

GOOD NEWS FROM ST JOHN

January
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

My favorite Advent blessing is this: *May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, and the peace of the Christ Child.* By the time the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season is past, we may finally find time to ponder the significance of these words—just as Mary pondered the words the angel Gabriel spoke to the shepherds that holy night.

Advent was the time of joyful expectation, waiting for Jesus: for the baby to be born, and for the King to come again. My favorite words from a Christmas carol are from *O Little Town of Bethlehem: O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray; cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.* Wouldn't that be an excellent New Year's resolution? to pray daily that Jesus would cast out our sin, so that he could be born anew in us each day?

Our trip to Italy was a whirlwind, really too much to fit into a six-day tour: two nights in Rome, two in Florence, two in Venice. We saw churches, palaces, and museums, and if it weren't for the date stamp on our photos, we'd have no idea what city they were from! I was filled with awe and wonder at the basilica (St. Peter's cathedral in Rome) and the Vatican (the smallest country in the world), where we wondered and pondered at Michaelangelo's painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. We missed Pope Francis by a matter of hours. It pleased me greatly when I learned, on our return, that the Pope has invited the Roman Catholic world to begin using the contemporary wording of the Lord's Prayer!

Pasta and wine, pizza and desserts—so much for a holiday diet! We enjoyed one excellent meal after another, some in restaurants with 4-5 private dining rooms. On the pizza we were offered tuna fish, eggplant, and arugula, as well as the old standbys we enjoy here.

(Continued)

Pastor's Ponderings



Our tour company, Globus, knows how to generate repeat business. Three days after we returned home they notified us that *each* of us had been offered a \$250 “incentive” to book our next tour before the end of the year and travel in 2018. Next destination: the Netherlands (Holland), July 28-August 3!

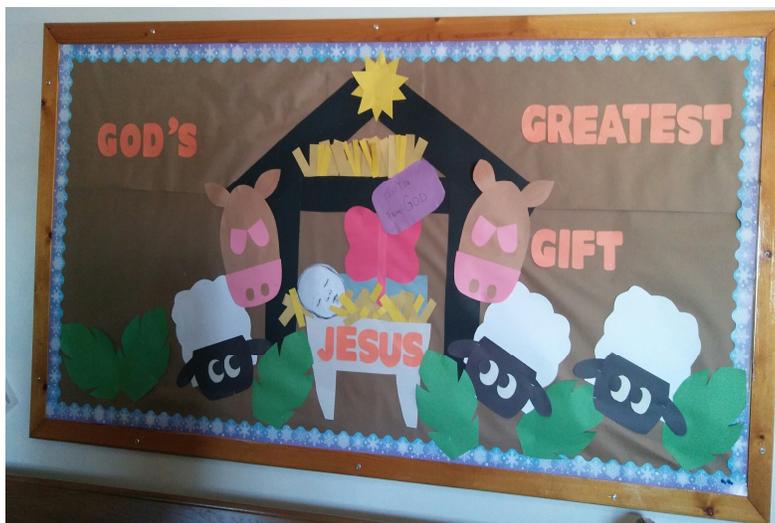
For me, the past and the present come together when I travel to other countries and see how other people live. I’ve been blessed with traveling all my life, beginning in elementary school when my grandfather took our family from Los Angeles to San Francisco by train. There have been so many “aha!” moments to expand my horizons. We may not always walk in the shoes of the people we visit, but at least we have a sense of the different customs and values in other societies. We had no formal time of worship on our trip, but we prayed in several different churches and felt a fellowship with believers we would never meet.

Wonderful as the trip was, it was a blessing and a joy to return to Edgar and realize that “business as usual” had continued in our absence. Thanks to all who helped that happen!

Read again the Christmas words by Howard Thurman: *When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and the shepherds have found their way home, the work of Christmas is begun!* Our work is always to live in the way, the truth, and the light of Jesus, our Savior.

—Pastor Gail

St. John Family News!



Our Sunday School students delivered a wonderful presentation of their Christmas program “New Star” on Sunday, December 17th in the 9am service. 148 were in attendance!

Many thanks to Lana Strasser who directed, and to those Sunday School teachers & helpers who assisted in the production.

Of course, MUCH appreciation to all our “stars” and their parents for their efforts in practicing and presenting this musical drama to turn our thoughts to Jesus, the real reason we celebrate Christmas today!



Cookie Walk



The ANNUAL Cookie Walk took place downstairs immediately following the Sunday School Christmas program. There was a wide variety of delightfully tempting Christmas treats from which to choose. Many thanks to all who baked AND shopped. \$220 was received from sales!

Operation Blessing—A good assortment of gifts were donated for Homme Youth & Family Services in Wittenberg. Many thanks to those who gave, and to Bev Umnus for delivering the gifts. 17 Quilts and \$200 were sent along with the gifts. *Blessed to be a blessing!*

The St. John & St. Stephen joint Community Mission Project received an abundant collection of warm winter socks, hats & mittens that were distributed by members of our yoked Parish to patrons of **Circle of Joy**. *Many thanks to all who shared!*

The Quilters also gifted the Circle of Joy with 7 of their handmade quilts to warmly wish their community a Merry Christmas. *A note of appreciation was received and is posted on the bulletin board.*

Sharing Christmas Joy!

The women of St. John & St. Stephen enjoyed a **Christmas Salad Luncheon** together at St. Stephen on December 12th.

A delicious buffet of many different salads, cookies and other Christmas treats were available to enjoy as each woman brought a dish to pass.



Time was shared around God's Word as together the women studied "Joy to the World" an Advent devotional found in the "Gather" magazine. A time of singing favorite Christmas hymns topped off our time together wonderfully!

Thanks to the Women of St. Stephen for hosting!

MORE Christmas JOY!

How we enjoyed the Christmas windows! Thanks to those of you who shared your Christmas reflections with us in this way. Some of the windows have been featured on the front of Sunday bulletins. We hope you've taken the time to savor each one. Some of them were created in loving memory of a dear one who is spending their first Christmas in their eternal home, some were created by Sunday School class groups. ALL of them helped us to ponder God's glorious love for us that moved him to send his Son! *Thank you.*



Fostering an attitude of **WORSHIP !**



The Sunday School again encouraged Christmas giving to those in need by sponsoring the Global Barnyard Giving Tree. They also made pretty decorative jars of Christmas sweet treats available for sale for which the proceeds went to Global Barnyard as well. \$648 has been received

to share with those in need through this worthwhile ministry of the ELCA. Thanks for your generosity!



Women of the ELCA

Next Bible Study—Tuesday, January 9, at 1pm. (at St. Stephen).

Next General meeting—Wed. March 7, at 6:30pm.
Next Funeral Group to serve is Group #2



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The 2018 Yearbook for the St. John Women of the ELCA is out. If you have any changes in the contact information printed in the book, please let Bev Umnus know.

Upcoming items of interest:

Valentine Boxes—Donations will be made to Circle of Joy or individuals that might be in need of some loving encouragement.

Spring Rally—Our Women of St. John will be hosting the Spring Rally here on April 7. The responsibilities of the host group are as follows:

- (1) provide coffee and small muffins & fruit as women arrive at 8:30am;
- (2) light refreshments at break time at 10:30am;
- (3) provide a noon lunch—soup, salad, dessert.

Hosts are reimbursed by W/ELCA Synod \$5.00 per person.

Synod Conference—is being held in April at Bethany Lutheran Church in Rice Lake. St. John Women need to send a delegate. Anyone interested? Talk to Bev.

The STEWARDSHIP PROJECT for the months of January, February, and March is Personal Care Kits: *Bath-size towels-approx. 52" x 72" (dark colors recommended)*

Bath-size bars of soap (4-5 oz.)—any brand, in original wrapping

Adult-size toothbrushes—in original wrapping. Multi-packs may be used by sealing an individual in a business envelope—NO plastic bags or wrap.

Sturdy combs

Metal nail clippers

Soon all the WHITES sales will start. It's a good time to get these items!

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Quilters Taking a BREAK!

The Quilters have been very busy and are now taking a break for an undetermined amount of time. Plans were to resume sometime in January so you will see it on the January calendar, but it has (?) after each time. So keep your eyes on the bulletins and your ears open, because the time to begin again will be announced SOON.



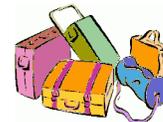
Bits & Pieces FYI

That's My Pan! was a new fundraising opportunity introduced by Susan Robers this year. It offered the opportunity to purchase personalized, quality products while helping to raise money for St. John. \$447.00 in profit was received, and many of us had the fun of giving (or receiving) some of these quality, unique Christmas gifts at the same time! Many thanks to Susan Robers, for seizing and spearheading this opportunity!

Herbie Werner recently took in 237.50 lbs of cans from the shed to be recycled. He received 55 cents per lb. They paid us an EXTRA 5 cents per lb. because we are a church! \$130.63 was deposited into the General Fund.

Our can drive began September of 2014. A total of \$1,074.39 has been deposited into the General Fund since we began. *Many thanks to Herbie & Mary Jo for taking the lead in seizing this opportunity!*

Adventures of the Church Mice . . .



Now that Pastor Gail and Rose are back from their last vacation of the year, the four of us decided we'd better come back too. It's been a while since we last shared our adventures with you. And speaking of adventures and vacations, did you know Pastor Gail was attacked by a SEAGULL in Venice??? She was walking down the street, munching on a calzone to keep her going till their late dinner (their "last supper" of the tour) when a HUGE sea gull swooped down out of the sky and snatched half the sandwich out of her hand! She was so startled she shrieked! (just like some people shriek when they see us church mice, even though we're not at all scary like that huge Italian sea gull!) It left the wrap but took half the prosciutto (that must be the right spelling, 'cause spellcheck let it go) and cheese and arugula (whatever that is). There weren't many people in that area of the canals, but everyone was laughing. I guess Pastor Gail laughed too.

We heard that story when Pastor Gail and Rose were talking about their trip. Well, I (Tully) and Twink (Merry Twinkle) heard it, and we filled in Miri and Frederick from St. Stephen so they could laugh too. (We DO laugh, we don't just squeak!) Twink heard Pastor Gail and Rose talking about something else when they were sharing their "donuts and devotions" on D-day. Pastor Gail was talking about the spirit of Christmas, and Rose sort of shrugged and said, "For me that's just every day, because Jesus was born for me and died for me and he's in my heart all the time." That's really cool, we think. It's like the spirit of mouse-ness is in OUR hearts all the time, we can't ever NOT be mice. So whenever Pastor Gail says Jesus lives in her, that must be the same.

We hope you all had a blessed Christmas, with the spirit of Jesus in you, and we wish you all a happy, safe, peace-filled new year!



A Ministry Opportunity . . .

It has been brought to our attention that there is a great personal need for help and encouragement in the life of Lori Krause. Lori is a friend of Cindy Manecke who has recently been diagnosed with Acute Myelogenous Leukemia (AML). We have been praying for her as a church family for a time already. Now we'd like to see that help go to another level.

Lori has begun chemotherapy. During treatment, her chances of infection are high, therefore visitation is limited. With limited family contact, as well as income uncertainty being a reality, Lori is uncharacteristically afraid. She is afraid of not being able to pay her bills, keep her home, and that she will lose her resolve to fight this disease.

Since we are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our world, we are called to minister help, hope, and healing in his name whenever the opportunity arises and we are able.

1. There will be a raffle on February 10th, 2018 at "Cruisin' 1724" at 1724 Merrill Ave., Wausau. *Let's get together and create some of those RAFFLE BASKETS we've gotten so good at making and donate them!*
2. Give financially. St. John has the "Charities Account" that was begun for just such giving opportunities. *If you'd like to give a gift of money to help with Lori's medical need, just mark your envelope for the Charities Account and it will be directed to Lori for you.*

Lori is a strong woman. This was witnessed when she was fighting her battle against breast cancer which was pronounced to be in remission 5 years ago. Hope is key to remaining in the fight and WINNING these kinds of battles. Hope is strengthened by the support of family, friends and the community.

The friends and family of Lori Krause extend their appreciation in advance for your consideration and support!

God's Work,
Our Hands!

Coming SOON . . .



The ANNUAL Meeting will be after the service on January 21st. **Annual reports must be to the secretary by January 10th**, so she has time to get them all put together. Please consider the report as being more than just the facts and figures of how an individual ministry account has been affected during the past year. A summary of how **people were affected** by a particular ministry would be good to hear too!



Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on **February 14th** this year. Time to start thinking about Soup Suppers . . . watch for sign up sheets

Reflections from Rose



Ok, it's NEWSLETTER time. Time to sit still and REFLECT! It's not easy. So much is going on, and HAS gone on...

Italy was GRAND! So much beauty. Insights into art, architecture, history and people! Wonderful, I'm STILL savoring & digesting it all.

I (we) actually SAW Michelangelo's painting in the Sistine Chapel. It was astounding! I had thought it was just all kinds of swirly cherubs, but it's NOT! It's actually the artist's representations of Biblical history and characters: like creation, Adam & Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Noah, the prophets...it was amazing. The more breathtaking art we saw in palaces, museums and churches, the more I was impressed with how God has been touching human lives and rocking their worlds for centuries upon centuries. Some express their encounters/understanding of God with paints, some with a sculptor's tool, some in a tapestry, others in music or words. But the same God continues to touch OUR lives now today. We wrestle with understanding who he is, how he has worked and how he continues to work.

I LOVED having a local tour guide take us through the Uffizi Art Museum in Florence. To see all that beautiful art and hear the stories behind it, or about the artist was really FUN. For instance, did you know that if you're looking at a painting and one of the people in the painting is looking directly out at you, the observer, it's probably a self portrait of the artist? I had never heard that before!

Anyway, there was just so much to take in.

And then, it was such a blessing to return to St. John and see the Christmas windows, the Nativity Scenes, and all the other preparations for Christmas. *(I had accomplished NONE of my own Christmas prep BEFORE we left.)*

Joy in going and joy in returning. Whether I'm **coming** or **going** I am BLESSED!

(And that's a good thing, because some days I'm not sure which it is!)



Pictured above is Michelangelo's representation of "Creation".

*I didn't take the picture (we weren't allowed!).
But seeing it "in real life" was breath-taking!*

*Embrace the New Year Everyone,
Emmanuel!
(GOD is with us!)*



The values of the ELCA are grounded in faith, in our biblical and Lutheran confessional sources and our love of God and neighbor: Forgiveness and reconciliation; dignity, compassion and justice; inclusion and diversity; courage and openness to change; faithful stewardship of God's creation and gifts. They speak to the way this church lives and practices our faith, and they will guide how we journey forward in Christ as church together. ELCA.org/future.

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Each new year brings us new opportunities to know Him more, to walk in faith, and grow by His grace.

May your year be blessed in the Lord.

"...Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." — 1 CORINTHIANS 2:9 KJV

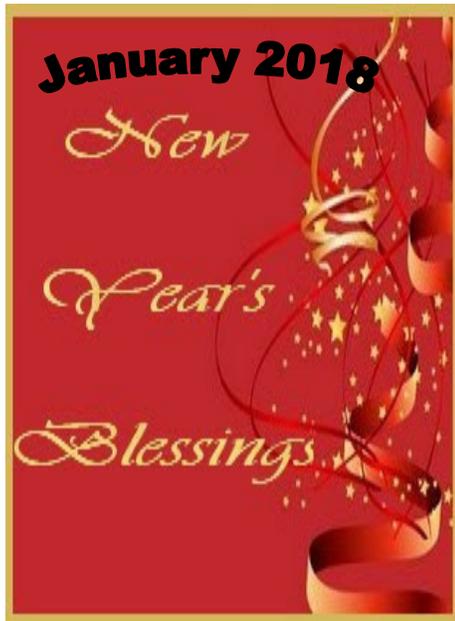
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Jim Lewis

GOOD NEWS

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We're on the Web
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Deadline for Feb. 2018 News



January 21st

St. John/St. Stephen Joint Mission Statement:

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