

Pastor Luke Kuenzli

Interims -
Pastor Sharon
Worthington

and

Pastor Celeste
Waymire

*Followers of
Christ
who seek to
HEAR
the Word,
LIVE
the Word
and
SHARE
the Word.*

Saturday - 5:30pm

Sunday - 8:30am
& 11:00am

Sunday School
9:45am

November and December are often called the “Season of Giving,” and there will be countless charitable organizations and donation programs seeking to provide Thanksgiving meals and Christmas gifts for the neediest of our neighbors. At most local grocery stores, you can find bags with lists of items to purchase, which you can then donate to families who can’t meet our widespread cultural expectations for the holidays. That is wonderful! Please consider providing what you can to help others experience the holidays with dignity and joy. And as you do so, please remember that the needs don’t disappear after December 25th.

I’m excited by the new project that we’re beginning at Saint John, which you can read about in more depth in the article from Toni Wilson. She brought us an idea that her workplace had put into action of installing a “Little Free Pantry” on our Saint John grounds, Council liked the idea, and the Serving/Learning Committee is on board! Please check out Toni’s article and consider contributing items from the list she includes!

Another way of engaging in our Council Bluffs Community is in the shared Advent services we’ll have along with Emanuel Lutheran Church and Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, our two other ELCA congregations in town. A reminder that we will be having meals at 6:00 prior to 7:00 worship. We host the meal and worship on December 3rd, and are asking Confirmation students and mentors to eat together and then work on our Christmas decorations around the church building. We will continue with meal and worship on December 10th at Our Savior’s Lutheran (600 Bluff St) and December 17th at Emanuel Lutheran (2444 N. Broadway).

Our weekend schedule at Saint John will continue as normal, with our special holiday services included. Saturday, December 6th will be a worship including Christmas readings and drama (being prepared by Pastor Celeste), and Sunday the 7th will be the Adult Special Music (8:30) and Sunday School (11:00) programs. Then, on Saturday, December 20th we’ll have a Christmas Hymn Sing, with our Combined Choir Cantata at the 8:30 and 11:00 services on the 21st. On Christmas Eve, we will have three opportunities for worship at 3:30, 5:30, and 10:30. I am looking forward to our first Advent and Christmas together!

It seems wild that it was already over a year ago (November 9) that I had the Saturday evening Q&A session with the congregation and you voted to call me to be your pastor. It was a whirlwind of change in late 2024 and early 2025! I pray that the same energy and hospitality with which I have been welcomed will continue to invigorate our ministry together in the years to come. Have a blessed and safe holiday season, with many joyful reunions of families, friends, and neighbors; and with grateful memories of those who are celebrating Christ’s earthly birth from heaven on high.

Peace ><, Pastor Luke



Sunday school
Christmas
program
December 7,
11:00 Service

Advent Evenings Together

Wednesday, December 03

Dinner at 6 p.m.

Service at 7 p.m.

St. John Lutheran Church
(633 Willow Ave, Council Bluffs, IA 51501)

Wednesday, December 10

Dinner at 6 p.m.

Service at 7 p.m.

Our Savior's Lutheran
(600 Bluff St, Council Bluffs, IA 51503)

Wednesday, December 17

Dinner at 6 p.m.

Service at 7 p.m.

Emanuel Lutheran Church
(2444 N Broadway, Council Bluffs, IA 51503)

**Cookies
COCOA
& JESUS
December 6**

8:30 - 9:30am Program Rehearsal
9:30 - 11:00am Stay for Cookies!

- ⇒ There will also be a cookie exchange. Each family should bring 2 dozen cookies to share with others.
- ⇒ Looking for 4 more adult volunteers for cookie stations. Call or text Kerri at 319-329-0359

Little Free Pantry

Did you know that 1 in 8 Iowans, and 1 in 6 children in Iowa face food insecurity? Families facing access to nutritious food often have higher risk of chronic diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. Children of food-insecure homes often struggle academically and socially.

To help better serve our community, the Service & Learning Committee at Saint John Lutheran Church will be installing a Little Free Pantry to help folks who are struggling with food insecurity. The benefit of this type of small permanent pantry is that it provides a food source 24/7 for those who are unable to access a larger food pantry due to transportation, location, or operational hours. While it does not contain all of the same perishable food items that a full-service pantry would offer, our **location** will serve a large population with its proximity to Bloomer Elementary and the surrounding neighborhood. This project along with our donations to the Care & Share House will help to supplement our efforts in supporting our neighbors in need.

The pantry will be placed in the parking lot and attached to a light pole, so that it can be easily accessible day and night. The committee will stock the pantry several days each week and will begin accepting donations that can be placed in the grocery cart near the front office entrance. Please see the insert for a list of the most requested donations. During the winter months when cold temperatures may affect the quality of canned foods, we will try to refrain from adding them and instead supplement with other needed items from the list.

A very special thank you to Richard Mlynarik for building the Little Free Pantry and to his employer Tuff Shed for donating all of the **building** supplies needed for this project!

If you have any **questions** regarding donations or the Little Free Pantry, please reach out to the **Service & Learning Committee** or **Pastor Luke**. **Thank you in advance** for your generosity!





“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.” ~ Isaiah 40. This is exactly why we make quilts. We make them from the repurposed scraps of fabric that people give us! But quilts are made up of more than just small scraps of material. Quilt makers place their heart and soul into creating comfort for those who are in need.

All are welcome to come and lend a hand! When we make quilts, we do good work on many levels. It brings us together in service and fellowship, it creates a tangible message of love and caring to strangers facing exposure right here in town, delivering warmth and comfort. “And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, ‘Here I am; send me.’” ~ Isaiah 6:8

Come as you are able; experience is definitely not required! The Saint John Quilting Group family wishes to welcome you! If you are thinking about it, please know we will make you feel very much at home as we tie quilts for comforting donations locally through the “*Takin’ It To The Streets*” ministry in Council Bluffs, which serves meals and the Word to the homeless! In our ministry of serving we also set aside time to enjoy fellowship with one another with devotions and snacks! If you’ve read this far, thank you!

Save the date! Next meeting is Wednesday, December 17, 2025! You’re most welcome to join us. We will meet between 9:00 A.M. and Noon at Saint John, in the Faith and Life Center. Please bring a Christmas Treat to share if you can. See you then! For more information, please call Sue Pagan at 712-325-0257.

Card Club will meet on
December 18 at 6:30pm
Come and play!

The Men’s Club meets every 3rd Thursday of the month at 11:30am at The Dock Bar & Grill. Men of all ages are welcome to join us for lunch and great conversation. Next date is December 18.

MEN’S GROUP

The Good Time Group will meet on **Sunday, December 14** at 5:00pm in the Faith & Life Center.

Good Times Group

* IF anyone in the Good Time or Players need a ride contact Andrea Hill at 402.990.3395

December 6 & 7
Cookie Johnson
Becky Taylor
Kim Pace
Diane Hartman

December 13 & 14
Mary Lou Burke
Norma Jones
Joyce Mlynarik
Alan Meilike

December 20 & 21
December 24
Carolyn Clark
Sandy Cerveny
Ruby Runte

December 27 & 28
Patricia Minchin
Elaine von Gillern
Carol Wood
Andrea Hill

Altar Guild Meeting - Dec. 2, 9:30am

ALTAR GUILD
SCHEDULE

of the **Women ELCA**

* Esther Group—
Dec. 9 at 9:30am
* Mary Group—
Dec. 11 at 9:00am

PLAYERS GROUP FELLOWSHIP

Players group will meet on **Thursday, December 4** at the Country Club. Arrive at 4:30pm; Dinner at 5:00pm
RSVP to Andrea Hill 402-990-3395
No one will be calling for an attendance count, so please RSVP

CARE & SHARE
Care and Share House, Inc.

We are requesting donations of **Canned Dinners** ex. Spaghettios & Ravioli



November is National Adoption Month

A Success Story:

“I started in foster care at just 17 days old. Life was full of challenges and obstacles, but I was determined to rise above them. At age 5, I was adopted by a family in a small town. At first, it felt like I was living in a real-life Cinderella story—with strict rules and little freedom. By age 10, I was sent away because I was considered ‘too much.’ The trauma I experienced left little room for healing.

I was placed in a treatment facility in Missouri, where I stayed for two and a half years. It was there that I began to discover my true potential. I explored new interests, found joy in learning, and started to excel in school. From facility to facility, my journey continued until I was 14. Just before high school, I was placed in a foster home with people I barely knew. It was a bumpy start, and I was hesitant to trust or enjoy life.

School became my constant, my anchor. I joined the cheer squad, theatre, and choir, slowly finding confidence in myself. At 15, I began searching for a permanent home. After many interviews, weekend visits, and calls, I met a family willing to take a chance on me in April 2020. Despite the challenges of that year, I felt an immediate connection. By May, I moved in permanently and finally felt truly welcome.

My new family supported my dream of becoming a teacher. With my new family's encouragement, I pursued my passion and am now student teaching at a local elementary school—four years later.

What made the biggest difference was love, support, and encouragement. Hearing “I’m proud of you” and feeling believed in even when I wanted to give up, helped me persevere.

My advice to foster families and youth: don’t give up. Keep fighting for what you believe in, let your voice be heard, and most importantly—be yourself. Mom and Dad, if you read this, thank you for giving me the chance to be me. You’ve given me the opportunity of a lifetime, and I couldn’t have done this without you.



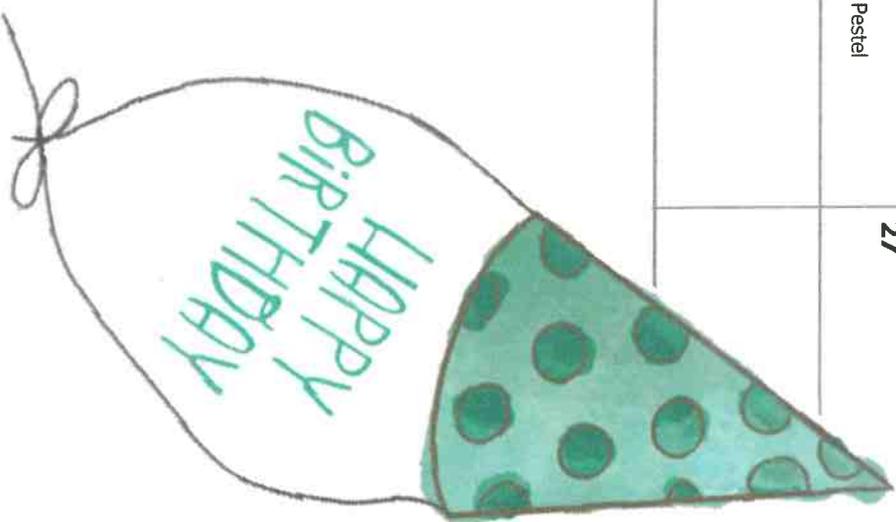
Bethany will be collecting items for their Christmas Store:

- Gift Cards to Restaurants, Book Stores, Shopping
- Slipper Socks or Fuzzy Socks
- Lotion, Bath Gel, Scented Hand Sanitizer
- Small tool
- Small Gadgets that Men would enjoy
- Plants
- Stuffed animals
- Window Catchers
- Small Children’s Books or toys
- Batteries
- Small Boxes of Candy
- Crayons. Coloring Books, etc.
- Coasters
- Cook Books
- Small Fleece Blankets or throws
- Scarves
- Coffee Mug
- Picture Frames
- Hot Pads
- Puzzles
- Cologne
- Stretchy Gloves
- Magnifying Glass
- Air Fresheners/Scented Oil and Wick. Etc.
- Candles
- Coin Purses (Both Men and Women)
- Letter Openers
- Trivets or small cutting or cheese board
- Placemats
- Cologne/ After shave
- Purses/ Wallets
- Yarn
- Embroidery
- Board games
- Cards
- Puzzles 300-500 piece
- Word finds
- Colored pencil’s/markers
- Mystery books



Birthdays

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Jamie Loose-Ives Addison Thompson BethAnn Wilson	2 Isaac Kuenzli Susan Stellish Elaine von Gillem	3 Rick Graham Selah Kuenzli Madie Thomas	4 Roy Adams	5 Mike Hartenhoff Hudson Maas Quinn Wendl	6 Nolan Phillips Margaret Schneider
7	8 Larry Califf	9 Beverly Jensen	10 Owen Reber	11	12 Henry Gerhardt Rick Nickerson Peggy Tye	13 Maxine Carlson
14 Ruby Fellows	15 Andrea Alderton Richard Neal	16 Stephanie Urbanek Jacob Warner	17 Dick Comley	18	19 Alisha DeSignore Cal Hartman	20 Megan Elam Susan Hartman Addison Nano Nancy Sales
21 Angela Elam Trevor Petersen	22 Steve Hansen	23 Jan Urtlaub Steve Vander Helm	24 Luke Northwall	25 Sophia Danker Christensen	26 Curtis Pestel	27
28 Greg Brougham Joshua Burtanek Carrie Solon Layla Velasco	29 Catherine Sundermann	30 Keith Tye	31 Jane Lando			





Celebrating WITH you

85th Birthday

Larry Califf (Dec.8)

92nd Birthday

Beverly Jensen (Dec. 9)

94th Birthday

Catherine Sundermann (Dec. 29)

97th Birthday

Roy Adams (Dec. 4)

98th Birthday

Maxine Carlson (Dec. 13)



Sympathy to the families of...

Connie Byrnes

Arlene Walch, aunt of Karen Bramman

Lynette Schmitt

Those who wish to take a plant home, please check here: ____

If you WILL NOT be taking a plant home, please check here: ____

I would like to dedicate ____ plants. \$7.00 each

In Memory of

Blank lines for name entry.

In Honor of

Blank lines for name entry.

Given by

Blank line for name entry.

Please print clearly.

Return form to church or call church office (323-7173)

Deadline to order is Sunday, December 7.

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Saint John Lutheran Church Staff

- Senior Pastor: Rev. Luke Kuenzli (revluke@saintjohnelca.org)
Interim Pastor: Rev. Sharon Worthington (pastorsharon88@gmail.com)
Interim Pastor: Rev. Celeste Waymire (interimpastorsjlc@gmail.com)
Parish Ministry Coordinator: Patricia S. Minchin
Sound Booth volunteers: Mack Bertelsen, Paul Schmidt
Chancel Choir Director: Elmer Ellefson (saintjohnchancelchoir@gmail.com)
Bell Choir Director: Laura Nelson
Pianist / Organist: Joan Hicks
Foundation Board President: Ross Jensen (402-681-1383)
Nursery Attendant: Susan Stellish
Stephen Minister Leaders: Alan Meilike (328-1671) Debbie Plugge (256-5310)
Office Manager: Kim Malskeit (712-323-7173) info@saintjohnelca.org
Custodian: Alicia Pigsley

Church 712-323-7173

Email: info@saintjohnelca.org ~ Website: www.SaintJohnELCA.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/SaintJohnCouncilBluffs

Saint John Lutheran Church

633 Willow Avenue
Council Bluffs, IA 51501-4242

Please email us
(info@saintjohnelca.org)
if you no longer wish to
receive this newsletter.
Thank you.

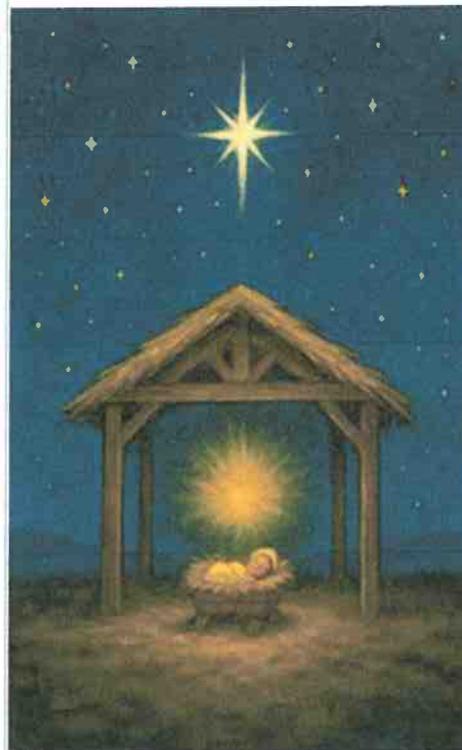
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Permit No. 68
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Change Service Requested



December 24
3:30 - 5:30 - 10:30



THE
LIGHT SHINES
IN THE
DARKNESS,
AND THE
DARKNESS
HAS NOT
OVERCOME IT.
JOHN 1:9, NIV



December 6, 5:30
Christmas readings
and drama

December 7
8:30 Special Music
Program

11:00 Sunday School
Program

December 20, 5:30
Hymn Sing

December 21
Christmas Cantata

