



# Zion St. John

## LUTHERAN CHURCH

*Being the Body of Christ*

December 2025

Vol. 31 No. 12

Advent/ Christmas



## Children's Program

*Sunday December 14, 4 pm*

*In person and Livestream*

### OUR VISION STATEMENT

*At Zion St. John Lutheran Church, we are committed to being the body of Christ until He returns. Led by the Holy Spirit and gathered around God's Word and Sacraments, we join in worship, fellowship, learning, spiritual nurture, outreach, and service, as we grow in faith and invite others to experience Christ's presence.*

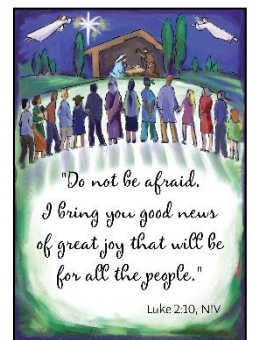


*Do not be afraid; for I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.* Luke 2:10

When it comes to treasured stories from our congregation's past, one of my favorite ones involves the Christmas sacks that were given to the kids following the annual Christmas program. Back in the early 1900's, these sacks included a variety of candies and included fresh fruit, such as apples and oranges. From what I've gathered, what the kids received in those sacks back then isn't all that different from what our kids receive today.

But back then, obtaining fresh fruit out of season was both difficult and very expensive. The bags were assembled then, as they are now, the day before the Christmas program. The bags were so valuable, that one of the male members of the church was appointed to spend that night in the church guarding the bags as they were afraid someone would break into the church and steal them. I wonder if anyone ever tried to break in and steal those bags? Back then those bags were a very valuable gift. One of our members, who now resides in heaven, was always thrilled if we had an extra bag left over so she could have one, as it reminded her of her childhood.

One of the reasons this story means so much to me is that it is full of irony. The most valuable gift in the church isn't the treat bags. The most valuable thing was the message of Christmas that the children learn and share with the adults, that God loved us enough to save us from ourselves. God sent Jesus in the form of a small vulnerable child to show us how to live, how to love and even how to die. The Sunday School children of our congregation will present their program on Sunday, December 14 at 4:00 p.m. A light supper will be served following the program. I encourage you to come and hear the wonderful story again, to hear it from the lips of children. I pray that you receive it with joy and wonder.



I pray that in this season you will remember just how valuable a gift the Christmas Gospel truly is.

God's blessings to you,  
Pastor Kim



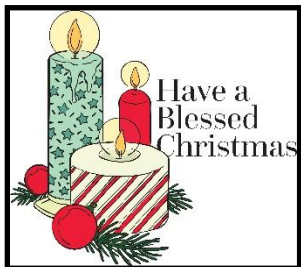
The days are now colder and darker, but the night is being lit up with lights and decorations of the Christmas season. It's nice to drive around the neighborhoods and see the shining displays.

Another fabulous Christmas tradition I enjoy is all the baking! Making way too many cookies and the fun of making a mess while frosting them is my idea of having a good time. Let's not forget the shopping! When I think about Christmas shopping the first thought in my head is the scene from the Grinch (Jim Carey version) when Cindy Lou is shopping with her dad and everyone is going a little overboard and crazy. It really can be like that sometimes; we get caught up in showing our love and care in the form of material items.

However, amid all the wonderful activities it can be easy for the true center of Christmas to become overshadowed: Jesus Christ, our Savior.

This season let us remember how the first Christmas really was. Remember how the Virgin Mary felt, her bravery to carry in her womb the child of God, the trust and faithfulness she showed to God. Remember the understanding and patience shown by Joseph when he found Mary to be with child that was not his. Remember the miracle and the perfect blessing that is baby Jesus, sent to save us from our sins

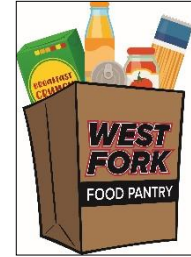
Merry Christmas!  
Leah



**Office Closed Dec 31-Jan 1**

**Thursdays,  
Dec 4, 11, 18  
2-5 pm**

**Saturday, Dec 6  
10 am-noon**



If you want to help, we are very appreciative for all donations of money, personal hygiene items, perishable and non-perishable food items. We are especially in need of condiments, soup and personal care items. You can place items in the cart in the Narthex or in the drop box on the front of the pantry building @ 106 Gilman. Our Christmas meal bag distribution, with ham, will be Thursday, Dec 18. The pantry will be closed December 25 and January 1.

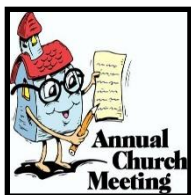
## FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Here's a look at our finances as of October 31, 2025:

<b>Budgeted Income</b>	<b>\$187,067</b>
<b>Offerings Received</b>	<b>\$165,242</b>
<b>Current Deficit</b>	<b>\$ 21,825</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$179,493</b>
<b>Checking Balance</b>	<b>\$ 15,916</b>



Our giving in October was good. Our budget deficit increased by less than \$500 and our checking account balance dropped by less than \$200. Pledge cards have been mailed out and are also available at the church. Please prayerfully consider filling one out for next year. Studies have shown that those who make a written commitment of giving to the church are both more likely to keep that commitment and feel better about how they are living out their faith in their daily lives. Thank you for your faithful giving!



**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**  
**ZSJ ANNUAL MEETING JAN. 25 2026,**  
**10 AM**  
**(SNOW DATE FEB 1)**  
**REPORTS DUE JAN. 13!**

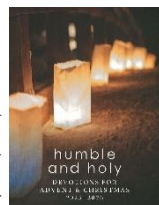


Thank you to everyone who made our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration a wonderful day!

Our amazing committee, Lorna M, Marcia E, Marlene S, Kari M, Al N, Nancy R, Lynette M, Pastor Kim and Diane W; our supportive council, Cindy H, our amazing choirs and Charles S for the great music, Fred R and Scott C for all the AV help and Lori S for the beautiful flowers; all who contributed to our videos and devotions and everyone who contributed to our projects!

## ADVENT EVENTS

1. Free Advent devotional books will be available in the narthex.
2. Midweek Advent worship will be on Wed, Dec 3, 10 and 17 @ 7 pm. The Holden Evening Prayer Service is a beautiful candlelight service that brings peace during a very busy time of the year! Come and find the true meaning of Christmas!
3. Participate in the Reverse Advent Calendar for the West Fork Food Pantry. Each day add an item to a box and then bring it to the Food Pantry in December or January and help us fill the shelves! Here are some suggestions or create your own!



- Dec 1 cereal
- Dec 2 peanut butter
- Dec 3 baked beans
- Dec 4 boxed potatoes

- Dec 5 mac and cheese
- Dec 6 canned fruit
- Dec 7 canned tomatoes
- Dec 8 canned tuna or chicken
- Dec 9 cake or brownie mix
- Dec 10 canned applesauce
- Dec 11 canned sweet potatoes
- Dec 12 juice
- Dec 13 jelly
- Dec 14 crackers
- Dec 15 rice
- Dec 16 ketchup, mustard, pickles
- Dec 17 packaged pasta
- Dec 18 spaghetti sauce
- Dec 19 chicken noodle soup
- Dec 20 tomato soup
- Dec 21 canned corn
- Dec 22 canned peas
- Dec 23 canned carrots
- Dec 24 canned green beans



## ELCA GOOD GIFTS TREE

The Christmas tree in the narthex contains ornaments from ELCA Good Gifts. If you are looking for a way to give a gift twice, this is a great idea. Not only can you give a gift to the one you love, but also share the gift of an animal with a family in need somewhere around the world! Just take an ornament and follow the directions to order on line, or if you need assistance, talk with Diane in the office.



## KLMJ BROADCAST



Our 10 pm Christmas Eve worship will be broadcast on KLMJ radio @ 9 am on Christmas Day. Thank you to a very generous anonymous donor for this special gift!



*Thank you to all who provided poinsettias for this Advent and Christmas season! You may pick up your flowers any time after Christmas Day.*

## *Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*



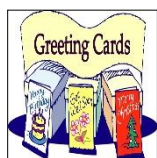
**Rebekah Circle**  
Mon, Dec 1 @ 6 pm

**Recording**  
Available by 10 am  
Tues, Dec 2

**Monday,  
Dec 15  
1 pm,  
fellowship hall**



### **BOXED CARDS**



The Women of ZSJ have boxed and individual cards for sale in the narthex. There is a new supply of sympathy, Christmas, get well, birthday, thinking of you and blank cards. Prices range from \$5- 6 per box, and individual cards are .50. Stop by and check it out!



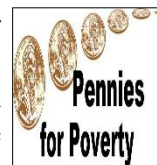
### **2026 TRIENNIAL**

Come to the Gathering in Des Moines, Iowa July 16-19, 2026!

- \* Experience electrifying worship
- \* Connect and build relationships with women of all ages from your church and beyond
- \* Be inspired by messages from speakers who remind you that you are a miracle
- \* Learn about and live out the ministry and mission of WELCA
- \* Participate in service and advocacy
- \* Run, Walk and Roll with our 5K Fun Run to raise money for women and girls.
- \* Enter a quilt in the Quilt competition.
- \* Learn more & Register at [New Triennial Event Page - Women of the ELCA](#).
- \* Don't miss this once in a lifetime chance!!

### **PENNIES FOR POVERTY**

Do you have a lot of loose change around your house? The Women of ZSJ have a collection jar on the narthex table! Any donations to the Penny jar will be given to West Fork Wishes. Help us to fill the jar to make Christmas a little brighter for families in our area!



### **HOLIDAY FOOD FAIR**



Everyone needs a reminder so here is yours regarding the Holiday food Fair. The fair will be Sun, Dec, 14 during the fellowship hour and after the SS Christmas Program in the afternoon.



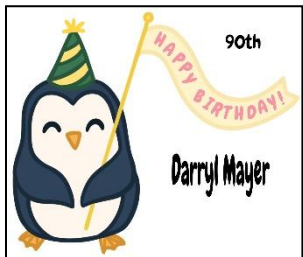
Those who have items to donate, please bring them to the church on Fri, Dec. 12 or by 9:00 am on Sat Dec. 13. Please label your cookies and other items so we know what they are. Labels will be provided.

The cookies will be sold by the dozen and other items individually. If you have a suggested price, please include that with your item. Cookie containers will be left in the kitchen for you to pick up .

Come and join us for fellowship, cinnamon rolls, coffee or juice. Then take time to shop, There will be something for everyone, The proceeds will be divided between the kitchen countertop fund and Wings of Refuge. Volunteers or questions, call Carla, 892-4985.



**Buy a chance to win this beautiful, handcrafted quilt!**  
**\$5/ ticket, drawing Dec 14,**  
**need not be present to win! It will make an awesome gift**  
**for a special someone!**  
**Proceeds to benefit the ZSJ Quilters & WELCA ministries!**



*Everyone is invited to help Darryl M celebrate his 90th birthday on Sunday Dec 7, during the fellowship hour! Cards are welcome!*



The meeting was called to order at 10:30 am on Nov 23, 2025 by Daren M. Members Present: Al N, Josh S, Darwin M, Alice G, Daren M, Pastor Wills, Nancy R. Members Absent: Judy S, Scott S, John L. Pastor Wills led the council in prayer.

**Secretary's Report-** Motion to approve the report as presented, Alice; second, Josh; carried.

**Treasurer's Report-** reviewed.

### **Pastor's Report**

#### **Inurnments Performed**

\* Oct 18, 2025 Lois Brinkman at Hillside Cemetery

#### **Baptisms Performed**

\* Oct 19, 2025 Hattlyn Rose, daughter of Collin & McKenzie S at ZSJ  
\* Nov 9, 2025 Lillian W at ZSJ

#### **Things Working On**

\* Providing Home Communion to those who request it.  
\* Preparing for Advent and Christmas.  
\* Attended Mandatory Boundaries Training at St. James in Mason City on November 6.

#### **Items to Consider**

\* Important dates coming up when council is needed to help. Sat Nov 29 is decorating the church for Advent @ 9 am. Dec 13 is assembling the Christmas sacks for the Sunday School kids @ 9:00 am. Daren will take care of getting the supplies for the sacks.  
\* Regarding the trip to Tanzania, there is a travel advisory in place at this time, so he is not sure that they will be able to go. Darwin, Diane and Pastor have set the date for February 18-29, 2026. We are monitoring the situation but still hope to go.  
\* Our youth are inviting friends to church who are new to the faith. Leah and Pastor are in the early stages of working on a new program to help meet their needs. Our early research is showing that youth are

looking for a safe place to make connections with a caring community. The two temple talks given by Abby S and Lillian W confirmed this in a powerful way.

- \* Pastor will be in Minnesota Nov 26-28. A big thank you to Nancy Retz for leading worship on Thanksgiving Eve.
- \* Motion made to approve the transfer of membership for Mariellen VB, Darwin; second, Alice; carried.

## Committee Reports

### Property Committee

- \* Lights have been installed on the west side of the church.
- \* They are investigation the possibility of installing lights on the south side as well.

### Stewardship Committee

- \* “Blessed and Sent to Thrive” has been well received. Thanks to Pastor and Daren for their work on this.

### Worship & Evangelism

- \* Sign up sheets are on the narthex bulletin board.

### Technology/ Parish Ed/ Youth & Family

- \* No new updates

### 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

- \* Had a wrap up meeting last week. Everyone has enjoyed the past year. Still awaiting the rest of the bills but should be in good shape financially.

### New Business

- \* 2026 budget was reviewed. A motion to approve the budget pending the changes discussed during the meeting, Darwin; second, Al; carried
- \* Annual Meeting will be held January 25 with a weather date of February 4.
- \* Council members completing their term this year are Al N, Judy S, and John L. They will work with Pastor on securing people to be on

council beginning in 2026.

- \* A suggestion was made to investigate options for CD’s for some of the money that is currently in our savings accounts. Alice and Josh will gather information and present it at the February 2026 meeting.
- \* Money counters for December – Josh and Darwin
- \* No regular council meeting in December.
- \* Motion to adjourn the meeting, Nancy; second, Josh; carried. Meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

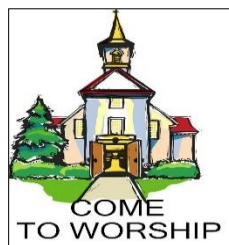
Respectfully Submitted,  
Nancy R

## STAFF OFFICE HOURS & CONTACT INFORMATION

G Kim Wills, Pastor 641-425-9453 [pastor@zionstjohn.org](mailto:pastor@zionstjohn.org)  
9am-3pm, T-F

Leah Cruz, DYFM 641-373-7015 [youth@zionstjohn.org](mailto:youth@zionstjohn.org)  
8am-12 pm, T; 8am-8pm, W

Church Office 641-892-4010 [mail@zionstjohn.org](mailto:mail@zionstjohn.org)  
9am-12pm, M-F



## SUNDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

9:00 am Worship  
*Livestream @ [www.zionstjohn.org](http://www.zionstjohn.org) , Livestream)*  
10:15 am Fellowship & Sunday School

## PRAYER LIST



In order to keep Pastor Kim informed and our prayer list accurate, please let the church office or Pastor know if you are in the hospital or are anticipating hospitalization. You call him directly @ 641-425-9453. Family members are also welcome to call.

Sarah P	Ray R	Zayne F
Doug D	Dusty M	Jim M
Christy M	Kay E	Lori M
Jon S	Steve H	Cheryl R
Marcy M	Keely S	Sue K
Crystal B	Wendy J	Jeri B
Lavonne C	Patricia S	Sharon S
Karla C	Crystal C	

⇒ The newly baptized, Lillian Faith W  
 ⇒ The family of Louise K  
 ⇒ The family of Diana K

1	Marvin K
2	Cruz W
3	Jesse E, Michael R, Preslee C
4	Colin C, Kenden N
6	Rebecca H, Joseph K
8	Doug D
14	Connie L
15	Brittany G
16	Grant N , Darryl M
20	Georgi S
21	Doug D, LeAnn E, John T
22	Kathy B, Colten H
23	Sue R
24	Coleen B
25	<b>JESUS!</b>
26	Deb Barkema, Kelly K, Steve K
27	Alex B, Gene B, Tina H-L , Dakota R, Gage P



29 Hayden F, Cooper W  
 30 Brett B  
 31 Norah T

[Christmas with  
 Wartburg 2025 |  
 Wartburg College](#)



### 2025 Performance Dates

- Saturday, December 6, 3 p.m. - Neumann Aud, Waverly
- Saturday, December 6, 7:30 p.m. - Neumann Aud
- Sunday, December 7, 3 p.m. - Neumann Aud



[Christmas at Luther |  
 Luther College](#)

### 2025 Performance Dates:

- Thursday, December 4, 5:45 p.m.
- Friday, December 5, 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, December 6, 7:30 p.m.
- Sunday, December 7, 2:30 p.m. (livestream )

**Franklin County Choir Concert**  
**Sunday, December 7, 2 pm**  
**United Methodist Church, Hampton**  
 Featuring local musicians and  
 members of ZSJ Handbell choir  
**ADVENT/CHRISTMAS**



Nov 29 9 am Family Tree/ Sanctuary Decorating

Nov 30	9 am	Sunday Advent Worship w Holy Communion
Dec 3	7 pm	Midweek Worship, “Holden Evening Prayer”
Dec. 7	9 am	Sunday Advent Worship
	2 pm	Franklin County Choir Concert
Dec. 10	7 pm	Midweek Worship, “Holden Evening Prayer”
Dec. 14	9 am	Sunday Advent Worship w/ Holy Communion w/ SS Children singing
	10 am	Holiday Food Fair
	4 pm	SS Christmas Program, light supper following
	5 pm	Holiday Food Fair
Dec. 17	7 pm	Midweek Worship, “Holden Evening Prayer”
Dec. 21	9 am	Sunday Advent Lessons and Carols Worship
Dec. 24	5 pm	<b>Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with children in mind</b>
	10 pm	<b>Christmas Eve Candlelight Service</b>
Dec. 25	10 am	<b>Christmas Festival Worship w Holy Communion</b>
Dec. 28	9 am	Sunday Christmas Lessons and Carols Worship

All worship services are in person  
and livestreamed @ [www.zionstjohn.org](http://www.zionstjohn.org)

