

NEWS FROM ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN

DECEMBER 2025

FROM THE PASTOR

AI Companions, and the Loss of Real Connection

For several years now we have seen the rapid growth in capability and scope of large language models colloquially referred to as AI. There are skeptics, whistleblowers, and apologists which together form a cacophony of opinions about the impact this technology will have on humanity. There are some who are skeptical that it will have a net positive impact on humanity, weighing the likely risks with the possible benefits. There are others, both inside and outside the industry who are genuinely concerned about the ways in which this technology could be catastrophic for humanity. There are many others who consider this new technology simply an advanced tool and are excited for the future of innovation it will enable.

But first a short technical explanation. Large language models as we currently know them have enabled just about anyone to access a series of tools which allow us to ask detailed questions and receive detailed and often complex answers in seconds. It can proofread emails and documents. It can help you explore any topic that comes to mind in an enclosed environment that feels like a natural conversation. And, more recently, it can speak and generate images making the conversation feel like you are talking to a real person. It can likewise generate entire videos that look almost indistinguishable from real life, even capable of mimicking the human voice and appearance.

The opportunities are endless, but along with opportunities are real risks. Most of the negative chatter about AI is focused on the risks it poses to employment. Many are concerned this technology will make certain jobs obsolete. But there are others who are concerned about the moral impact of this technology. For the sake of time, I will focus on that aspect.

Last week, I came across a new AI powered application called 2wai. They claim: "we're building a living archive of humanity, one story at a time. It all starts with the social network for avatars: the 2wai app." In the promotional video, it shows a family appearing to video chat with a grandmother, asking her questions, hearing stories, and showing their sonogram photos to her. But the

grandmother is not real at all, it is a AI generation of their grandmother who had passed. The app takes real footage of a person, learns their voice, their appearance, and mimics it using AI. This eerie technology allows you to "communicate" with those who have died. To put it bluntly, this is wicked. We cannot replace those who have gone before us with AI. As Christians we should know better and look to the reunion in heaven instead of the fake promises of the world.

This is just one dystopian example of what this technology is already bringing to the forefront. There are many examples of children and adults becoming attached to their AI "partners". In one such example, a young boy was given instructions and encouragement to commit suicide. There are many men and women who are becoming so attached to AI romantic partners that they are abandoning their marriages. Claiming that the AI gave them what their real husband or wife did not. Children in particular are especially vulnerable to these things.

I am writing all this as your pastor not to be a contrarian or because I am "anti-technology". But because it is my duty as your pastor to encourage discernment when engaging with the world and its technological promises. We must be **"wise as serpents, and harmless as doves"** which includes considering the moral implications of any particular activity. I want to encourage you to seek embodied relationships, not artificial ones that are unnatural and unfulfilling. We are made with a body and soul that cannot be replicated or replaced. We are social creatures who exist in body and soul who are made to be in physical communion with one another. We are restored by the body of Jesus, his death, his resurrection. We look not to promises of the world, especially now the scientific utopia promised by AI. Instead we look to the promise of Jesus, and his coming again for which we pray — "Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Amen".

- Pastor DeYoung

OFFICIAL ACTS

Baptism:

Oliver LeeRoy Douglas 11-2-2025

Wedding:

Alec Schaefer and Sadie Neave 11-1-2025

Funeral:

Judy Schweitzer 11-14-2025

ADVENT/CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Please see the list below of the special service times from Thanksgiving through the New Year at St. John's. Please join us!

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

Advent Vespers – 6pm

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

Advent Vespers – 6pm

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

Advent Vespers – 6pm

Wednesday, December 24, 2025

Christmas Eve Communion Services at 4 and 11pm

Thursday, December 25, 2025

Christmas Day Communion Service – 9am

Wednesday, December 31, 2025

Hymn Sing – 6pm

SUNDAY SCHOOL INFORMATION

Join us for Sunday School! We meet from 9:00-10:00. Bring your children and grandchildren to hear the stories of God's love. What greater gift can you give them? Our classes meet in the following locations:

3, 4, & 5 year olds — Pre-K 4 classroom in the basement

1st & 2nd grades — Chapel by the Erie Street door

3rd, 4th, & 5th grades — library on the second floor

6th, 7th, & 8th grades — faculty room near the N

Wisconsin Street door

high school students — 7th grade room on the second floor

NURSERY RENOVATION

Our nursery downstairs has been expanded and renovated! Please make use of it if you have young children who are being loud during the service. The nursery is just down the stairs in the narthex and offers a video feed of the service as it takes place through the TV on the wall. Young children need a break from time to time, and they most often express this need loudly! The best way to get them accustomed to the space here in church and to the service is to bring them every week, and to give them some space as it is needed. Thanks to our trustees and everyone involved with the nursery expansion and renovation.

CRADLE ROLL PLAYDATE

Please join us for a play date! Intended for the youngest among us (newborn to those who haven't started school yet). For the parents(s) there will be coffee and other adults to talk to, and for the kiddos new friends to be made and different toys to play with. We will meet Wednesday, December 10 at 9am(ish) at the Peterson House, 1423 Borgardt Rd Sturtevant. Text or call Stephanie at 815-931-8790 with questions.

NON-PERISHABLE FOOD DRIVE

The Stewardship committee is going to be placing food drive baskets in the back of church and in the classrooms for collecting food, gift cards and cash for Families in Need of help. Please donate non-perishable food items and/or gift cards to your favorite grocery store as those are nice as well. We will be collecting food and gift cards from Thanksgiving until December 14. We will be distributing the baskets sometime before Christmas. Thank you!

FELLOWSHIP FRIDAY

There will not be a Fellowship Friday in December. We look forward to getting together again in January.

"BIBLE AND BREW" MEN'S STUDY

Just a note that Bible and Brew Men's Study will not be held in December. We look forward to meeting again in January!

2026 FLOWER CALENDAR

The flower calendar for 2026 has been posted in the church narthex. To sign up to provide altar flowers, simply write your name and contact information next to any available Sunday.

2026 GIVING ENVELOPES

Giving envelopes for 2026 are now available! You can pick yours up on the tables outside the cafeteria. If you give online with Vanco or through another means, envelopes were not issued. If you would still like to receive a box of giving envelopes, please let Kimberly know. Thank you!

CRAFT SALE THANK YOU

Thank you so much to everyone who came and supported the craft sale. Your generous donations helped to raise almost \$1,000. This money will go directly to help support the Bugenhagen Conference. Thank you again and we hope you are enjoying all of your treasures from the sale.

ENDOWMENT APPLICATIONS

Applications are now being accepted for consideration by the Endowment Committee for funds from the Endowment Fund. If you have a project or funding request for the Endowment Committee, please submit your endowment application to the church office by January 15. An application is attached to the electronic copy of this newsletter. Applications can also be picked up in the back of the sanctuary or from the church office.

USHERS NEEDED

The Board of Elders is in need of individuals interested in ushering during worship services. Thank you for your prayerful consideration in helping out as an usher. If you would be interested in ushering, please contact an elder or Kimberly in the church office at chapman@stjohnsracine.org; (262) 637-7011.

CHURCH ROOF UPDATE

The church roof replacement and painting of the fascia metal has been paid in full. Through member special gifts and leaf purchases we have raised approximately \$142,000.00. The remainder came from member memorials, and funds from the designated renovation account. The complete project cost was approximately \$500,000.00. Thank you for your support and special gifts to help defray the cost of the roof project. You can still 'leaf out' our tree branches by purchasing a leaf for our tree. There are three different levels to choose from: Gold for \$300, silver for \$200, and bronze for \$100. There are order forms available at the back of the sanctuary, in the church office and attached to emails that Kimberly sends out.

Rodney Adel, Congregation Chairman

SERMONS ON YOUTUBE

We are now streaming live content through YouTube. The easiest way to watch the sermons live is to subscribe to the channel and turn the notifications on. Our channel can be found by searching "St. John's Lutheran Church and School Racine, WI." Every time a live video is being broadcast, you will get an update and will be able to watch it. The sermons are also archived on the channel, but are now accessible through the tab that says "Live" rather than the "Videos" tab.

TACKLING TOUGH TOPICS

We have a new online educational opportunity for you! It is called "Tackling Tough Topics" and will be focused primarily on addressing issues related to the Christian morality, parenting, and marriage from a scriptural perspective. You can find my new page on Substack and on YouTube by searching "Tackling Tough Topics" and following the link or scanning the QR code on below. (A flyer can also be picked up at the back of the sanctuary.) I encourage anyone who is interested to subscribe. If you have any suggestions on topics that you would like to be tackled, please reach out to Pastor DeYoung. This is different way to address relevant topics that I pray will be a blessing to St. John's and the wider church.

SCHOOL NEWS CORNER

FROM THE PRINCIPAL

The holiday season is upon us and is one of the busiest times of the year for everyone. At school, it is no different. Our teachers and students work hard to fit Christmas program practices, holiday crafts, classroom decorating, and gift exchanging in between the regularly scheduled math, reading, and science lessons. The Cougar Classic, our annual basketball tournament, will take place on the first weekend in December at RLHS, and our teams are preparing for that big event. We hope that you are able to join us for our school's Christmas program on Monday, December 15th, at either 4:15 or 6:00pm. You can do no better preparation for Christmas than hearing children sing lullabies about our Savior in the manger. God's blessings to you this Thanksgiving and as you prepare for the celebration of Jesus's birth.

DINING OUT NIGHT

Join us for our next Dining Out Night at Panera. 5304 Washington Avenue, on Tuesday, December 16 from 4-8pm. St. John's will receive 30% of all qualifying purchases. Please show the flyer or mention the fundraiser when ordering for St. John's to get credit for your order. A flyer is attached to the emailed newsletter or can be picked up in the back of the sanctuary. Hope to see you at this tasty fundraiser!

BOX TOPS FOR EDUCATION

We have an account with Box Tops for Education. If you would like to help raise funds for our school, please follow the steps below.

- Download the Box Tops for Education app on your phone and create an account.
- You scan your store receipt from the app and submit it. You can also upload a digital receipt. The program will automatically find products that are Box Top eligible.
- You can also link your Walmart account to the Box Tops for Education app, and it will automatically redeem Box Tops points when you shop at Walmart.
- There is a list of eligible products on the app.

Miss Pesch has put an envelope/box by her classroom for store receipts if you are unable to scan your receipts. She'd be happy to scan them for you. If you have any other questions, please let Miss Pesch know.

FROM YOUR DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

December 2025 Church Newsletter

Advent Worship Services: Please join us for our midweek Advent Vespers services Wednesday, December 3rd, 10th, and 17th at 6:00 pm.

Christmas Concert: Join us for our annual Christmas Concert Sunday, December 14th. The pre-concert music will begin at 5:45 pm, and the concert will follow at 6:00 p.m. Our Senior Choir, Handbell Choir, Hand Chime Choir, Children's Choir, vocal Soloists, Trumpet Choir, Violinists, Flautist, and Dulcimer will color this beautiful traditional service we have come to know and love with music that will point us to the promise God's Word proclaims that a Savior is sent into this world to cleanse us all from our sins.

Children's Christmas Concert: On *Monday, December 15th*, the students of our school will provide a visible witness of their faith and trust in the Savior born to us with a special Pre-School – 8th grade Christmas program '*This is My Son*'. The program will be held two times - 4:15 pm and 6:00 pm, December 15th. Special pre-service music will be provided by the Hand Chime Choir, Dulcimer Choir and several of our Band Students.

Hymn Sing: On Wednesday, December 31st, we will have a Hymn Sing at 6:00 pm. Join us as we gather and sing our favorite hymns during this evening.

May God Bless you *and* your family through this Advent and Christmas season and may you be filled with peace and joy in the year to come!

*Glory to God in the highest heaven
and on earth peace to those on whom His
favor rests. Luke 2:14*

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

2-Dec	John Borgardt	16-Dec	Wesley Patzke
2-Dec	Sean Fox	17-Dec	Melissa Bowe
2-Dec	Naomi Holthaus	17-Dec	Justin Schuler
2-Dec	Steven Johnson	18-Dec	Matt Patzke
6-Dec	Elijah Hlavacek	20-Dec	George Miller
7-Dec	Shirley Elwood	21-Dec	Tootie Blaesing
8-Dec	Jillian Widmar	21-Dec	Joy Neideffer
9-Dec	Linda Lie	23-Dec	Sally Marek
9-Dec	Mack Struebing	25-Dec	Merry Mertins
11-Dec	Brenden Cummings	25-Dec	Debbie Ritt
11-Dec	Julia Miller	26-Dec	Eric Peterson
11-Dec	Grace Preuss	27-Dec	Elanor DeYoung
12-Dec	David Messersmith	28-Dec	Diane Glassen
12-Dec	Marie Rumage	28-Dec	Tiffany Hoffmann
13-Dec	James Day	28-Dec	Thomas Nelson
14-Dec	Hollynn Anzalone	29-Dec	Elena Borgardt
14-Dec	Valentina Miller	29-Dec	Maximilian Knoell
14-Dec	Ava Morales	30-Dec	Connie Cochran
15-Dec	Eunice Matter	30-Dec	Jayce Klimowicz
15-Dec	Madison Mohar	30-Dec	Sarah Miller
15-Dec	Natalie Rosborough	31-Dec	Jim Dresen



We apologize if we have forgotten anyone.
Please contact the church office at 637-7011 to correct.
Thank You!

LIFE THOUGHTS FOR LUTHERANS – DECEMBER 2025

December 7 – Advent II (Populus Zion) – Abortion and assisted suicide arise out of panic. The Advent Gospel offers something better: promise and patient anticipation. During surprise pregnancy or terminal diagnosis, Jesus Christ means that better days are coming (Malachi 4:1-2), redemption is drawing near (Luke 21:28), and we may welcome one another like the Lord Himself (Romans 15:7). Sufferings will end, but blessings accumulate. Breathe, trust, hope, and rejoice.

December 14 – Advent III (Gaudete) – Our congregations must become comfortable speaking publicly about abortion if for no other reason than that Christian hearts also carry guilt and grief over the killing of their own children. The Word of the Lord commands us to condemn sin so that we may cry out comfort and peace (Isaiah 40:1-2) in the Heavenly Father's forgiveness, even for violating the sanctity of human life.

December 21 – Advent IV (Rorate Coeli) – Gospel-motivated voices For Life bring reasonableness to life issue conversations (Philippians 4:5). It means a message of joy and hope instead of an angry and fearful demeanor. Even the unborn rejoice (Luke 1:44) that the God of Christmas loves to elevate what seems insignificant (Luke 1:52). May we not let anxieties about politics (Philippians 4:6) silence the words the Lord Himself has put in our mouths (Deuteronomy 18:18).

December 28 – Holy Innocents – Herod's fury and Rachel's weeping still sound forth in our time and our land. Bethlehem's slaughter may have had dozens of casualties, but abortion's victims number in the millions. We have not only responsibility but privilege to participate instead in the Lord's work, upholding life (Psalm 54:4) by advocating hope (Jeremiah 31:16-17) and arranging deliverance for the endangered (Matthew 2:13-14).

STEWARDSHIP CORNER – DECEMBER

Advent I - Matthew 21:3 – “If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” – Consider the faithfulness of that man who owned the donkey and colt. All he needed to hear was, “The Lord has need of it,” and he willingly gave. The Lord has given each of us various callings in life (in our homes, in the church and in the communities we live in). In each calling we have good work to do which comes from the Lord’s hand. The Lord has need of us in each calling. How is He calling you to generous giving in each of your vocations?

Advent II - Luke 21:28 – “Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” When the world starts to fall apart, when things go badly, when nation rises against nation, Jesus tells us to lift up our heads because redemption is nigh. What a wonderful reminder that we Christians really do have nothing to fear! Jesus has conquered and He will deliver the full victory to us in His second Advent. Therefore we are free to live godly, generous, faithful lives here and now, for we have nothing to be afraid of.

Advent III - Luke 3:4 – “As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’” God makes long-range plans: Isaiah lived more than seven hundred years before St. John the Baptist preached by the Jordan River. Obviously, God sees farther into the future than we do! That’s yet another reason to trust Him when it comes to how He tells us to live our lives: He knows what’s coming and we don’t.

Advent IV - Philippians 4:5–6 – “The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Wouldn’t you like to be free from worry and anxiety? Isn’t it worry and anxiety that often keep us from living the generous life God has called us to? St. Paul contrasts anxiety with prayer, supplication and thanksgiving in making our requests known to God. In other words, when you are tempted to anxiety and worry, pray to the Lord with a thankful heart and pour out your supplications before Him.

Christmas I - Luke 2:38 – “And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.” Notice here how giving thanks to God leads to good works (speaking about Jesus, in this case). Thankfulness toward God for all He has done for us is the foundation of a Christian life lived in godliness. For if we know all that the Lord has done for us, how can we not strive to honor Him with what we think, say and do?

VANCO MOBILE AND ONLINE GIVING

Giving is easier than ever through St. John’s Vanco online or the Vanco Faith mobile app. You can access **Vanco online giving** by going to the St. John’s Church and School website; stjohnsracine.org.

Under the church heading, click online giving. This page allows you to give to different church funds. You can choose a one-time contribution or set up recurring contributions through this site. Giving is also available through the **Vanco mobile app**. Vanco, our eGiving provider, has launched an updated mobile app called Vanco Mobile Faith. Downloading the new Vanco Mobile is easy! Head over to the App Store or Google Play to download Vanco Mobile for free.

To use Vanco Mobile, follow these easy steps:

1. Search for our church by entering St Johns Lutheran. Do not use any punctuation, and it is case sensitive
2. Create a new account or login
3. Select your gift amount, fund, and frequency
4. Enter your payment method and click submit to complete your donation.

Please contact Kimberly in the church office if you have any questions about or need assistance with the Vanco online or mobile app giving. chapman@stjohnsracine.org or (262) 637-7011

You can also scan the QR code below to set up electronic giving or make a one-time gift through our church/school website giving page.



PLEASE JOIN ME FOR THE FOURTH ANNUAL
SHUT-IN CHRISTMAS CARD PROJECT

It's our fourth year of sending Christmas joy to our St John's family "Shut-Ins" with Christmas cards. Even if you don't normally send traditional cards in the mail, please consider sending cards to our "very special members" on the list below. This is going to take some time – buying or making cards and getting stamps. You could even make it a family project with the children, encouraging them to use the skills they're learning in school. Please ask the Holy Spirit to direct you, your family, and fellow members of St John's to do this. Please share with them the Christmas message, **"JOY TO THE WORLD, THE LORD HAS COME!"**

May God bless you!
Julie

Julie Hagen 262-331-0052
Julie_hagen@hotmail.com

SHUT INS

Name	Address	Phone Number
Carol Busarow	5225 Douglas Avenue #104, Racine, WI 53402	
Pat Cole	6551 Mariner Drive, Unit 6, Racine, WI 53406	
Sue Erickson	2262 Loni Lane, Racine, WI 53406	
Gary & Shirley Filicetti	4710 N Main St, Racine, WI 53402	
Janet Fisa	Marion House 4105 Spring Street, #212, Mt. Pleasant, WI 53405	
Marcella Geyer	3139 Conrad Drive, Racine, WI 53404	
Gail Gotch	1916 Wisconsin Avenue, Apt. 359, Racine, WI 53403	
Mimi Hynek	5321 Douglas Avenue, Apt. 1156A, Racine, WI 53402	
Susan Monson	418 Shoreland Drive, Racine, WI 53402	
Kathy Patzman	5404 Idlewood Drive, Racine, WI 53402	
Joanne Ruble	1108 N. Sunnyslope #104, Racine, WI 53406	
John Smith	1636 Raintree Lane, Racine, WI 53406	