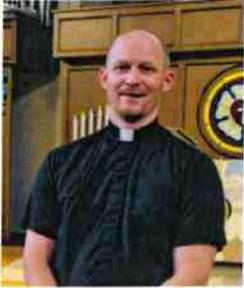


JANUARY
2026

The Caller

Saint John Lutheran Church



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

Happy New Year, Saint John!

It is nearly unbelievable that this marks one year of ministry together! I feel that 2025 was a year that was filled with blessings and learning for me in the midst of a great deal of change and all the inherent challenges. In 2025, I was privileged to work alongside Pastor Jon and Pastor Sharon, welcome Pastor Celeste to the team, and continue to work through the oh-so-slow Call Process along with our Call Committee.

A few of my 2025 highlights include: my *first* First Communion Class at Saint John; getting to host Bishop Scott Dalen's Installation; a number Baptisms; offering pastoral care and counseling to families in grief and crisis; assisting with needs for members of our Council Bluffs community; working with our Saint John Confirmation Class, Mentors, and Small Group Leaders; working toward including Assisting Ministers in our worship services; sharing Advent midweek meals and worship with Our Savior's and Emanuel; local service projects with high school youth; our congregations' family events for Back-to-school, Sunday School kick-off, Easter, Halloween, and Christmas... and most of all, continuing to get to know you, the faithful followers of Christ at Saint John Lutheran Church!

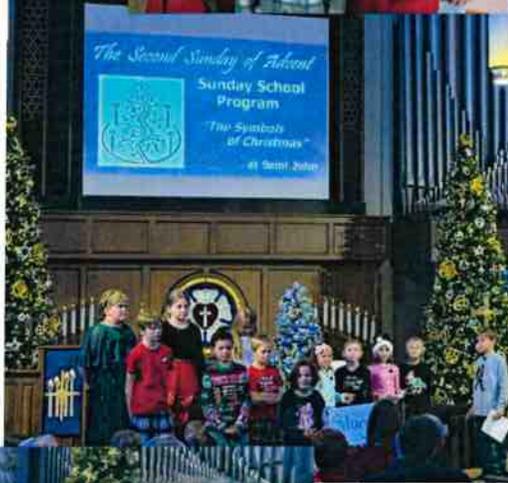
I feel confident that as we enter into 2026, the Lord has good things in store for us, and will continue to call us and challenge us to hear, live, and share the Word of God with one another and with the world around us. Blessings to you all in this New Year!

Pastor Luke

Pictures of our Sunday school fun at Cookies, Cocoa & Jesus and the Christmas program.



First Communion Class - Making bread



Celebrating their First Communion on November 26, 2025 :

- Jaxon Archer
- Sarah Arnold
- Hannah Hansen
- Jonah Harris
- Autumn Mauch
- Allison Nelson
- Bodie Traeger

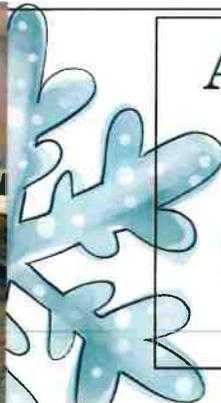


Budget Forum January 18, 9:45am



ANNUAL MEETING

January 25 at 9:45am





“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, January 21, 2026! 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. See you then! For more information, please call Sue Pagan at 712-325-0257.



Card Club will meet on January 8 & 22 at 6:30pm. Come and play!

January 3 & 4
Jan. 31 & Feb. 1
Joyce Mlynarik
Norma Jones
Mary Lou Burke
Alan Meilike
Becky Smith

January 10 & 11
Carolyn Clark
Sandy Cerveny
Ruby Runte



January 17 & 18
Patricia Minchin
Elaine von Gillern
Carol Wood
Andrea Hill

January 24 & 25
Cookie Johnson
Becky Taylor
Kim Pace
Diane Hartman

Women of the ELCA
* Esther Group—
Jan. 13 at 9:30am
* Mary Group—
Jan. 8 at 9:00am

 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 January 15, 2026

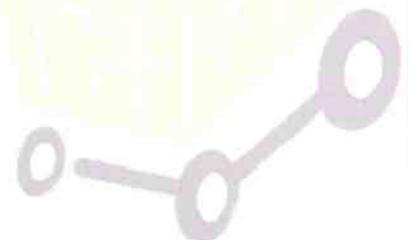
PLAYERS GROUP FELLOWSHIP
Players group will meet next in February at the Prime Rib Dinner.



Watch the bulletin for information on the next Good Time group gathering.



We are requesting donations of **Cookies**





Do you know someone who...

- Struggles with mental health and needs support?
- Is a refugee or immigrant starting over in Iowa, building a new life?
- Is a young parent trying to give their child a better future?
- Has been adopted or grown up in foster care?

Lives with a disability and could thrive with access to the right resources and care?

These are the people your generosity touches. Their lives are transformed through Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) — because of caring donors like you.

Let me introduce you to Heather, one of our long-time foster and adoptive parents.

“Toby and I fostered for nearly 8 years, welcoming many children into our home before adopting three of our own. Through foster care, I’ve formed meaningful relationships with many families — I still get calls weekly to hear updates or just be a listening ear. I would do it all over again for every child we had the chance to help.

Foster care is so much more than being a substitute parent. It’s helping families heal, supporting them through trauma, and being a cheerleader when life has brought them to rock bottom.

Foster care completed our family when reunification wasn’t possible. I love these kids with every fiber of my being, and I am so blessed to be their mom. Foster care will always be in my heart.”

Heather’s story is just one example of how LSI’s programs create lasting impact. Every day, LSI’s dedicated staff walk beside neighbors facing life’s hardest challenges offering compassion, stability, and hope when it’s needed most.

Take Brookie, who lives in Harmony House, one of LSI’s group homes for individuals with disabilities. Her mom shared:

“LSI supports Brookie emotionally and physically every day. The staff are caring, kind, and compassionate. With their support, Brookie lives as independently as possible in a safe and happy environment. She participates in Special Olympics, Strikers bowling, ice hockey, softball, work, community events, and family gatherings. LSI has enriched Brookie’s life and our family’s life in ways we cannot measure. It’s a huge comfort knowing she is cared for so wonderfully.”

Your generosity makes stories like Heather’s and Brookie’s possible. Will you make a gift today to continue this life-changing work? Every dollar brings comfort, healing, and hope to someone who needs it most, someone right here in our Iowa communities. Your compassion transforms lives, builds resilience, and spreads hope. Thank you for your faith in others, your generosity, and your partnership. Together, we are creating brighter futures, stronger families, and thriving communities — every single day.



Introducing Creating a Graceful Journey — The Compassion Wing Campaign.

50 years ago, Bethany Lutheran Health Services opened a 121-bed nursing home for the community of Council Bluffs. In 1994, an addition of an Assisted Living Facility was opened with 60 apartments. These were bold moves made by a group of faithful Lutheran Churches to care and provide for people in need response to Matthew 25. Today, we are stepping forward boldly on a new adventure.

Bethany Lutheran Health Services is launching a \$1.7M campaign to remodel a hospice wing built for comfort, dignity, and connection. The project will add private rooms, peaceful family gathering spaces, and thoughtful design details to support residents and loved ones through life’s most tender moments.

With your support, we can create a place of grace for families when they need it most.

INTRODUCING

CREATING ^a GRACEFUL JOURNEY

The COMPASSION WING CAMPAIGN



JANUARY 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>4 Communion 8:30am Worship 11:00am Worship</p>	5	6 7:00pm Praise Team	7 9:00am Bible Study 6:30pm Bell Choir 6:30pm Confirmation Class 6:30pm High school Youth 7:30pm Chancel Choir	8 Office Closed 	9	10 5:30pm Worship
<p>11 8:30am Worship 9:45am Sunday School 11:00am Worship</p>	12	13 9:30am Esther Group 7:00pm Praise Team	14 9:00am Bible Study 6:30pm Bell Choir 6:30pm Confirmation Class 6:30pm High school Youth 7:30pm Chancel Choir	15 11:30am Men's Club 7:30pm CMA Meeting	16	17 Communion 5:30pm Worship
<p>18  Communion 8:30am Worship 9:45am Budget Forum 9:45am Sunday School 11:00am Worship</p>	19	20 7:00pm Praise Team	21 9:00am Bible Study 9:00am Quilting Group 6:30pm Bell Choir 6:30pm Confirmation Class 6:30pm High school Youth 7:30pm Chancel Choir	22 6:30pm Card Club 7:30pm CMA Meeting	23	24 5:30pm Worship
<p>25  8:30am Worship 9:45am ANNUAL MEETING 9:45am Sunday School 11:00am Worship</p>	26	27 7:00pm Praise Team	28 9:00am Bible Study 6:30pm Bell Choir 6:30pm Confirmation Class 6:30pm High school Youth 7:30pm Chancel Choir	29 7:30pm CMA Meeting	30	31 Communion 5:30pm Worship

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Kate Brougham	2	3 Bella DeSignore Keith Thompson
4 Maverick Miller	5 Ayden McIntosh Jackie Reinders Heath Schneider	6 Harold Waddell	7 Carol Denker Eden Kuenzli	8 Ian Swenson	9	10 Hailey Hansen Nynette Wilcox
11 Gloria Hunt Kitty Richardson	12 August Ferreck Don Nelson	13 Tim Gue Sara Schneider	14 Hannah Jensen Annasa Smith	15 Derek Archer Glen Campbell Mike Nebel Mark Preston	16 Ronald Mowery Micah Petersen	17 Will Sadr
18	19 Becky Taylor	20 Sue Pagan	21 Phyllis Blumhagen Mike Hahn Jared Harris Vicki McCallen Mandy Stogdill	22	23 Niki Roberts	24 Kara Applegate
25 Harper Campbell Mike Damgaard Luca DeSignore Kim Malskeit Ronald Vredeveld Jill Wells	26 Esther Kuenzli Mary Madison Joyce Mynarik Tom Stuart	27	28 Tim Clark	29	30	31 Nancy Chew





*Celebrating
-WITH-
you*

93rd Birthday

Gloria Hunt (Jan. 11)

101st Birthday!!

Kitty Richardson (Jan. 11)

90th Birthday

Tom Stuart (Jan. 26)

63rd Anniversary

Bob & Linda Hansen (Jan.25)



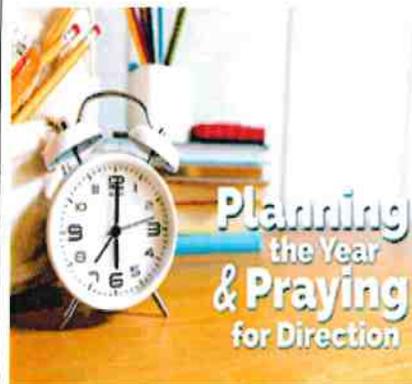
Baptism

Maverick Miller was baptized on
December 14.

Madalyn Hansen will be baptized on
December 27.



New Year's resolutions are personal commitments to improve oneself at the start of a new year, focusing on goals like health (exercise, better diet, sleep), finances (budgeting, saving), skills (learning something new, hobbies), and relationships (family, friends).



To succeed, make resolutions specific, start small, set realistic timelines, find accountability, and focus on building positive habits rather than just stopping bad ones.

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 (interimpastor.celeste@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

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

hello
2026

COME
AND
Worship
WITH US

COMING UP...

Budget Forum on
January 18 at 9:45am

Annual Meeting on
January 25 at 9:45am