

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Why We Practice Closed Communion

Communion as Confession – When Christians come to the Lord's Supper, we are not only receiving the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ—we are also making a confession. In receiving Holy Communion, we are publicly saying: "I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, without

error. I believe what Jesus says is true. I believe that here, in this bread and wine, Jesus gives me His true body and blood for the forgiveness of sins."

Communion is not just an individual, private act between a believer and God. It is a fellowship act of confession before the congregation and before the world. St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:17, "*For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.*" To commune together is to confess together.

Why We Take Jesus at His Word – In the words of institution, recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and 1 Corinthians 11, Jesus says: "*This is My body... This is My blood.*" As Lutherans, we do not rationalize or explain away His words. We do not ask, "How can this be?" Instead, we humbly confess: "Because Jesus said it, it is true."

To deny the Real Presence is to deny the plain words of Scripture. But to believe them is to confess the living and powerful Word of God, which is "*God-breathed*" and without error (2 Timothy 3:16).

Why Wrong Reception Brings Spiritual Harm – The Bible also warns against taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy or false manner. 1 Corinthians 11:27–29 says that those who eat and drink without discerning the Lord's body "*eat and drink judgment on themselves.*" This is why the Church has always practiced careful instruction and examination before communing. Out of love, we do not want anyone to receive the Supper to their harm.

Why Unity of Confession Matters – Holy Communion is also a public statement of unity. To commune together is to declare: "*We believe the same doctrine, we confess the same faith.*" This is why we cannot share communion with Christians who belong to church bodies that deny Christ's words about the Supper, or who teach contrary to God's Word in other areas.

For example:

- A Baptist or non-denominational Christian who denies that Christ's body and blood are truly present in the Supper is making a different confession.

- Churches that ordain women or bless same-sex lifestyles are publicly rejecting God's clear Word about the pastoral office (1 Timothy 2:12; Titus 1:5–9) and about marriage (Romans 1:26–27; Matthew 19:4–6).

To commune together while holding such different confessions would be dishonest. It would blur the truth of God's Word and make us participants in false teaching. Out of love for God's truth and for souls, we must say, "*We cannot commune together unless we confess together.*"

Jesus Cares About Our Confession – Jesus once asked His disciples: "*But who do you say that I am?*" And Peter replied, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" (Matthew 16:15–16)

Our Lord still asks His Church the same question today. In the Lord's Supper, we are called to make a good confession of who Jesus is, what His Word says, and what His gifts truly are. To commune faithfully is to join Peter in boldly confessing Christ—not according to our own opinions, but according to God's Word.

Conclusion – Closed Communion is not about keeping people out. It is about keeping Christ's Word clear and keeping souls safe. It is about true unity in the truth. As members of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, we practice this out of obedience to Christ, faithfulness to His Word, and love for all people.

We joyfully invite all who share this confession of faith to the Lord's Table. And we lovingly invite those who do not yet confess the same to come, study God's Word with us, and receive instruction—so that one day, we may commune together in full unity of faith and truth.

Unity and Separation in Scripture – Some may object to the practice of Closed Communion by saying, "*Didn't Jesus pray that His Church would be united?*" This is absolutely true—Jesus prayed in John 17 that His disciples would be one, even as He and the Father are one. But biblical unity is always unity in the truth of God's Word, not unity by ignoring or setting aside doctrine.

Throughout the Scriptures, God shows that His people are to be set apart from the unbelieving world:

- In the flood, only Noah and his family—eight souls in all—were saved (Genesis 7:23).
- Abel's offering was accepted by God, while Cain's was not (Genesis 4:4–5).
- God delivered Israel through the Red Sea while destroying Pharaoh and his army (Exodus 14:26–31).

These examples remind us that God's people have always been called out, set apart, and preserved in the truth. To practice Closed Communion is not to divide Christ's Church, but to preserve the true unity that comes only from faithfulness to His Word. Jesus' prayer in John 17 was not for a shallow unity that overlooks differences in doctrine, but for a unity grounded in the truth of God's Word. He prayed, "*Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth*" (John 17:17). True unity comes when the Church remains faithful to Christ's Word, not when it compromises or waters it down.

In the Peace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Pastor Ben Hollingshead



Give Thanks

All are welcome to join us for
"the day before"

THANKSGIVING WORSHIP

Wednesday, November 26
at 6:00 pm

St. John's Food Drive

ACCEPTING NON-PERISHABLE FOOD
ITEMS THROUGHOUT NOVEMBER
FOR AITKIN FOOD SHELF



Come as you are

this includes any
hunters out there

Fall Luncheon

and Snack Shack Bake Sale
at St. John's Lutheran Church

\$10
per person

Savory Hearty Beef Stew
Freshly baked buns
Colorful variety of salads
Assortment of desserts
Tasty beverage

FRIDAY
NOV
14
11^{AM} – 1^{PM}

324 3rd Street NW, Aitkin (behind the Aitkin High School)

you're invited to a
**HARVEST
BREAKFAST**

SUNDAY NOV
23
following
worship



Pancakes
Sausage
Eggs
Fruit
Juice
Coffee

**Proceeds support ACT activities &
2028 Youth Gathering in San Antonio, TX**

hosted by
ACT
ACTIVE YOUNG CHRISTIANS
1 TIMOTHY 4:12
**ST. JOHN'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH**



ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

YOUTH NEWS



FALL FUN AT THE WOLDS!

What a perfect day at our Fall Gathering! The kids had a blast running wild through the corn maze, bouncing through gunny sack races, hopping on the hayride, and showing off their artistic side with pumpkin painting.

And the food? Let's just say yum! Walking tacos, cheesy potatoes, pasta salad, fresh veggies, fruit salad... our potluck game was STRONG! Thanks to all the families who shared their specialties.



Huge thanks to everyone who came out to make the day so special, and an extra big shoutout to the Wold family for hosting! Feeling grateful and fall-tastically blessed!



AWAY IN A MANGER

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS SERVICE

This year's children's Christmas service is inspired by the beloved carol, *Away in a Manger*—a favorite sung by young and old throughout the Christmas season. But what do we truly find in that humble manger? Is it simply a sweet scene of a baby asleep in the hay... or is there something more?

Practice and part distribution will be November 23 during Sunday School. Please be sure to have your child(ren) present.



SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE EXCITING THINGS AHEAD!

Our year of Sunday School is in full swing, and we've had a wonderful time gathering each week to learn about the amazing works of the Lord! We have a new start/end time. **Sunday School now runs from 10:45 am and 11:45 am.**



UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

NOV 2 – HAND BELL CHOIR – 11:45AM - NOON

Connect with Brittney if your child(ren) is/are interested.

NOV 16 – SS SINGS DURING WORSHIP – 8:45 AM

NOV 23 – PRACTICE BEGINS – 10:45 AM

ASSEMBLE CARDS – 11:15 AM

NOV 28 – WATCH US IN FISH HOUSE PARADE

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but be an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12

SHARING CHRIST TOGETHER AT ACT

St. John's Active Christian Teens (ACT) meets regularly on Wednesday nights from 5–7 p.m.

The church opens to teens at 3:20 p.m., providing a welcoming space to relax or start homework. Confirmation class begins at 3:30–5:00 p.m.

ACT officially begins at 5:00 p.m. with a shared meal. We are thankful for the healthy and delicious meals provided by parents. If you're interested in signing up to serve a meal, please contact an ACT Leader.

After dinner, the group transitions to games and active play. We are enjoying the fall weather to burn off energy and strengthen connections through friendly competition and teamwork.

The evening wraps up inside with a devotion. So far this year, devotion topics have included:

- Let Your Yes Be Yes
- Jesus' Teaching on Paying Caesar
- Planting Beans for a Better Life
- When John Baptized Jesus
- Psalm 119:105 – "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

We've noticed the teens are more engaged this year... perhaps thanks to our new "no sleeping during devotion" rule! These devotions are a key part of ACT, where leaders guide teens in learning to live and grow in their faith.

We're excited to see both new and familiar faces attending this year. Attendance is up, and spirits are high. We pray that God continues to bless the teens of St. John's and guides them to live faithful Christian lives, to influence others toward Jesus, and to encourage one another in their walk with Christ.

Tony Flerlage
ACT Leader



ACT SERVES FELLOWSHIP SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16

Please sign up on BAND to help.



ACT HOSTING HARVEST BREAKFAST NOVEMBER 23

Please sign up on BAND to help.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Serve one another, as good stewards



FALL LUNCHEON, SNACK SALE & CRAFT FUNDRAISER – VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We're excited to try something new to raise funds for much-needed window treatments—a **Fall Luncheon, Bake Sale & Craft Sale** on **Friday, November 14 from 11 AM – 1 PM!** We're inviting the community and local hunters to come as they are and enjoy a warm bowl of hearty beef stew, fresh salads, and homemade desserts. To make this event a success, **we need your help!** We're asking members to contribute their favorite salads or desserts, and we'll also be offering a Snack Shack and Craft Table with tasty treats and handmade items perfect for the deer stand—or to take home and enjoy. We'll be preparing those items the day

before, so extra hands are welcome then, too! We also need plenty of volunteers on the day of the event for serving, setting up, and clean-up. **Please sign up in the entryway** to lend a hand and be part of this fun, fall fellowship!

COMMUNION PREPARATION / CLEANUP – VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The recent move to weekly offering of Communion increased the need for help preparing for and cleaning up after communion.

We currently have two types of roles:

- **Fillers** – Prepare communion on Friday or Saturday, which takes about 30 minutes.
- **Cleaners** – Put everything away after the Sunday service, which takes about 15 minutes.

Some volunteers have served in both roles at different times, and we're grateful for that flexibility. Going forward, to support the increased frequency, we are looking for additional volunteers. Ideally, individuals would serve 4–6 times per year, which means we need 9–13 people for each role.

If you're willing to help as a Filler, a Cleaner, or in both roles, or if you have questions about the new procedures, please contact **Debbie at 218-839-4322**. Training will be available. Thank you for serving in this important ministry!

Important for current volunteers: There have been changes in how communion is now set up. Please review the updated instructions posted in the sanctuary before preparing.





HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Blessings on your special day!

Kylan Hill	Nov 01	Jim Urban	Nov 08	Linda Hejny	Nov 23
David Paulson	Nov 01	Deanna Bauer	Nov 11	Jeff Parker	Nov 24
Lois Paulson	Nov 02	Johnathan Arness	Nov 12	Adah Williams	Nov 24
Trevor Radke	Nov 02	Chad Backstrom	Nov 12	Tenley Crowther	Nov 27
Paige Beaufaux	Nov 03	Jeff Peysar	Nov 15	Randy Greenbush	Nov 27
Hanna DeVries	Nov 03	Becky Zenke	Nov 16	Connor Rose	Nov 27
Brad Nelson	Nov 03	Caleb Neutz	Nov 18	Ruth Bender	Nov 28
Brian Ruschmeier	Nov 03	Colyn Neutz	Nov 18	Amber Peet	Nov 28
Gerald Borgman	Nov 05	Greta Rose	Nov 18	Alexis Phillips	Nov 29
Brenda Larson	Nov 05	Cody Fossum	Nov 19	Julie Solien	Nov 29
Cora Nelson	Nov 05	Judy Fossum	Nov 19	Shanna Christian	Nov 30
Lynn Wikelius	Nov 05	Siarra Espeseth	Nov 20	Rebecca Harrison	Nov 30
Paul Zenke	Nov 06	Jody Hamdorf	Nov 20	Mike Johnson	Nov 30
Evan Redepenning	Nov 07	Braden Bartel-Wagner	Nov 21	Wendy Wegner	Nov 30
Owen Redepenning	Nov 07	George Bender	Nov 22		

**The birthdays listed are from our church records. Any mistakes are unintentional. Please notify the office of any mistakes, deletions, or if you do not want your birthday listed.*

A GIANT THANK YOU!

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped make the Annual St. John's Bazaar & Bake Sale such a success! We're excited to share that we cleared **\$5,100**, which will go toward new window treatments for the Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, and Narthex. This event wouldn't have been possible without the support of so many. Whether you were handing out boxes to customers, working as a cashier or helping with bagging, setting up tables, baking pies, organizing Grandma & Grandpa's Attic, bringing in items to sell, helping with advertising, working in the kitchen, overseeing the baked goods and crafts, or even just showing up as a customer, your contribution made a difference. Your help and support did not go unnoticed. Thank you again. We couldn't have done it without you!



REQUESTING UPDATES

Please take a moment to review your information in the 2024 Annual Report. If you have any updates—such as a new phone number, corrected name spelling, or address change—and haven't already contacted the church office, please let us know. You can reach us by calling **218-927-3170** or by emailing **Greta Rose at grets07@yahoo.com**. Thank you for helping us keep our records accurate!