

The Loveletter

St. John Lutheran Church, 201 Fourth Avenue, Keystone, Iowa 52249

December, 2024

THE LOVELETTER

Published Monthly by

St. John Lutheran Church
(Missouri Synod)
201 Fourth Avenue
P.O. Box 176
Keystone, Iowa 52249
Phone: 319-442-3514

Church E-Mail:
stjnluth@netins.net

Church Website:
www.stjohnkeystone.org

OUR STAFF

Rev. Josiah Schultz
Pastor

Phone: 913-223-8261

Donna Busch
Parish Assistant
319-721-0952

Relda Pickering
Custodian
319-442-3742

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday Worship
9:00 a.m.

BIBLE STUDIES

Sunday School
10:15 - 11:15 a.m.

Sunday Adult Bible Class
The Book of Mark
10:15 - 11:15

Wednesday Bible Class
Studying 1 John
10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

SWADDLING CLOTHES

Store open second
Saturday of each month
from 9 to noon,
the following Monday
afternoon from 4:30 - 6:00.

Midweek Advent Services and Preservice Soup Suppers

Our first Midweek Advent Service entitled *"His Gospel is Peace"*, will be held on Wednesday, December 4th, starting at 6:30 p.m. There are a total of three midweek Advent services this year, also on December 11th, and 18th. Like last year, a soup supper will be held prior to worship, from 5:30 to 6:15. These are to be simple meals with a soup, bread, and dessert/bar available. We are asking for 2 volunteers who could each bring a crockpot of soup, 2 volunteers who could each bring bread to serve 15-20 people, and 2 volunteers who could each bring dessert or bars to serve around 20 people. Pastor Schultz and Hannah are preparing the meal for December 4th. There are sign-up sheets in the narthex for the 11th and 18th. The church will provide styrofoam soup bowls, small plates for the bread and dessert, cups, napkins, plastic silverware, margarine, crackers, and coffee. This will be self-serve. Crockpots can be plugged in on the counter if need be, bread and desserts can be served out of the container that they arrive in. Food will be available from 5:30 to 6:15. Those who choose to eat will need to clean up their table as they leave and dispose of their table service in the trash before heading upstairs to worship. Direct any questions to the church office. Thank you in advance for volunteering!

Advent Devotion Booklets

Advent Devotion Booklets entitled *"Come, Let Us Adore Him"*, are available for pick up in the narthex. There is a devotion for each day from the First Sunday of Advent (December 1st) to Epiphany, (January 6th, 2025). These devotionals are perfect for personal reflection or to share with family, and friends. It is true that God deserves our worship and praise for all that He has done for us. And in the birth of Jesus into our world, born to save us from our sins, born to give us eternal life—God has given us His very Best. To which we can only respond: *"Come, Let Us Adore Him!"*

Children's Christmas Service

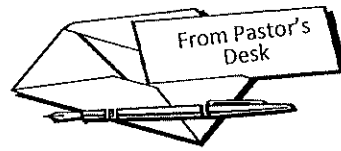
A Children's Christmas Service will be held here at St. John on Sunday, December 15th, at 6:00 p.m. We'll be joined by the children of St. Andrew, Van Horne; St. Paul, Luzerne; and First Lutheran, Belle Plaine this year. Please join us for this special service as the children tell the story of Christ's birth. We will be collecting an offering of diapers, wipes, and cash for Swaddling Clothes. After the service we will be serving desserts in the lower level. If you would be willing to provide a dessert, please contact Donna in the church office as soon as possible.

Congregational Christmas Caroling

Congregational Christmas Caroling is planned for Wednesday, December 18th, at 4:00 p.m. Meet at the church and we will carol at the care center and to shut-ins around town. You don't need to be a great singer, just someone who loves to put smiles on the faces of the residents and shut-ins. Following the caroling we will have our soup supper with serving from 5:30 until 6:15 and then our midweek Advent service at 6:30. We enjoyed congregational caroling for many years before Covid. Let's bring it back!

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services

Our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be held on Tuesday, December 24th, at 4:00 p.m. There will be communion offered at this service, along with lots of Christmas carols and readings of the Savior's birth. On Christmas Day, Wednesday the 25th, we will be worshipping at 9:00 a.m. and celebrating Holy Communion. Join us to celebrate our Savior's birth! Please note that this year we will not be holding a worship service on New Year's Day.



Dear Friends in Christ,

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever." Psalm 136

Thanksgiving is upon us, and there is no better time to say how thankful I am to be your pastor. It has been a wonderful five months for my family and me, and we feel so blessed by God to be here in Keystone. We are starting to feel at home in our beautiful parsonage and in the community. We are so grateful that God has placed us here to live among you as brothers and sisters in Christ. I look forward to spending many more holidays with you in the future as we share the love of Christ with the people of Keystone and the greater Benton County community. May God bless you and your families as you celebrate Thanksgiving.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Schultz

Board of Elders

St. John now has a Board of Elders in place! The purpose of the Board of Elders is to be a liaison between the church and our pastor. Of course, Pastor Schultz is available anytime to meet with you about issues in the church, but if you need to speak with someone other than pastor about issues that need attention, please contact one of the elders. Please know that matters of a private nature are kept strictly confidential. Members of the Board of Elders include Jim Buch, Dave Gahring, Bill Hennings, Bob Albertsen, Dan Busch, Dennis Schwab, and Richard Oehlerich.

His Love - Our Response Food Drive

Thank you to everyone who helped with our food drive. The food will soon be delivered to the Belle Plaine Food Pantry, along with a check after we are sure no more donations are coming in. The pantry will be very appreciative of our donations.

Cancellation of Services

Winter weather is close at hand! Here's a reminder of our policy on cancelled services. Services will be held if at all possible; however, if you are in doubt about whether services will be held call the church office at 319-442-3514 and listen to the message there. If it is the normal message, there will be services held as planned; otherwise a cancellation message will be heard. The cancellation message will be recorded at least one hour before the scheduled service. The cancellation will also be posted on the KCRG website (www.kcrg.com) and television station (channel 9), on our facebook page (St. John Lutheran - Keystone), and on our webpage at stjohnkeystone.org. Pastor Schultz should be able to get to the church no matter what the weather; however, if you feel it is unsafe to come in person because of the weather the service can be watched online.

Offering Envelopes

Look for the 2025 offering envelopes that will be available for pick up starting the first part of December. If you received offering envelopes in 2024, but don't wish to have them for 2025, please let the church office know. If you wanted envelopes this year, but didn't receive them last year, please let us know that as well. The envelopes will be located in the southeast corner of the sanctuary and will be in alphabetical order so yours should be fairly easy to find. Don't start using the new envelopes until after the first of the year as more than likely your number on the envelope will change. Year-end contribution statements will be available for pick up sometime mid-January. Remember that we don't mail out these statements unless we are specifically asked to.

**No store can sell us a gift
greater than the one God has already given us. ♥**



Swaddling Clothes

The last couple of months at Swaddling Clothes have been pretty busy. We have had a lot of coats, snow pants, boots, mittens, and winter clothing go out! We have also been blessed with a lot of donations! Our next shopping days will be Saturday, December 14th, with shopping from 9:00 a.m. until noon and again on Monday afternoon, December 16th, with shopping from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. If you or someone you know have donations that Swaddling Clothes could use, please contact the church office for drop off. We are so appreciative of all donations!

We have the best group of volunteers! They have helped so much with getting our clothing and items ready to be displayed! We can't thank you enough! If you'd like to help, either contact Darla Kromminga, or Donna in the church office.

If you have household items to donate, why not take them to Stuff, Etc. in Cedar Rapids and have the items listed on Swaddling Clothes St. John Lutheran Church Keystone charitable account? When those items sell, our Swaddling Clothes would get the money for the items and we can use that money to purchase needed baby items from Stuff, Etc.

Lastly, you can help by telling others about our program. We have a new brochures in the narthex to take and share with others or you can direct them to our website at www.stjohnkeystone.org or to our Facebook page Swaddling Clothes-St. John Lutheran Church, Keystone, Iowa. We just ask that to come in you have children in your custody either by birth or court order. We offer a sleeve of diapers and baby wipes for each of your children that are in need of them. Thank you for your continued support of Swaddling Clothes!

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them,
for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."*

Matthew 19:14

The Giving Tree



The Giving Tree has been set up in the narthex. This has become a wonderful service project for St. John with the spirit of giving reaching out into the community. Our goal is to make Christmas special for those less fortunate, not only with a gift but a gift with a Christian message attached to it. This year we have 29 names being put on the tree from families in Benton County. These are names of children whose parents will be struggling to provide their children with gifts. There are a few ways you can help:

- 1) If you don't care to shop, you can make a donation and have the committee do the shopping for you. If you choose this option, please **DO NOT** take a name from the tree. Donations may be dropped off or mailed to the church office or placed in the offering plate clearly marked with "Giving Tree".
- 2) You can take a name (or names) from the tree. On the back of the Christmas Card ornament that you take from the tree there is a pocket that contains information with gift suggestions, including sizes. These are suggestions, purchase what you wish from the list. There is also a name tag label included in the pocket which needs to be attached to your wrapped gift before it is placed back under the Giving Tree. **We need to have all gifts in the narthex by December 15th!**
- 3) You can call in to the church (442-3514) and you can specify what age group, sex of child, etc. that you would like to buy for and we can pull a card off the tree for you and send a picture of it via text, email, or USPS, then you can shop and return the gift to us before the December 15th deadline.
- 4) We also have 12 families that would like to have a Christmas Food Basket this year. The basket will feed a family of 6 a Christmas Dinner. Included in the basket will be a ham, potatoes, 2 cans of vegetables, dinner rolls, canned fruit, and a pie. St. John is putting together the baskets this year and we can put a basket together for \$35. If you'd like to help with a donation, please mark your envelope with Christmas Food Basket.

Each year we have helped many less fortunate individuals in the area - *Serving the Lord by serving others*. If you'd like to be part of the committee and like to shop, please contact Wendy Junge at 442-3483, or Donna in the church office. We are always looking for people to help out!

Bible Studies at St. John

†Sunday Mornings from 10:15 - 11:15 - Book of Mark

†Wednesday mornings at 10:00 - 1 John

Please join us for these interesting and informative studies.

Trinity Lutheran - Vinton Cookbooks

Members of Trinity Lutheran in Vinton have created a cookbook in honor of the church's 100th anniversary (1924 - 2024). *Our Daily Bread* cookbook is available for \$15 each. It includes delicious recipes from church members, a grilling guide, substitution chart, a guide for serving large quantities, and a spice and herb guide. These would make great gifts for Christmas, birthdays, showers, weddings, etc. Stop by Trinity at 1002 East 13th Street in Vinton to pick up a copy or call 319-472-5571. If enough copies are ordered in our area, delivery can possibly be arranged.

Christmas Cookie Walk

First Lutheran Church, 1523 Sunset Drive, Belle Plaine, will be holding their annual Christmas Cookie Walk on Saturday, December 14th, in the Family Life Center at the church from 9 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. They will be selling all kinds of cookies, candies, and other treats! Don't let Christmas baking stress you out this year! They will do all the work for you! Supplemental Funding is being provided by Thrivent Financial.

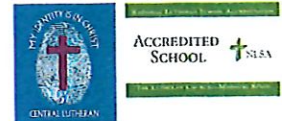
Rev. Jason Groth and our Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner

We were so pleased to have the Rev. Jason Groth and two of his daughters with us on Sunday morning, November 24th. He preached God's Word to us during our worship service and joined us downstairs for our Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner. Pastor Groth shared with us some information about Belize, where he, his wife, and children will be heading as missionaries. Pastor Groth and his wife, Emily, serve the Lord as career missionaries through the LCMS in Belize. In this role, they help plant Lutheran churches and coordinate the operations of Camp Concordia in Belmopan, Belize. In addition to these responsibilities, the Groths support short-term mission teams and facilitate acts of mercy. If you'd like to learn more about Pastor Groth's mission to Belize, or to donate to that cause there are prayer cards located in the narthex or visit the LCMS website and type in "missionaries - Groth".

We'd like to thank all who made the Thanksgiving Potluck a special time. So much good food! Thanks especially to Doug Buch and Ben Lennie, who smoked the turkeys and to all who brought in their favorite sides! The volunteers and Church Council members who helped with the preparations, decorating, and cleanup did an exceptional job!



Central Lutheran School, Newhall, IA December 2024- Monthly Newsletter



+Central Lutheran School provides students with a quality education built on a firm Christian foundation, so they grow in the knowledge of Jesus as their Savior and become loving servants to others. +

Advent Greetings from Central Lutheran School!

The entire CLS Staff would like to wish everyone a blessed Advent season as well as a very Merry Christmas!

Please continue to keep CLS Board members, staff, families, and students in your prayers. God's blessings to you!

Thank you for your support!

Thrivent Choice Dollars - Thank you to donors for making this program a success for Central Lutheran School. Will you help make 2024 and into 2025 an even better year in Thrivent Choice giving?

Go to <https://www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice/> or call 800-THRIVENT (800-847-4836) and state "Thrivent Choice" to designate your choice dollars for Central Lutheran School today. Thank you for making Thrivent Choice a valuable stream of revenue for Central Lutheran!

Christmas "GIFT" to CLS - This time of the year you are probably getting many requests asking for you to give a gift or donation to this organization or that organization. I know I've received requests from Concordia, Seward, Fort Wayne Seminary, and Lutheran Hour Ministries. You can give a gift to Central Lutheran School that can be a tax deductible donation and you know for sure that will go towards telling children about Jesus Christ as their Savior. Your gift helps in educating them about the world they live in, then please consider CLS. Thank you in advance for considering Central Lutheran School for a gift!

Philippians 1:3-6

Franklin O. Parris – Principal, principal@centrallutheranschool.org

Central Lutheran School, Newhall, IA

To the congregation of St John's Lutheran Church:

Greetings! Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you all!

I wanted to write to you and thank you for your continued financial and spiritual support during my last year at the Seminary!

It's hard to believe that Fall quarter is already over! The weeks have just flown by and I have accomplished a lot in that time. It's also hard to believe that we are a few months away from Call Night. I feel there is so much I have left to do and so much I need to prepare for when I step into the parish.

If there is one highlight from this quarter, it would have to be my completion of my Theological Interview! For those unaware, the Theological Interview is the means that the Seminary uses to determine my readiness to enter the ministry. I am assigned one professor, and I get to choose a second one. In the interview, there is no shortage of questions I can be asked. All subjects and disciplines from my Seminary students are 'fair game', just like it would be in the parish.

My Theological Interview went great! Even though I did not feel as prepared as I had hoped I was, I still was able to provide competent answers and respond correctly to the professor's questions. After a literal 30-second deliberation, the professors told me I passed and signed off on the paperwork. It was a relief, not only to have my Theological Interview completed, but also feel validated in my studies.

It has been my humble desire to serve the Lord in His church. I seek for Him to use me to give His gifts to His people, similar to how Isaiah said "Here I am. Send me." I seek this, not for my own glory, but solely for the glory of Christ. I feel that this is my source of purpose and comfort in life, and I would be unfulfilled doing anything else!

Personally speaking, Hannah and I are great! Hannah has been enjoying working with the schools as a Speech Pathologist. She was able to keep her same position she had in Iowa. Given we are in Indiana, she is working with students over the computer. She has enjoyed her position so far and she appreciates being able to work from home! We have also taken a few weekend vacations this Fall. We were able to make it up to the Whitefish Dunes for Hannah's birthday, spending time with family. We also were able to visit some friends who are currently on their vicarage year. Both were great little excursions that offered a nice break.

All this to say, we are truly blessed to have generous people supporting us during our time at Seminary. There have been some rough times since we moved back to Fort Wayne, and major expenses we had not expected. Your generosity has helped to ease the burden. Hannah and I thank you so much for your financial and spiritual support!

Take care! God bless!



Zach Johnson



Ushers and Greeters

- December 1 (9:00 a.m.): **Greeters:** Dan and Donna Busch. **Ushers:** Wayne and Kelsey Ritscher, Rick Pickering, Todd and Cheryl Hennings.
- 4 (6:30 p.m.): **Greeters:** Keith and Wendy Junge. **Ushers:** Kent Silhanek, Jim and Cathy Buch, Ben and Missy Lennie.
- 8 (9:00 a.m.): **Greeters:** Dean and Kathy Scheel. **Ushers:** Bill and Barbara Hennings, Doug and Colin Buch.
- 11 (6:30 p.m.): **Greeters:** Greg and Carlene Silhanek. **Ushers:** Eric and Ann Franzenburg, Byran and Tracie Kimm, Jacque Jones.
- 15 (9:00 a.m.): **Greeters:** Pam England and Rita Pickering. **Ushers:** Denny and Susie Albers, Brad Sievers, Robert Albertsen, and Colby Lennie.
- 15 (6:00 p.m.): TBA
- 18 (6:30 p.m.): **Greeters:** Dan and Donna Busch. **Ushers:** Wayne and Kelsey Ritscher, Rick Pickering, Todd and Cheryl Hennings.
- 22 (9:00 a.m.): **Greeters:** Keith and Wendy Junge. **Ushers:** Kent Silhanek, Jim and Cathy Buch, Ben and Missy Lennie.
- 24 (4:00 p.m.): **Greeters:** Dean and Kathy Scheel. **Ushers:** Bill and Barbara Hennings, Doug and Colin Buch.
- 25 (9:00 a.m.): **Greeters:** Greg and Carlene Silhanek. **Ushers:** Eric and Ann Franzenburg, Byran and Tracie Kimm, Jacque Jones.
- 29 (9:00 a.m.): **Greeters:** Pam England and Rita Pickering. **Ushers:** Denny and Susie Albers, Brad Sievers, Robert Albertsen, and Colby Lennie.

Acolytes

- December 1 (9:00 a.m.): Kenna
- 8 (9:00 a.m.): Emma
- 15 (9:00 a.m.): Noah
- 22 (9:00 a.m.): Lauren
- 24 (4:00 pm.): Hunter
- 25 (9:00 a.m.): Kenna
- 29 (9:00 a.m.): Emma

Deacons

- December 1 (9:00 a.m.): Rich Oehlerich
- 4 (6:30 p.m.): Rich Oehlerich
- 8 (9:00 a.m.): Kent Silhanek
- 11 (6:30 p.m.): Jordan Silhanek
- 15 (9:00 a.m.): Doug Buch
- 15 (6:00 p.m.): Jordan Silhanek
- 18 (6:30 p.m.): Jordan Silhanek
- 22 (9:00 a.m.): Kent Silhanek
- 24 (4:00 p.m.): Rich Oehlerich
- 25 (9:00 a.m.): Kent Silhanek
- 29 (9:00 a.m.): Kent Silhanek

Altar Guild for December

Rita Pickering
Kathy Scheel

Videographers

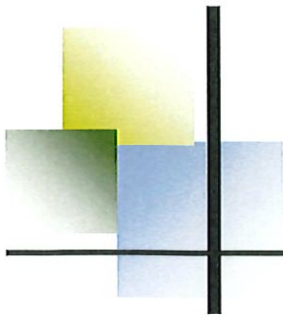
- December 1 (9:00 a.m.): Dave Gahring
- 8 (9:00 a.m.): Dean Scheel
- 15 (9:00 a.m.): Rich Oehlerich
- 15 (6:00 p.m.): Dan Busch
- 22 (9:00 a.m.): Dan Busch
- 24 (4:00 p.m.): Jim Buch
- 25 (9:00 a.m.): Dave Gahring
- 29 (9:00 a.m.): Dean Scheel

Hospitality Committee for December

(December 8)

Bake: Carlene Silhanek

Bake and Serve: Angel Brecht, Cathy Buch



December, 2024

St. John Lutheran Church
 P.O. Box 176—201 Fourth Avenue
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 Church E-mail: stjnluth@netins.net
 Rev. Josiah Schultz, Pastor
 Pastor's Cell: 913-223-8261

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
7:30 a.m. - Elder's Mtg. 9:00 a.m.—Divine Service 10:15 a.m.—Sunday School 10:15 a.m. - Adult Bible Class 11:00 a.m. - Budget Mtg. 2:00 p.m. - Children's Program Practice	10:30 - 11:15 - Pastor teaching at CLS		10:00 a.m. - Bible Class 1:30 - 2:30 - Midweek Class 5:15 p.m. - Choir Practice 5:30 - 6:15 - Soup Supper 6:30 p.m. - Advent Service	10:30 - 11:15 - Pastor teaching at CLS		
9:00 a.m. - Divine Service 10:15 a.m. - Sunday School / Adult Bible Class	10:30 - 11:15 - Pastor teaching at CLS	2:00 p.m. - Lutheran Communion @ KNCC	8:30 - Pastor leads Chapel 10:00 a.m. - Bible Class 1:30 - 2:30 - Midweek Class 5:15 p.m. - Choir Practice 5:30 - 6:15 - Soup Supper 6:30 p.m. - Advent Service	10:30 - 11:15 - Pastor teaching at CLS		9:00 a.m. to noon - Swaddling Clothes Shopping Day 1:00 p.m. - Dress Rehearsal
9:00 a.m.—Divine Service 10:15 a.m.—Sunday School / Adult Bible Class 11:00 a.m. - CC Mtg. 6:00 p.m. - Children's Christmas Service	10:30 - 11:15 - Pastor teaching at CLS 4:30 to 6:00 p.m.- Swaddling Clothes		10:00 a.m. - Bible Class 1:30 - 2:30 - Midweek Class 4:00 p.m. - Caroling 5:15 p.m. - Choir Practice 5:30 - 6:15 - Soup Supper 6:30 p.m. - Advent Service	10:30 - 11:15 - Pastor teaching at CLS		Church Basement Reserved
9:00 a.m.—Divine Service No SS (Returns January 12th) 10:15 a.m. - Bible Class		4:00 p.m. - Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service	9:00 am. - Christmas Day Divine Service			
9:00 a.m.—Divine Service Zach Johnson Preaching No SS (Returns January 12th) No Bible Class						

Birthdays

- December 2 - Jim Buch
- 7 - Ethan Albers, Connie Pickering
- 10 - Adam Vargason
- 11 - Shirley Jurgens
- 13 - Bill Hennings
- 15 - Tonya Hamilton, Rick Selk
- 16 - Dan Busch, Dick Loy, Amy Pace
- 17 - Pat Franzenburg, Deb Kromminga, Cindy Reinberg
- 18 - Dorene Pickart, Greg Silhanek
- 19 - Logan Flack, Colton Jones, Callyndora Jurgemeyer
- 20 - Ethan Jurgemeyer, Dirk Sievers
- 22 - Cali Junge
- 23 - Michael Allers, Aubrey Stechcon
- 25 - Megan Metz

Birthdays (continued)

- December 26 - Miranda Dunek, Tim Feuerbach
- 27 - Brent Harder, Brooklyn Lyne, Rod Silhanek
- 28 - Ann Reinhardt
- 30 - Adrieonna Reddick, Jake Stechcon
- 31 - Jim Grace

Anniversaries

- December 3 - Andrew and Becca Enderle
- 7 - Jeremy and Sara Wenger
- 11 - Tim and Jay Feuerbach
- 20 - John and Jan Meyer

