



ST. JOHN'S EAGLE

Volume 56, Issue 2

February 2026

Special items of interest:

Worship in our Sanctuary continues each Sunday morning at 9am. If you are unable to attend, you can join us for virtual worship on our YouTube page. (Go to YouTube.com and search for ST JOHN 'S LUTHERAN CHURCH - MENDOTA.)

If you would like Pastor Elise to visit when you are hospitalized, please contact the church office. Because of privacy laws, the hospital will not contact us.

St. John's offers **Electronic Giving.** If you are interested please contact Le Roy in the office. You can also **give online** through the link on our website.

The **Wednesday prayer group** meets from 9am to approximately 9:30am every Wednesday to lift up prayers on behalf of the St. John's community. You can pray aloud or silently, come frequently, or on occasion. All are welcome!



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Dear friends in Christ,

This month we enter the season of Lent. Lent calls us to a time of introspection, a time to become rooted, like a seed planted in good soil, strengthening roots first, so that the shoot can come forth secure and sure. It is an intentional time of drawing near to Christ, to participate more fully in his death and resurrection. It is a personal endeavor, resulting in a life lived outwardly, bearing the fruit of Christ's love in our lives.

It is not always easy, especially in these days of increased polarization, where perspectives vary on what is true and what is right. Our Sunday worship readings over these months are from John's Gospel, where beloved community, bound together by Christ is emphasized. It is not easy to be beloved community when we know people disagree with us, even when we all believe that we are being faithful to God's values and the call of Christ to love our neighbor.

One of the gifts of our Lutheran theological heritage is understanding that God's Word comes to us as both law and gospel. That is, God's Word both convicts us and frees us. We stand under the judgement of God's Word, and we recognize our sins. We turn to Christ for forgiveness, orienting us anew to life in God's beloved community. Whether we hear a word as law/judgement or hear it as grace will often depend upon where we are sitting at any given time. One time, after a Holden Evening Prayer service, one of the worshippers, who had been to that service many times before said, "Pastor, where is this coming from? We sang that God has 'left the wealthy no part.' I don't like that." She was someone who had financial resources, and discovering these were the words of Mary, Jesus' mother left her convicted but also thoughtful. For the gospel, the good news, is more than one verse of Scripture, and life in Jesus is open to all, in the times we feel convicted and in the times we are Spirit-led to embrace the way of Jesus.

We are beloved community, bound to one another in Christ Jesus, bearing one another's burdens, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep (Romans 12:15). I am saddened that so many of us can only speak to one another with "surface" talk and feel unable to say publicly what weighs on our hearts. It is difficult to talk with one another and it is difficult to listen. But we are assured that Christ is the one who has bound us one to another in this community of faith.

I encourage you to find resources that help us be open to one another in these days. Two I recommend: Romans 12:9-21, and a social statement published in 1995 "For Peace in God's World," which you can find by typing that title and ELCA in your browser search bar or ask for a print or digital copy through the church office.

On a personal note, thank you for prayers for my mother, Mari Eklund, over the past year and especially as she has been under hospice care. I appreciate your prayers for her comfort in these days, and all the care you have shown me and my family.

Your servant in Christ,
Pastor Elise

Church Council Highlights

The following are some highlights from the January 15th meeting of our Church:

- Used the Faith 5 process for devotions
- Heard more about our financial position from financial secretary Le Roy Groff
- Made recommendations for the congregation at the annual meeting regarding establishing the mission endowment fund.

At its meeting following the annual meeting on January 25, the council elected the following officers for 2026: President: Tony Troyer; Vice-President: Tom Meinhardt; Secretary: Carole Eich; Treasurer: Betsy Westrick.

Finance Report January 2025 thru December 2025:

Budgeted Income \$367,620 Actual Income \$361,014

Budgeted Expense \$379,712 Actual Expense \$391,205

We are grateful for your continued financial support, through your offerings in person, through the mail, and through electronic giving. We are blessed to have such a faithful St. John's family.

Trivia Night

On January 10, 2026, the Task Force hosted their annual Trivia Night following the annual Spaghetti Dinner. Fifty-two people in 7 teams enjoyed trivia, snacks and fellowship. After six categories of some pretty difficult questions this year, the *Friends & Family* team ended up in first place and donated their \$300 "winnings" to the Mendota Area Senior Services.



Food Pantry Collection

On December 14, 2025, 8 members of the confirmation class along with Pastor Elise and Ken and Laurie Ladenburger, went to Sullivan's Foods in an effort to restock the local food pantry. The kids split into 3 teams and used a shopping list and budget to purchase the needed items with seed money provided by Thrivent. On December 21, 2025, during the children's Christmas program, the congregation was invited to bring their food donations to the altar and place them with the purchased items. On January 8, 2026, Ken and Laurie Ladenburger delivered the **329 pounds of food** to the Mendota Area Christian Food Pantry.

Well done St. John's!!

Young Adult Bible Study

All young adults out of high school are invited to share in a Bible study. The group meets at St. John's every other week at 6:00 PM and is led by Ted Landgraf and Tim Miller.

The next dates are February 3, 17, and March 3.

Inspire Youth with Your Hobby or Skill

The Live Well Mendota Youth Engagement Coalition is planning for summer. Do you have a skill, hobby or talent that you could share or teach local youth for one or multiple days? If so, please contact Maria Arteaga: marteaga@mendotacity.com 815-539-7459.

Lent 2026

Lent is the time of the church year when we are invited into an intentional focus on who Jesus is for us, and prepare ourselves to die and rise with him. The word Lent comes from an old English word that meant "springtime." Lent will begin on Ash Wednesday, February 18.

Ash Wednesday

We will observe the start of the season with Ash Wednesday worship at 6:30 PM in the sanctuary. The service will include imposition of ashes and Holy Communion, offered at the altar rail and on the main floor.

Wednesday Evenings with Holden Evening Prayer

We will gather each Wednesday evening at 6:30 PM in the chapel for worship with the beloved Holden Evening Prayer service. Our theme will be "Conversations with Jesus."

There will be no Wednesday suppers this year.

Congregational Resourcing Event of the Northern Illinois Synod — March 7, 2026

You are invited to the Congregational Resourcing Event on March 7, 2026, at Sauk Valley Community College in Dixon, Illinois. Come gather together with lay and rostered members from across our synod as we share ideas and inspiration for all the great ways we can go deeper in faith in our congregations and in our communities. The morning will include display visits, worship, and a keynote. The afternoon will be time for workshops and conversations. Each piece of the day will inspire and encourage participants in faith and ministry!

Cost is \$40 per person and includes lunch and coffee. Registration is now open! Visit this website to check out what all is happening at the CRE and register, <https://nisynod.org/programs/cre>. Registration closes on Feb. 20th. Contact Pastor Elise if you would like to carpool.

Dementia Friendly Mendota

Mendota's first dementia support group will meet February 2 from 1:00-3:00 at Zion Methodist Church (808 Jefferson St). We will discuss upcoming caregiver support and memory cafe meetings. ALL are invited, not just dementia caregivers. Helping one of us helps all of us!

A second meeting is planned for Monday, February 16 from 1:00-3:00 PM at Zion Methodist Church for people living with memory changes and their care partners. Light refreshments, conversation, and a no-obligation activity are offered. No pre-registration is required.

A Thank You to the Congregation

To the Congregation,

I just want to take a moment to say thank you to the amazing group of kids and adults who helped make the Spaghetti Dinner such a huge success. It truly wouldn't have been possible without everyone's time, energy, and willingness to serve. We served over 125 meals, raised \$1,500 for the youth, and had a wonderful time doing it. The compliments our diners shared about the kids serving were so heartwarming — they truly did an amazing job. We are very blessed! A huge thank you as well to our congregation for the generous donations of supplies. Your kindness and support played such an important role in making the evening a success. I would also like to extend a special thank you to Karen and Don Goy, who quietly help behind the scenes and are always willing to lend a hand. Their support does not go unnoticed and is truly appreciated. We have another event coming up in February with the Pancake Supper and will be looking for additional volunteers. After that, we're planning a simple thank-you gathering in March to celebrate our youth, more details to come!

Thank you again for all that you do. Your help makes such a difference in our church community.

Monica Dankenbring-Zimmerlein

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

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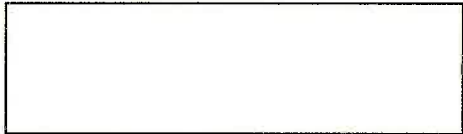
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Find us on Facebook!

Search for our page "*St. John's Lutheran Church, Mendota, IL*" and join us.



FAT TUESDAY
Pancake Supper
March 17th
5pm-7pm

Join us at St. John's for pancakes, freshly grilled sausage and applesauce

February Birthdays, Anniversaries & Upcoming Events

God's continued blessings to all of those celebrating birthdays & anniversaries this month!

75th+ Birthday



- Feb. 4 Ron Egler
- Feb. 6 Carol Schinzer
- Feb. 8 Jim Mathesius
- Feb. 17 Bruce Wilhelm
- Feb. 18 Dennis Pohl
- Feb. 23 Elizabeth Robinson
- Feb. 26 Pam Dean
- Feb. 27 Steve Florschuetz

Happy 50+ and Milestone Anniversary!

- Jim & Dawn Mathesius
February 14th — 55 years
- William & Marlene Simonton
February 14th — 67 years
- Mike & Delle Vercimak
February 20th — 10 years

February

- 3 Young Adults Bible Study 6pm
- 4 Prayer Group 9am
- 5 Sarah Circle at Stonecroft 130pm
- 9 Rebecca Circle 1pm
- 11 Prayer Group in Chapel 9am
- 12 Allure 10am
- 12 All Teams 7pm
- 13 First Communion Class 6pm
- 17 Young Adults Bible Study 6pm
- 17 Fat Tuesday Pancake Supper 5-7pm
- 18 Prayer Group in Chapel 9am
- 18 Stonecroft 10am
- 18 Ash Wednesday Service 630pm
- 19 Executive Team 545pm/Church Council 630pm
- 24 Quilting 9am
- 25 Prayer Group in Chapel 9am
- 25 Holden Evening Prayer 630pm

February 2026

St. John's Lutheran Church

815-539-5626

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1		2	3	4	5	6	7
		OFFICE CLOSED	6pm Young Adult Bible Study	9am Prayer Group	130pm Sarah Circle at Stonecroft	OFFICE CLOSED	
8		9	10	11	12	13	14
	9am Worship	OFFICE CLOSED		9am Prayer Group	10am Allure	OFFICE CLOSED	
	1015am Fellowship	1pm Rebecca Circle			7pm All Teams	6pm Class for First Communion	
	1015am Sunday School						
15		16	17	18 - Ash Wednesday	19	20	21
	9am Worship with First Communion students	OFFICE CLOSED	6pm Young Adult Bible Study	9am Prayer Group	545pm Exec. Team	OFFICE CLOSED	
	1015am Fellowship		5-7pm Youth Pancake Supper	10am Stonecroft	630pm Council		
	1015am Sunday School			630pm Ash Wed. Worship	newsletter deadline		
22		23	24	25	26	27	28
	9am Worship	OFFICE CLOSED	9am Quilting	9am Prayer Group		OFFICE CLOSED	
	1015am Fellowship			630pm Holden Evening Prayer			
	1015am Sunday School						

Upcoming Readings for Worship

- February 1 – John 4:1-42
- February 8 – John 4:46-54
- February 15 – John 9:1-41
- February 18 – John 10:1-18
- February 22 – John 11:1-44
- March 1 – John 13:1-17

The St. John's Prayers

Maybe you wonder, what is required to join those who pray on Wednesday mornings? Or maybe you are pretty sure you don't belong in that group because there is no way you could pray aloud in front of others? Please know that your prayerful presence is all that's required. While prayers are spoken, no one is obligated to pray aloud. We pray for the needs of people and situations named by our congregation; we pray for St. John's as a whole, our ministry, and the needs of the world. You are welcome to join us every week, or whenever you can make it.

All Teams

All teams of the congregation are invited to our first 2026 All Teams meeting night, **Thursday, February 12 at 7:00 PM**. We will meet in the fellowship hall. The goal of this time together is both to have a better understanding of the goals of each team and time for us to work with one another. If you are not yet part of a team but would like to be, show up and we will connect you to the right ministry!

St. John's Lutheran Church
815-539-5626

February 2026 Volunteer Schedule

Please switch with another volunteer if you have a conflict and contact the office with the change.

	February 1st	February 8th	February 15th	February 22nd
Sundays 9am	Contemporary	Traditional	Contemporary	Traditional
Reader	Todd Zimmerlein	Jeff Simonton	David Rothfusz	Rita Randecker
Communion Assistants	Monica Dank-Zimmerlein & Charlee	Jeff & Lori Simonton	David Rothfusz <i>& Deb Rose</i>	Aimee Holland & volunteer needed
Usher/ Greeter	Melissa Nosalik, Leann O'Brien, Lisa Martin & Melissa Doll	Chris, Christy, Camryn & Callie Perra	Dennis & Deb Bieser, Lisa Martin & volunteer needed	Troy & Aimee Holland, Judy Kerns & Linda Buettner
Acolyte	Cooper K.	Brooklyn S.	Hunter P.	Ally T.
Altar Guild	Kris Blunk	Becky Atherton	Myrna Simon	Shirley Pierson
Sound	Rich Wujek	David Rothfusz	TBD	Jeff Simonton

Feb. 18th Ash Wednesday

Reader	Becky Atherton
Communion Assistants	Becky Atherton, Melissa Nosalik
Ushers	Let office know if you are willing to usher
Acolyte	TBD
Altar Guild	Myrna Simon
Sound	TBD