

NEWS FROM ST. JOHN'S

DECEMBER 2023

FROM THE PASTOR

As we reach the final month of 2023, we are reminded again of how busy things get right at the end! The season of Advent points us to the coming end of time when our Lord will return to this world as our righteous judge. It also points to the coming celebration of His birth, which comes each year on Christmas.

This year, the season of Advent begins on Sunday, December 3. We will hold two Advent midweek services (December 6 & 13 at 6:00 pm) and, as we have been doing for the last couple of years, an Advent hymn sing on December 20, also at 6:00 pm. This offers an opportunity for us as a congregation to sing through some of the Advent or Christmas hymns that we haven't gotten to in a service, or simply ones that are well-liked and requested to be sung again!

The students in our school will also offer a Christmas program, which will take place on Monday, December 18. Given the number of students enrolled at St. John's (254), the same program will be offered twice that night in order to make the best use of the space we have. Feel free to join us for either program, which will be in the sanctuary that evening. School Christmas programs will be held at 4:15 and 6:00pm.

There are often lots of extra things to do or events to attend. I hope you will also take the time to join us for our Christmas Concert, which will be held on Sunday, December 10 at 6:00 pm. This is a helpful time to take in the beauty of the faith that saves as we hear again from God's Word the extent of His love for us by taking on our same flesh and being born in such a humble setting. We further our examination of this promise with our Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. Please note that we will hold one morning service on Sunday, December 24 at 9:00 am. It will be a regular Divine Service and will not be the same as our 4:00 & 11:00 pm services later that day. Our Wednesday evening services will revert back to the regular order we follow on December 27, and then on Sunday, December 31 we will switch back to the normal morning schedule of 7:45 & 10:15 am.

Please be sure to recognize the importance of coming together as God's people to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. The world would point us to so many other distractions and work to convince us that we don't have time or even a need to revisit the familiar account of Jesus' birth. The world is wrong! He came into this world to take our sin upon Himself and to overcome its affects, including death itself.

We examine this reality, and the end result of our faith, in the final stanza of the hymn "Once in Royal David's City" as we sing these words:

Not is that poor, lowly stable
With the oxen standing by
Shall we see Him, but in heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high.
Then like stars His children, crowned,
All in white, His praise will sound!
(LSB 376)

God's blessings as we continue through this month of December together!

In Christ,
Pastor Gilbert

FELLOWSHIP FRIDAY

Please note that there **will not** be a Fellowship Friday in December. The next Fellowship Friday will be held on Friday, January 19, 2024! We look forward to getting together in January.

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 15. We will be distributing the baskets sometime before Christmas. Thank you!

UPDATED ADVENT/CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

SCHEDULE

Listed below are the special worship service times for the month of December.

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

Advent Vespers – 6pm

Wednesday, December 13, 2023

Advent Vespers – 6pm

Wednesday, December 20, 2023

Advent Hymn Sing – 6pm

Sunday, December 24, 2023

Divine Service – 9am

Christmas Eve Services at 4 and 11pm

Monday, December 25, 2023

Christmas Day Communion Service – 9am

Wednesday, December 27, 2023

Midweek Divine Service – 6pm

Sunday, December 31, 2023

Divine Services at 7:45 and 10:15am

2024 FLOWER CALENDAR

The flower calendar for 2024 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.

2024 GIVING ENVELOPES

Giving envelopes for 2024 are now available! You can pick yours up on the tables outside the cafeteria. If you give online 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!

MONTHLY CHURCH NEWSLETTER

During the spring, we will be moving away from providing our monthly church newsletter through USPS bulk mail. Most families prefer to receive the newsletter via email. At this time, we do not have enough families (200) that would like to have the newsletter delivered by mail. For those families that do not have an email address, we will continue to mail the monthly newsletter by regular mail. If you have an email address, but would still like a paper copy, please let me know, and we will continue to send one out to you by regular mail along with the emailed version. We appreciate any email updates you can provide as we switch over to email as your primary source for the monthly newsletter. *As always, the current monthly newsletter can also be found under the church tab on the St. John's Church and School website!*

CRAFT SALE UPDATE

Our Craft Sale to benefit the Bugenhagen was a success Thanks to you! Thank you to everyone who visited our craft sale, we raised over \$1,400 to help support the Bugenhagen Conference. Thank you to all of those who donated items to the sale. We hope you are enjoying all of your treasures! Thank you again for your support!

GREETINGS FROM OUR SEMINARIAN

Dear St. John's of Racine,

Greetings in Christ! All is well at the seminary. As I write this, we are in the final week of the fall quarter. This past summer, I had the privilege of taking Summer Hebrew. It was a difficult class, but well worth the effort. After the class was finished, we were able to have a large cookout at our professor's house with our families.

This fall quarter has gone by very quickly. Since this is year two in my seminary education, my wife, Abby, and I are preparing for Vicarage next year, where I will have the opportunity to serve in a church full time under the supervision of a pastor. Please keep us in your prayers as we prepare for this next big step.

Our son, Oliver, is now fifteen months old. He enjoys running around, being outside, and reading books. It truly is amazing how even a young child grows into the faith that he was given in baptism. When we pray the Lord's Prayer with him, he puts his hands together and says "Amen!" after the prayer. One must truly be as a little child to enter the kingdom of heaven.

As always, thank you for your generous support while I attend seminary. Gifts such as these enable us to afford seminary and remain out of debt. You are truly a blessing.

In Christ,
Jacob R. Stefanec

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

2-Dec	John Borgardt	17-Dec	Justin Schuler
2-Dec	Sean Fox	18-Dec	Matt Patzke
7-Dec	Marilyn Dargin	20-Dec	George Miller
7-Dec	Shirley Elwood	20-Dec	Marlene Roepke
8-Dec	Jillian Widmar	21-Dec	Tootie Blaesing
9-Dec	Linda Lie	21-Dec	Gavin Fox
9-Dec	Mack Struebing	21-Dec	Lydia Rodriguez
11-Dec	Brenden Cummings	23-Dec	Sally Marek
11-Dec	Grace Preuss	25-Dec	Merry Mertins
12-Dec	David Messersmith	25-Dec	Debbie Ritt
12-Dec	Marie Ramage	26-Dec	Eric Peterson
13-Dec	James Day	28-Dec	Diane Glassen
14-Dec	Ava Morales	28-Dec	Thomas Nelson
15-Dec	Lou Duchac	28-Dec	Tiffany van Sliedrecht
15-Dec	Eunice Matter	29-Dec	Elena Borgardt
15-Dec	Madison Mohar	29-Dec	Maximilian Knoell
15-Dec	Natalie Rosborough	30-Dec	Connie Cochran
16-Dec	Peter Duchac	30-Dec	Sarah Miller
16-Dec	Wesley Patzke	31-Dec	Jim Dresen
17-Dec	Melissa Bowe	31-Dec	Kristen Fox



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

FROM YOUR DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Advent Worship Services: Please join us for our midweek Advent Vespers services beginning Wednesday, November 29th at 6:00 pm. On Monday evening, December 18th, our students will provide a visible witness of their faith and trust in the Savior born to us with special Pre-School – 8th grade Christmas programs. Join us!

Christmas Concert: Please join us for our annual Christmas Concert to be held this year on *Sunday, December 10, 2023*. The pre-concert music will begin at 5:45 pm, and the concert will follow at 6:00 p.m. Senior Choir, Handbell Choir, Hand Chime Choir, Children's Choir, vocal Soloists, Trumpet Choir, Violinist, Oboe, Flautists, and Pianists 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. 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

FROM THE PRINCIPAL

December is a month of preparation, as we ready ourselves for Christmas and the arrival of our Savior. Around school, there is a great deal of activity this month. Our first big event is our Cougar Classic basketball tournament during the first weekend of December, which really kicks off our basketball season. Our Children's Choir and Chimes Choir will lend their talents to St. John's Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 10th. Finally, we are excited to bring back our school Christmas program this year. Our students will be practicing parts and learning Christmas carols for the programs on Monday, December 18th at 4:15 pm and 6:00 pm. Finally, after a half day on December 22nd, our students and teachers will get a chance to relax and celebrate the holiday with their families on our Christmas break. We wish you a Merry Christmas from all of us at St. John's Lutheran School!

ST. JOHN'S ENDOWMENT FUND

The current value of the Fund, as of November 15th, 2023, is **\$1,593,059**. For the calendar year 2023, January through November, we've seen an increase of about 1% in the value of the fund, down from a high during the summer months.

Our year-to-date contributions are approximately \$8,300.

At our October meeting, the Committee considered four requests submitted on or before September 1st, for church and school projects meeting the requirements outlined in Section II of the Endowment Fund bylaws.

The Endowment Committee, Church Council and the Voters' Assembly have approved two projects; a console rebuild and "walk-board" upgrade for the church's beautiful Schlicker pipe organ, by Nolte Organ Service, Inc. and the installation of a new/upgraded sanctuary sound, video & streaming, basement audio and chancel sound system by Sound Specialty Co.

The total amount approved by the Congregation is \$91,090.

With the approvals, a portion of the motion to approve included an effort by the congregation to replenish the funds taken from the Endowment Fund via giving and fund raising.

If you, or your family, are interested in a vehicle for giving or a place for memorials, please consider the St. John's Lutheran Congregation Endowment Fund as a destination for the "enhancement and furthering" of God's work.

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.

LIFE THOUGHTS FOR LUTHERANS – DECEMBER 2023

December 3 – Advent I – Surprise pregnancy intimidates, and terminal diagnosis terrifies because they darken the future. But Jesus the Savior looks through walls and sees around corners (Mark 11:2-3). He has promised abundant and everlasting life as the one who both secures the ends and supplies the means. God is faithful and will sustain (1 Corinthians 1:9); can we confirm it with our testimony (1 Corinthians 1:6)?

December 10 – Advent II – John the Baptist prophesied the Gospel of the Kingdom that with Jesus' blessing is always coming (Mark 1:7-8). Even during surprise pregnancy or terminal diagnosis, He is not slow to keep His promises. Instead, He acts patiently, not wishing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). Aren't we crying out about it as this generation's voice in the wilderness (Mark 1:3)?

December 17 – Advent III – Those who believe cannot help but speak. God's love for every human life has filled our mouths with shouts of joy (Psalm 126:2). We have His permission to give voice to this Gospel in all circumstances and without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). Our time has come to bear witness to the Light (John 1:6-7). Confess and do not deny (John 1:20) the sanctity of life!

December 24 – Advent IV/Christmas Eve – Almighty God has profound interest and investment in childbearing and childrearing (2 Samuel 7:12; Luke 1:31). He has made this relationship and vocation central to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Every mother and father, every son or daughter embodies the love of the Lord for humankind. While abortion attempts to conceal the realities, our sanctity-of-life advocacy gets to reveal this delightful mystery (Romans 16:25).

December 31 – Christmas I/New Year's Eve – Christmas – and a new year – offers opportunity for the joys of looking forward. Simeon and Anna exemplify and inspire faith that finds strength and celebration in anticipating. The Heavenly Father who escorted us thus far will also usher us ever onward. Neighbors facing surprise pregnancies or suffering terminal diagnoses need to know. For their sake, please do not keep silent (Psalm 62:1)!

STEWARDSHIP CORNER – DECEMBER 2023

December 3 – Advent 1

Jeremiah 23:6 – “And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’” Jesus is our righteousness, our justification, our all. In Jesus, we are forgiven and receive every blessing from the Father. This knowledge sets us free to live as children of the heavenly Father without fear. Freed from the supposed need to justify ourselves, we can do good works for the *right* reason: to thank God and to serve our neighbor.

December 10 – Advent 2

Romans 15:4 – “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction.” God’s Word was given to us to bless us. The Bible warns us of our sin and points us to Christ for our salvation. The Bible also instructs us how to live out our Christian lives (this is the “third use of the Law”). As Christians, we should welcome this instruction in humble faith. We know that Christ has saved us; now, we want to know how to live lives of faith that are pleasing to Him.

December 17 – Advent 3

1 Corinthians 4:2 – “Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.” A steward manages the property of the owner for the owner’s purposes. We are stewards of all that God has given us. So, we are called to use all that we are and all that we have for God’s purposes. How do we know what His purposes are? Consider your vocations, your callings from God, in the home, in the church and in society: What are the roles God has called you to play? And how should you be using the gifts He has given you to fulfill those roles?

December 24 – Advent 4

Philippians 4:6 – “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Paul puts two things in opposition to each other: anxiety and prayer. So, trade your worries for prayers! You have a Father who loves you and desires to hear your prayers and bless you.

December 24 – Christmas Eve

Luke 2:12 – “And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” Truly, as St. Paul said, He who was rich for our sakes became

poor. The King was laid in a manger, no crib for His bed! There in the manger is the very picture of self-giving generosity.

December 25 – Christmas Day

John 1:12 – “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” What a joy to be called the children of God! We have a Father who cares for us and loves us. Therefore, we have no need to fear, for perfect love casts out fear. And with our fear set aside, we are free to serve the Christ who has become flesh and made His dwelling among us.

December 31 – Christmas 1

Luke 2:39 – “And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned ... to their own town of Nazareth.” The Law of God is good. Of course, it always shows us our sins, but that is good, too! We need to be driven back to the forgiveness of Christ. And the Law also shows us the truly blessed way to live. As Mary and Joseph found their joy in a godly life, so should we see the Law as a guide for Christian living and as the roadmap for saying thank you to the Lord for all His grace and mercy to us.

December 31/January 1 – The Circumcision and Name of Jesus

Luke 2:21 – “And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.” The name of Jesus means “the Lord saves.” There is no better way to end or begin a year than with the sweet comfort of the name of Jesus. He saves us. He loves us. He desires to bless us. That assurance is the basis for all we do in our Christian lives, including our stewardship of His financial blessings.

PLEASE JOIN THE 2nd ANNUAL "SHUT-INS" CHRISTMAS CARD CONTEST!

And, just like last year, this isn't really a contest. There are no judges. There are no prizes. There will only be JOY!...*Joy in the hearts and souls of our "shut-ins"* after they receive SO MANY CHRISTMAS CARDS from their church family. This is going to take some of your time, so please start early! This is going to take some of your prayers, so please start now! Please be a part of sending them a little JOY. You may never hear from any of these cherished members, but they will remember your name, and they will thank God for you and your thoughtfulness. He will hear their happy hearts praising Him for the Gift of His Son and He will hear them asking Him to bless you back! Please share the Christmas message with them:

"JOY TO THE WORLD, THE LORD IS COME!"

SHUT INS

Name	Address	Phone Number
Ann Beckett	6603 Medley Drive, Racine, WI 53402	262-770-3770
Dean Bornofska	Woods of Caledonia, 5737 Erie Street, Room 201A, Racine, WI 53402	
Pat Cole	6551 Mariner Drive, Unit 6, Racine, WI 53406	
Sue Erickson	5101 Wright Ave #215, Racine, WI 53406	262-260-8454
Gary & Shirley Filicetti	4710 N Main St, Racine, WI 53402	262-639-3721
Janet Fisa	6101 – 16 th Street, Room 11, Mount Pleasant, WI 53406	262-234-9859
Marcella Geyer	3139 Conrad Drive, Racine, WI 53404	262-634-8105
Gail Gotch	1916 Wisconsin Avenue, Apt. 359, Racine, WI 53403	262-221-6912
Mimi Hynek	5321 Douglas Avenue, Apt. 1156A, Racine, WI 53402	
Susan Monson	418 Shoreland Drive, Racine, WI 53402	262-639-8490
Kathy Patzman	5404 Idlewood Drive, Racine, WI 53402	
Art Preuss	5643 Erie Street, Room 219, Racine, WI 53402	
Linda Puchter	1463 28th Ct, Kenosha, WI 53140	262-553-9470
Marlene Roepke	1201 Kingston Avenue, Racine, WI 53402	
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