

THE MESSENGER

December 2023

St. John's Lutheran Church at Stone Bank
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Office Hours: Monday thru Thursday 10:00 am -2:00 pm

Bishop Erickson's Thanksgiving Greeting



*For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God.
For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God.
For the wonders that astound us, for the truths that still confound us,
Most of all, that love has found us, thanks be to God.
(For the Fruit of All Creation, ELW 679)*

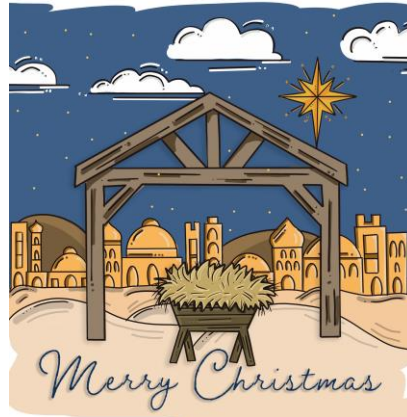
Earlier this year, after a string of rostered minister funerals, we decided to ask all our pastors and deacons to submit their funeral plans to our office, that we might be better able to accompany their families and congregations in those difficult times. Since I thought it wise to lead by example, I sat down and filled out the form myself. As I reflected on the scripture passages and hymns and other details I would like to be included in my service, my thoughts kept returning to this hymn, often sung at Thanksgiving.

The final verse, quoted above, contains what might be the clearest expression of several of my most central theological convictions. We all inherit things that are good and beautiful, and we are called to steward them and pass them along to those who follow us. This world is filled with amazing and wonderful things that promise to astound us, if only we will slow down enough to notice. The truths of our lives and our world are not simply facts to master and memorize, but they challenge and confound us, keeping us grounded in humility and open to the thoughts and experiences of others. Finally, and most importantly, love finds us. We don't earn it, we don't create it, we may not even feel like we deserve it, but love has found us. Love comes to us as a gift, through the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit, but also in the simple and gentle acts of human community and in the imperfect efforts of family and friends, love has found us, love will always find us, and all that is left for us to do is to simply say, "thanks be to God."

My prayer for all of us, as individuals, as families, as congregations, and as communities, is that we may find the space and the time to notice, to wonder, and to give thanks, this weekend and always, trusting that love has already found us, and love will never let us go.

Thanks be to God,
Bishop Paul Erickson

CHURCH NEWS



Youth Christmas Program and Family Potluck Christmas Party

Please mark your calendars for December 17th when St. John's Youth will lead the worship service, perform a short historical fiction play and offer musical selections.

Join us after worship service for our Family Potluck Christmas Party. Enjoy good food, good conversation, singing holiday carols, and a few quick games. The food will be potluck and a sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin at the bottom of the stairs in the fellowship hall but signing up is optional. All food and EVERYONE is welcome with or without a contribution. *(We're Lutherans, there is never a shortage of food!)*



Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Service

Join us for our Christmas candlelight worship service at 4:00 pm on Sunday, December 24th. Let's celebrate Christ's birth with Christmas music and hymns, communion, and lighting of candles. It is sure to be a joyful and meaningful way to begin the Christmas Season.

The 9:00 am service on December 24 will be a regular Sunday Advent worship service.



Gifts for Shorehaven Residents

Help brighten the Christmas season for Shorehaven residents by purchasing a gift for them. Tags with gift suggestions have been placed on the tree in the Narthex. Target and Walmart gift cards are also appreciated if you have limited time to shop. The Shorehaven residents will appreciate any gift that you are able to provide.

Please return all gifts to the church unwrapped and place them under the narthex tree no later than Sunday, December 10. Thank you for your generosity!

Youth Education Classes

Youth Education classes will resume November 12th and run through December 17th. The classes will begin after Communion is served and end around 10:30 am. The classes are designed as preparation for Confirmation. All youth from kindergarten through 7th grade are invited to attend.



2024 Offering Envelopes

Since many of you contribute on a monthly basis and in order to keep costs down, I ask that you use your 2023 envelopes for 2024 offerings. For those of you who do need a new pack of envelopes for next year, please see me and I will give you one.

– Judy Swanton, Financial Sec'y

Thinking Ahead to Year-End Benevolences

As you plan your end of the year charitable giving, consider an extra contribution to St. John's as we cope with short term income loss. Because of the unplanned loss of parsonage rental income over four months and, as we readied the house, unforeseen plumbing repairs and the need to paint the entire inside, we could use a financial boost to keep us stable until we recover. Thanks for your prayers and past generosity and for keeping us in mind now!

Thrivent Choice®

Ready to give back? Make a personal donation or direct some of Thrivent's charitable funds to a favorite nonprofit organization or cause. The choice is yours.

Do You Have a THRIVENT Policy or Account??

If you have a THRIVENT life insurance policy, insurance, or investment account, you are able to direct Thrivent Choice Dollars. Choice dollars amounts are determined by the value of Thrivent holdings and are dispensed to the organization or cause as directed by the account holder. There are a few ways to do this: Call 800-847-4836, go to [Thrivent.com/thriventchoice](https://www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice), or by downloading and using the Thrivent app on your phone (which is very easy!). 2023 Choice dollars need to be directed by March 31, 2024.

St. John's Lutheran Church at Stone Bank is an option as a place to which to direct your choice dollars.

If anyone would like some help setting up the app, accessing your account through the internet ask Nancy Barr, or leave a message with the church office asking for help.



Back by Popular Demand – Mt. Meru Christmas Traditions Coffee

Mt. Meru is offering a delicious Christmas Traditions coffee this Christmas that is 100% Mt. Meru premium Arabica coffee beans, enhanced with the rich flavors of cinnamon, nutmeg, and vanilla, with a hint of chocolate and other selected spices. Coffee comes direct from small coffee farms on the slopes of Mt. Meru, Tanzania. Consider purchasing Christmas Traditions coffee. It would make a wonderful Christmas or hostess gift!

12 oz. bags - Drip or Bean - \$18

Visit us and purchase at: [mtmerucoffee.org](https://www.mtmerucoffee.org)

See the attached order form for a list of other Mt. Meru Coffee Project options.

Prayer Booklets

The January through March prayer booklets, "The Word in Season" and "Portals of Prayer", are available on the counter near the main doors of the Fellowship Hall.

WORSHIP, MUSIC, & HOSPITALITY MINISTRY NEWS



Mark Your Calendars:

Sunday, December 17th - Family Christmas Party Potluck after the worship service

Sunday, December 24th – Advent Worship Service at 9:00 a.m.

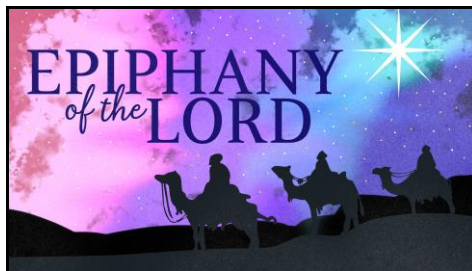
Sunday, December 24th - Christmas Candlelight Worship Service at 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 7th - Epiphany Sunday Service of Light at 9:00 a.m.



Poinsettias to Decorate the Sanctuary

Once again, parishioners have the opportunity to purchase a poinsettia plant to adorn the sanctuary. The plants can be designated in memory or in honor of a person or persons. The plants will be placed in the sanctuary for the Christmas service but may be reclaimed and taken after that service. Order slips are available in the pews and at the entrance of the sanctuary. Order forms are due by December 5th.



Epiphany, the Season of Light

The worship service on January 8, 2023 will be a celebration of Epiphany and the Baptism of Our Lord. The Epiphany portion of the service will include an opportunity for the congregation to light a candle and place it on the altar. So everyone is invited to bring a candle to light. The candle can be any shape, size, or color. Help us light up Epiphany, the Season of Light!

Lutheran Disaster Response Update: Crisis in the Holy Land

Dear friend,

Thank you for your outpouring of prayers and generosity for our siblings impacted by the conflict in the Holy Land. The humanitarian crisis continues to worsen — almost 70% of Gazan residents are displaced, and resources such as food, water and medical supplies are in short supply. The death toll has far surpassed those of previous conflicts in the region in recent decades.

Gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response have equipped us to respond to this and other disasters whenever and wherever they strike. Gifts designated for “Middle East Crisis”; will be restricted to and used in full (100%) for those affected by this crisis and others in the region.

I'd like to tell you some of the ways Lutheran Disaster Response already accompanies our partners in the Holy Land. Lutheran Disaster Response supports:

- Augusta Victoria Hospital. The hospital procures medical supplies and provides accommodations for patients and staff unable to return to their homes in Gaza.
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. The church provides emergency education support for families who have lost income due to the war and are unable to pay school fees.
- ACT Alliance. Through implementing partners Lutheran World Federation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, ACT Alliance responds to immediate needs for psychosocial support, shelter, household items, public health centers and direct cash assistance, focusing on the Palestinian communities in Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

These are just the first steps of what will be a long-term response. Our accompaniment of and solidarity with our partners endures, and we will work together to address other emerging needs. We continue to pray for peace with justice in the region.

I encourage you to visit the ELCA's "Conflict in the Holy Land" resource page, where you'll find ...advocacy opportunities, statements from the ELCA and our partners, and more.

WHERE CAN WE DONATE?

Go to: community.elca.org/middle-east-crisis

ST. JOHN'S GOOD NEWS REPORT

Congratulations to Jim Hanson for retiring on November 2 after 25 years with his last company and 38 years overall in the water treatment industry. Jim and Mary plan to travel frequently. When Jim is home, he will be working in the woods, playing a little golf and helping his parents with duties that they struggle with currently.

Call or email the church office to let us know of any "Good News" to include in future newsletters.

WE APPRECIATE ST. JOHN'S COMMUNITY MEMBERS:

Nancy Barr for leading the worship ministry all year long, setting up coffee hour, organizing the decorating of the sanctuary and decorating the fellowship hall

Nancy Barr, John Baumann and Grant Schuldt for decorating the sanctuary for the Christmas season

Jim Edgar for his time and dedication to St. John's Choir and for the many other hats that he wears

Scott Hampton for cleaning and organizing the pavilion

Mary Hanson for making the beautiful Christmas bows for the sanctuary

Kim Kaptain for lighting the All Saints' candles

Nancy Kutzt for the Christmas table decorations

Scott Lovas and Steve Lovas for purchasing and putting up the outdoor Christmas tree

Judy Runt for temporarily taking on the role of church treasurer, for training our new treasurer and for driving Alan Abeld to worship services

Grant Schuldt for helping put up the outdoor Christmas tree and for all his help with church projects

Try A Yummy New Recipe - Pilgram Potato Soup

10 oz. bag of frozen mixed vegetables
1/3 cup fresh parsley, minced
16 oz. frozen broccoli cuts
1/2 tsp. pepper
2 lbs frozen hash browns
6 chicken bullion cubes
1 cup chopped onions
2 cans condensed cream of chicken soup
2 cups of milk
1 lb. velveta cheese cubed

Mix all ingredients together. Heat through, stirring frequently.

Anita Olson served this delicious soup at a Lent Soup and Sandwich supper years ago. Many enjoyed this soup when Nancy Barr made it last Lenten season.





DECEMBER READINGS

December 3

Isaiah 64:1-9 - Prayer that God would come with power and compassion
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 - Let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.
1 Corinthians 1:3-9 - Gifts of grace sustain those who wait for the end
Mark 13:24-37 - The sudden coming of the Son of Man

December 10

Isaiah 40:1-11 - Good news of God's coming to a people in exile
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 - Righteousness shall prepare a pathway for God.
2 Peter 3:8-15a - Waiting for and hastening the day of God
Mark 1:1-8 - John appears from the wilderness

December 17

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 - Righteousness and praise flourish like a garden
Psalm 126 - The LORD has done great things for us.
Luke 1:46b-55 (alternate) - You, Lord, have lifted up the lowly.
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 - Kept in faith until the coming of Christ
John 1:6-8, 19-28 - A witness to the light

December 24

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 - The LORD's promise to David
Luke 1:46b-55 - You, Lord, have lifted up the lowly.
Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26 (alternate) - Your love, O LORD, forever will I sing.
Romans 16:25-27 - The mystery of God revealed in Jesus Christ
Luke 1:26-38 - The angel appears to Mary

December 31

Isaiah 61:10--62:3 - Clothed in garments of salvation
Psalm 148 - The splendor of the LORD is over earth and heaven.
Galatians 4:4-7 - Children and heirs of God
Luke 2:22-40 - The presentation of the child



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

December 3 – Nancy Barr

December 6 – Grant Schuldt

December 8 – Mary Hanson

December 14 – Kevin Swanton

December 18 – Jerry and Brigitte Katz Anniversary

December 18 – Jesse Bemis

December 23 – Amy Hlad and Hal Wagnon Anniversary

December 24 – Zachary Zuercher



St. John's Council

President: Judy Runt

Vice President: Nancy Barr

Council Members at Large: Julie Bohlen and Kris Kaptain

Financial Secretary: Judy Swanton

Acting Treasurer: Barb O'Connor

St. John's Music Program

Music Minister: Jim Edgar

Pianist: Lauren Genthe

Choir: Nancy Barr, Ann Greenseth, Oscar Kraft, Shirley Kraft, Bennett Shebesta, Judy Runt

Worship Assistants

Alan Abeld, Carol Baird, Phil Baird, Nancy Barr, John Baumann, Julie Bohlen, Jim Edgar, Ann Greenseth, Kris Kaptain, Oscar Kraft, Shirley Kraft, Julie Kuhtz, Nancy Kuhtz, Megan Rollefson, Deb Runt, Judy Runt, Grant Schuldt, Judy Swanton, Cynthia Tobolt

Altar Ministry

Nancy Barr, Julie Bohlen, Kris Kaptain, Brigitte Katz, Julie Kuhtz, Nancy Kuhtz, Anita Olson, Judy Runt