiar words, spoken from the heart, echoing off the stones of the Shepherd's Field chapel.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

The group of pilgrims I was with sat in silence for a few moments before we sang Christmas carols: *O Little Town of Bethlehem, Angels we have heard on High, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, Silent Night, Away in the Manger...* It was a holy moment and highlight of our trip to the Holy Land. It was simple, beautiful, goose bump, Hallmark Card moment....

BUT the undercurrent of that moment is more complicated. As tourists we were well aware that Bethlehem in 2018 is a city controlled by the Palestinians and the surrounding area is controlled by Israel. It is a land that has been fought over throughout known history by those who considered it Holy; Jews, Muslims and Christians. It is a place that builds walls to separate, and struggles with daily violence and conflict.

The Shepherds of first century were well aware that Bethlehem was under foreign occupation by Rome. The Roman Caesar, Augustus sent out a decree that Jews were to be enrolled in their hometown to be taxed. There were uprisings and revolts against Roman rule of the Jews. It was and is complicated and there is no quick fix.

But all of that is far away or long ago. How about the here and now? Is your life like a beautiful peaceful Hallmark card wishing season's greetings or is your life more complicated like a major geopolitical conflict? Or is it somewhere in between? Regardless, there is one thing that is true, in the midst of it all God put on flesh and came down to us, to live among us. In the midst of it all, Jesus was born.

Rev. Lauri Sta. Johnson

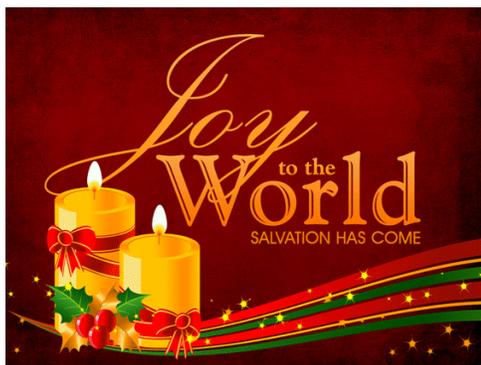


GOOD NEWS

St. John Lutheran Church ELCA
120500 County Road N
Edgar, WI 54426

We're on the Web
www.stjohnelcaedgar.org

December 2018



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Deadline for Jan. 2019 News



December 27th

Joint Mission Statement of St. John/St. Stephen Lutheran Parish, ELCA:

*"Saints united to be the body of Christ in the world, freed by grace
to live faithfully, witness boldly, and serve joyfully."*