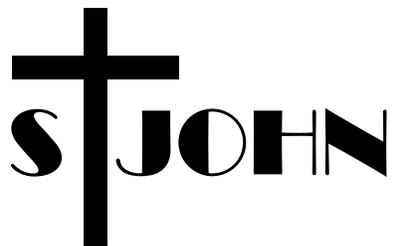


GOOD NEWS FROM ST JOHN



January
2020

Pastor's Ponderings



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.

"The Power of Hope" was the theme of the Rose Parade on this New Year's Day. Having grown up in Southern California, I'm an avid fan of this annual extravaganza. My grandparents lived just a block south of Colorado Street, the main parade route, and as a toddler (I'm told), I sat on my Grandpa's shoulders (he was 6'2") and wanted "more horses" and "more music." (Things haven't changed much: I still love horses and music!)

"The Power of Hope" is one of the foundations of our Christian faith.

Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your **hope** in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God (Psalm 43:5).

We rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance produces character; and character produces **hope**. And **hope** does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given to us (Romans 5:3-5).

May the God of **hope** fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with **hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

Faith is the assurance of things **hoped** for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

"The Power of Hope" is what I wish for all of you reading this, and indeed, for all members of St. John and St. Stephen. (Of course, I wish that for all people everywhere—but true **hope** begins at home.) And I have to ask, do *you* have this **hope**, this *trust* in the power of God's love, in the promise of forgiveness of all sin? I ask this because in my 20 years of ordained ministry I've stood at many a bedside of a dying member who was simply terrified of death. It makes me so sad to realize that some Christians aren't taking advantage of the enormous "power of hope" that's offered so freely and fully to us.

Do you know God? I don't mean, do you know *about* God—do you know God in a personal way, as your loving heavenly Father who desires only good for you? Do you know Jesus in a personal way, as your loving Savior who died so that you don't need to fear death? "There is no fear in love; perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment" (1 John 4:18).

If you make a New Year's resolution for 2020, may it be to get more deeply acquainted with God, with Jesus, so your whole life can be lived in the "peace that passes all understanding" (Philippians 4:7), and in the **joy** that knowing Christ can bring!

St. John Family News!



Our Sunday School students delivered a wonderful presentation of their Christmas program "The Symbols of Christmas" on Sunday, December 22nd during the 9am service. 188 were in attendance!

Many thanks to Lana Strasser who directed the program which was based on a play by Felicia Mollohan. Much appreciation also to the Sunday School teachers & helpers who assisted in the practices and presentation, as well as to the parents who faithfully made sure their students attended practices!

Of course, a big "thumbs up" to all our young people for their efforts in practicing and presenting this production to honor Jesus Christ our Savior, the real reason we celebrate Christmas!

Cookie Walk

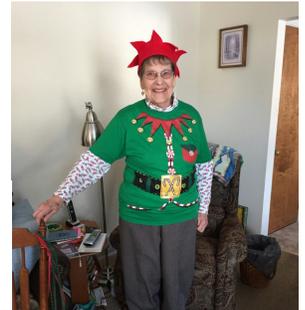


The ANNUAL Cookie Walk took place downstairs immediately following the Sunday School Christmas program. There was a wide variety of delightfully tempting Christmas treats from which to choose. Many thanks to all who baked AND shopped. \$229.00 was received from sales!

Sharing Christmas Joy!



The women of St. John & St. Stephen enjoyed a **Christmas Salad Luncheon** together at St. Stephen on December 10th at noon. In spite of challenging weather conditions, 9 women gathered to share a festive holiday luncheon and spend time in God's word. *Many thanks to the women of St. Stephen for hosting!*



One of Santa's elves showed up at the Women's Christmas Luncheon!

Operation Christmas



Thank you to everyone who helped contribute to the **Operation Christmas project** by taking tags from the Giving Tree and fulfilling needs of the **two local families** and **Homme** programs. We had great participation and were able to provide numerous gifts for each child and family, as well as many of the Homme needs. What a great group effort! I'm very proud to be a part of this giving congregation! *Pam Stahel*

Thanks to Pam for spearheading this Christmas outreach !

Many thanks to everyone that donated to **ELCA Good Gifts** this past summer (*Christmas in July*) and at Christmas. There was a total of \$400.00 raised this year. Thanks!



Bonnie Bargender



Change for "Change" Ministry

This ministry focuses on making charitable giving more fun, accessible (*especially to the children*), and transparent while supporting local charities in need where small donations have a meaningful impact. In other words, it helps people use their change for change! The first quarter of this ministry (October through December 2019) the giving total was \$262.90, and it went to the *Circle of Joy* in Edgar. The next quarter is designated to go to the Stratford Food Pantry. The Council would like to encourage parishioners to submit charities of their choice to be considered as recipients in the future.

Christmas Windows 2019



Ahh...Christmas Windows. A newer tradition here at St. John, begun about 4 or 5 years ago with a suggestion from Louann Miles. Part of Advent anticipation. Decorating the bountiful, beautiful windowsills of the church in preparation of the coming celebration of Emmanuel!

Nobody knew at that time if it would catch on, or how long it would last. But truly, it has become a treasured annual expression of faith and creativity! It has grown and evolved as families have shared their own precious memories and meaningful ornaments of Christmas. How it has added to the depth of our Christmas celebration. What joy and beauty.

Photo captures are courtesy of Pastor Gail.

Thanks for sharing!

Many thanks to those who have taken the time to share from their rich Christmas heritage. Some to honor loved ones, all to celebrate the joy of the season. Not enough room to picture them all here, but all have been savored & enjoyed. *What a great idea!*

Women of the ELCA

Next Bible Study is January 14th, at 1pm at St. Stephen.
Next General meeting—Sun. March 1st, at 10:10 am.



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The 2020 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 Vicky Finke know.

The STEWARDSHIP PROJECT for the months of January, February, and March is Personal Care Kits:

- Bath-size towels-approx. 52" x 27" (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. In fact, they may "cut the thread". Due to changes in the health and availability of many of our devoted craftswomen there aren't enough workers to continue.



There isn't time or space enough in this newsletter to adequately honor all the warm love and caring that has been shared through the efforts of these dear women as they have lovingly stitched their unique blankets of warmth and beauty. So many people have been warmed and comforted, both in body and spirit by their combined creative energies. So many "thank you" notes have been received and posted, many charitable organizations have had their resources increased, college students have had warm send-offs to their future endeavors, individuals have received warm comfort & encouragement when going through crises, and RAFFLES have been enhanced.

Dear Quilters we give you our thanks! You have served so well, and it has not gone unnoticed. Honor is certainly due your devoted efforts.

Many thanks to all who have provided resources for our Quilters. Not only fabric and blankets, but table props to relieve aching backs, and other helps. *Thanks to ALL for your support over the years.*

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LOOKING AHEAD in 2020:

The Annual Meeting is January 19th, following the service. . . .

***annual reports are due** to the secretary by THIS Wed., **January 8th.**

First Communion Sunday is February 2nd.

Ash Wednesday is February 26.

EASTER is April 12th this year.

Adventures of the Church Mice . . .

Happy New Year to all of you from all your Church Mice!

This is Frederick writing from St. Stephen to tell you all the things we mice have been talking about the last few weeks. Like Christmas Eve, when the Little Baby Jesus was born and there were angels and shepherds and sheep and Mary and Joseph and that funny bed they put the baby in, something the animals could eat out of. It's a good thing the cows weren't hungry that night, what if they ate Baby Jesus all up? THAT is what we talked about most, what if something happened to Baby Jesus and he never grew up at all. Little Timothy from St. John got pretty scared when we thought about that, cause he can't imagine not having grown-up Jesus as his FRIEND. So we all decided the very best Christmas present in the whole wide world is JESUS. And the other thing we wondered was if people have Christmas trees because the first bed for Baby Jesus was wood, like from a tree. Maybe people don't know how to make those feed thingies so they decorate a tree instead.



Anyway, we all hope you all have a very HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Many heart-felt thanks !

Sincere thanks and appreciation for all the cards, gifts and good wishes from all of you at St. John. Blessings in the New Year! —Pastor Gail.

Reflections from Rose



How wonderful it was to be the happy recipient of so many blessed Christmas wishes! There were cards, delicious cookies, gifts, and gift cards. Thank you to everyone for your outpouring of kind thoughtfulness!

Christmas is usually a challenging time for me, as it is for many I suppose. But this year was even more so. It was such a blessing though to have you dear ones at St. John ask about how things were going, how Jeff is doing, and offer kind words of encouragement and faithful prayer support. That is HUGE!

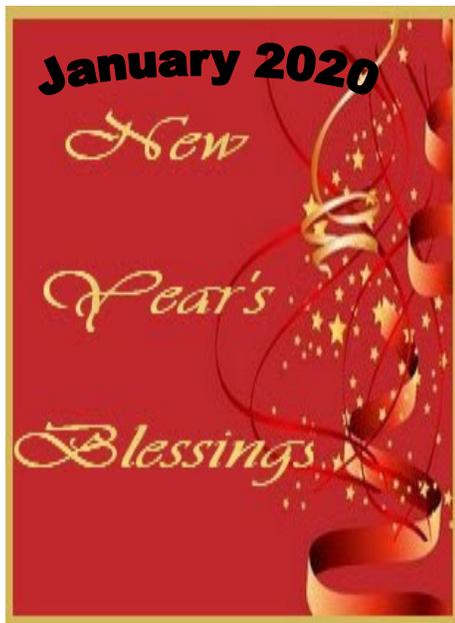
Something I've noticed over the years, and was especially reminded of this year, is that no matter how ready we are, no matter how bleak, challenging, or beautiful it may-or-may-not be...Christmas still comes. We get through it, in fact we are BLESSED. Jesus, our Savior came. It is a done deal. He accomplished all that He was sent to do. It doesn't matter, ready-or-not, pretty or not...Emmanuel. God is with us, because He so loved us and CHOSE to do so. Mind-boggling, right?

One of my favorite scripture passages is Ephesians 1: 3-14. I don't have room to quote it all, but it speaks to the fact that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in our Lord Jesus Christ, and adopted us as His children through Christ, in accordance with His PLEASURE and will. It is God's good pleasure to give us His wonderful grace in Jesus Christ, to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. Anyway, ready or not, it's here...embrace it! New Year blessings to each and everyone...*Rose*

GOOD NEWS

St. John Lutheran Church ELCA
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We're on the Web
www.stjohnelcaedgar.org



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Deadline for Feb. 2020 News



January 21st

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."*