

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Periodicals

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The church office follows the lead of our local school districts when it comes to closing because of wintry weather conditions. If the schools are closed, it is likely we are closed also. Please call before coming to the office.



February Birthdays, Anniversaries & Upcoming Events

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

75th+ Birthday



- Feb. 2 Elwood Kidd
- Feb. 3 Joanne Politsch
- Feb. 4 Ron Egler
- Feb. 6 Carol Schinzer
- Feb. 17 Bruce Wilhelm
- Feb. 18 Dennis Pohl
- Feb. 23 Elizabeth Robinson
- Feb. 26 Pam Dean

Happy 50+ and Milestone Anniversary!

- Jim & Dawn Mathesius
February 14th — 54 years
- William & Marlene Simonton
February 14th — 65 years
- Richard & Susan Ponto
February 28th — 45 years

February

- 5 Prayer group in Chapel gam
- 6 Sarah Circle 1pm at Stonecroft
- 6 All Teams meeting 7pm
- 10 Rebecca Circle 1:30pm
- 12 Prayer group in Chapel gam
- 13 Allure 10am
- 16 New Members Class 1pm
- 17 Office Closed — Presidents' Day holiday
- 17 New Members Class 6:30pm
- 18 Congregational Book Read 6:30pm
- 19 Prayer group in Chapel gam
- 19 Stonecroft worship 10am
- 19 Worship Team meeting 7pm
- 20 Hosting Synod Sabbath Space event gam to 12:30pm
- 20 Executive Team 5:45pm / Church Council 6:30pm
- 25 Quilting gam
- 26 Prayer group in Chapel gam

St. John's Lutheran Church



ST. JOHN'S EAGLE

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Special items of interest:

Worship in our Sanctuary continues each Sunday morning at gam. If you are unable to attend, you can join us for virtual worship on our YouTube page. (Go to YouTube.com and search for STJ LUTHERAN 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 Susan in the office. You can also give online through the link on our website.

The **Wednesday prayer group** meets from gam 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 beloved in Christ,

Happy anniversary! As mentioned at the annual meeting, we have reached the one year mark in our ministry together. I am so grateful God has called me to be part of St. John's ministry and serve Christ in partnership with you. You are such a gift to Mendota and the world, and I am blessed to be part of what God has done, is doing, and will do through our ministry.

Given the numerous executive orders and government changes this past week, I would like to share with you some of the principles and values that I hold.

I am a pastor to all God's people, and in particular, those whom God has placed in front of me on a daily basis – you! I have said since (and even before) the start of my ministry here that I believe we are bound to one another in Christ by virtue of our Baptism into Christ. This means that even if we disagree or have differences on something, I still value you. I believe that everyone is shaped by their context, how and where they were raised and by whom, family and friends, study of Scripture, history, news, and commentary. All these things shape who we are and how we see the world, and so we will not see eye to eye on all things. That does not change how I regard you as a child of God.

I am a pastor whose call is to proclaim Christ and his gospel in word and deed. His word comes to us as both law and gospel. That means sometimes we hear good news and sometimes what we hear convicts us. I do my best to proclaim the Word, being faithful to Christ and the promptings of the Holy Spirit each week as I preach.

God's Word in Christ gives us a moral compass to guide our behaviors and our actions. When moral issues become political hot potatoes, we need to pause and consider what is at the heart of the matter for us. How does our faith shape our understanding of the issue. Simply put no matter what, the gospel of Jesus has political implications for us. I also believe there is a difference between what is political and what is partisan. The gospel has political implications for how we vote, advocate, and live in the public sphere. But the gospel is not partisan. No one party can ever hold fully to what our Christian values and the gospel of Jesus demand of us. So while something I preach may sound political, it should not be partisan.

I am always open to conversation – about anything. Especially if you think what I have preached is inconsistent with the Gospel of Jesus and its biblical foundation, please talk to me. I am here to serve with you and among you. Living in community with one another requires honesty and integrity. We are accountable to one another in our life in Christ.

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I also believe that the Christian tradition has a wide spectrum of beliefs and practices. There is no one monolithic Christian dogma or practice. As people of the Lutheran tradition however, we do have certain theological understandings about the gospel of Jesus and how we live. In our polity of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we have bishops whose role is to help us (pastors and deacons and congregations) stay accountable to the gospel of Jesus as we best understand it. This past week, Presiding Bishop Eaton of the ELCA and the three bishops in the Illinois synods put out pastoral messages on the executive orders. You can find them online at these sites <https://nisynod.org/news> and <https://tinyurl.com/msyycahg>. There are also hard copies available in the church office.

People are dealing with a lot these days, personally and in grappling with rapid changes in our public landscape. I am here as a shepherd and guide, and as one who journeys with you in joys and griefs and challenges of all kinds, one who witnesses to God's love and grace for you. If you or someone you know needs support or a confidential ear, I am available.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Elise

Church Council Highlights

The following are some highlights from the January 16th meeting of our Church Council:

- Pastor Elise reported that St. John's will be a host site a few times this year for the Northern Illinois Synod "Sabbath Space" days for pastors, deacons, and synod-authorized ministers to have a place for personal worship, renewal, and rest. The first date is Thursday, February 20th.
- The council has proposed to research investment options to prolong the life of the Ministry Enhancement Fund, and heard a presentation by Tim Urness, our ELCA Regional Gift Planner, about the ELCA Ministry Growth Fund as one possible avenue.
- The council is in support of hosting a Men's Lenten Dinner at St. John's on Thursday, March 27th.
- Pastor Elise is involved with a Mendota working group to improve our community's responsiveness to people with dementia and their caregivers through a national and state initiative "Dementia-Friendly America." The working group is seeking support letters for their "Dementia-Friendly Mendota" application. The council is in support of this work and Pastor Elise will write a support letter on behalf of the council.
- The next meeting of the Council is set for Thursday, February 20th.

Finance Report Year To Date thru December 2024:

Budgeted Income \$323,910 Actual Income \$346,761
Budgeted Expense \$336,734 Actual Expense \$341,145

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.

New Members Gathering

A new members gathering will be held on two dates (choose one): Sunday, February 16th at 1pm to 2:30pm and Monday, February 17th at 6:30pm to 8pm. Join us in the Fellowship Hall.

Save the Dates!

Ash Wednesday is March 5th. Watch the bulletins and the March newsletter for ways you can deepen your faith during that season.

Men of the congregation are planning for the ecumenical Men's Lenten Dinner. The date will be Thursday, March 27th. More information will be shared as the date approaches.

Annual Meeting of St. John's Congregation

Before the meeting began, those present sang "Happy Birthday" to Pastor Elise, whose birthday was on January 23rd.

The 167th Annual Meeting of St. John's Congregation was held in the Sanctuary following worship on Sunday, January 26th. Council President Tony Troyer called the meeting to order and after determining that there was a quorum, Pastor Elise Rothfusz led the opening devotion. A video message from Bishop Stacie Fidlar was shown.

Council President Tony Troyer shared remarks about 2024: He expressed his gratitude for the team members, Council members, and Pastor Elise as well as the dedicated staff and many volunteers who made it possible for us to continue all of our ministries and activities during the past year. Tony remarked how blessed he has felt in his first year as Council President. He also thanked outgoing Council member Roberta Wendel for her 12 years of service to the church and thanked Carole Eich for agreeing to serve a second term.

Treasurer Jeff Simonton presented the 2024 Treasurer's Report which was approved. He then presented the 2025 Annual Budget which was followed by the Stewardship Team's presentation of the Narrative Budget for 2025. The 2025 Budget was approved. (Check out these links if you would like to have a look at our 2025 narrative budget. To view the slides: <https://tinyurl.com/SJM25Budget> If you wish to print the slides: <https://tinyurl.com/SJM25BudgetPrint>)

The 2025 Ballot was presented and voted upon favorably. We are in need of two Synod Delegates. If you are interested, please contact the office.

Todd Zimmerlein presented the Benevolence/Ministry Enhancement Distribution for 2025 which was approved.

New Business — Jeff Simonton and Tony Troyer asked for the congregational approval to research ways, including a Mission Endowment Fund, to extend the life of our Ministry Enhancement fund. This was approved by the congregation. The next annual meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 25, 2026. Copies of the 2024 Annual Report are available in the church office and the Information Booth in the Fellowship hall.

2025 St. John's Church Council, Delegates & Committee Members

The newly-elected Church Council gathered following the Annual Meeting on January 26th for a brief organizational meeting.

Executive Team includes: President—Tony Troyer; Vice President—Todd Zimmerlein; and Secretary—Carole Eich. The Church Council also includes: Melissa Doll, Sandi Maas, Tom Meinhardt, Dennis Politsch, Betsy Westrick, and Garret Zinke. We thank the following members for volunteering to serve St. John's as committee members and delegates: Nominating Team - Roberta Wendel.

Congregational Resourcing Event of the Northern Illinois Synod — March 22, 2025



Each year the Northern Illinois offers an opportunity for congregations to share ideas and inspiration for all the great ways we can grow disciples in our congregations and in our communities. Hear a presentation on what innovation in the church looks like, and attend workshops on a variety of topics, including livestreaming practices and inviting others to our church. You can find details at <https://nisynod.org/programs/cre>. Registration is open now and closes March 10th.