



# Monthly Newsletter

ANCHORED IN CHRIST  
through every season

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS TOGETHER

FEBRUARY 2026 VOL XXXIX No. 2 [stjohnaitkin.org](http://stjohnaitkin.org)

## INFANT BAPTISM: A MATURE, CHILDLIKE FAITH

A few years ago, I sat with three other pastors at a BBQ restaurant in downtown Milwaukee. An amiable waitress approached our table, welcomed us, and asked what had brought us to the city. We explained that we were in town for a Lutheran convention taking place that week. She then asked if we were pastors. When we told her that all four of us were, she smiled and replied, "Oh, I have questions for you guys!"

After taking our drink order, she shared her joy and hope: she and her husband were expecting their first child and were also celebrating their first wedding anniversary the following week. She then asked a question that pastors often hear: "Do you do baby baptisms?" We told her that we did.

She went on to explain that she believed her baby should be baptized, but that she and her husband had recently begun attending a church that does not baptize infants. Her husband, she said, did not believe babies could have faith. Then came the question many who resist infant baptism eventually ask: "***Can a baby truly have saving faith?***"

The short answer is **yes**. Infants can have faith, and Scripture testifies to this repeatedly.

In Psalm 71:5–6, we hear not only of infant faith, but even of faith from the womb:

*"For You are my hope, O Lord GOD;  
You are my trust from my youth.  
By You I have been upheld from birth;  
You are He who took me out of my mother's womb.  
My praise shall be continually of You."*

Another example of faith in the womb is found in **Luke 1**, when John the Baptist leaps in Elizabeth's womb at the presence of the unborn Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Himself teaches that infants not only can have faith, but that **infant faith is the very model of mature Christian faith**. In **Luke 18:15–17**, we read:

*"Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Him and said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.'" (NKJV)*

Whether we are baptized as infants or as adults, Christ calls us all to possess this childlike faith—a faith that is not weak or immature, but fully dependent, trusting, and receptive. According to Jesus, this is mature faith.

We all know it is wrong to steal candy from a baby. But it is far worse to rob a child of baptism. Our Lord even warns of grave consequences for those who cause children to stumble in faith. In **Matthew 18:6–7**, Jesus says:

*"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea."*

When Jesus speaks of “little ones,” the Greek word mikron refers specifically to small children. While adults are also children of God by faith, Christ here speaks explicitly and concretely of young children who believe in Him.

Many Christians mistakenly believe that baptism and faith are personal decisions made to prove sincerity or worthiness before God. Scripture teaches otherwise. Faith is not our work—it is God’s gift, given by grace through His Word.

As St. Paul writes:

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”* (Ephesians 2:8)

The gift is not merely salvation in general, but faith itself, through which salvation is received.

*“For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”* (Philippians 1:29)

*“You were raised with Him through faith in the working of God.”* (Colossians 2:12)

God’s grace is for all people because all people—infants, teenagers, and adults alike—are born under the curse of sin and death inherited from our first parents, Adam and Eve. All need God’s grace for deliverance from sin, death, and the devil.

This is why, from the very beginning of the Church, Christians practiced infant baptism. On Pentecost, Peter proclaimed:

*“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”* (Acts 2:38–39)

A common objection follows: *If infant baptism is biblical, why are so many young people falling away from the Church after confirmation?*

Sadly, the answer lies not in a failure of baptism, but in a failure of Christian parents and the Church. Before ascending into heaven, our Lord gave His Church the Great Commission:

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.”* (Matthew 28:18–20)

In our Lutheran churches, we have faithfully baptized many infants over the past decades. But we have often failed in the ongoing work Christ commands—teaching. Infant baptism has not failed; rather, our catechesis in the home and in the Church has often been weak, delayed, or absent.

A seed that is not watered will never grow as it should. In the same way, waiting to catechize children until confirmation at age twelve or thirteen has produced predictable results. Baptism plants the seed; catechesis nourishes it. One without the other leads to spiritual malnourishment.

We must therefore take up the responsibility of catechesis with renewed vigor and commitment. This is essential for nurturing strong and enduring faith in our children.

May the Church see the present moment as an opportunity—first, to give thanks to our Lord for His grace and mercy, which have given us a childlike faith that is truly mature; and second, to do the work He has entrusted to us: to bring children to Him by daily immersing them in God’s Word from their baptism onward, so that their faith may grow with them in this life, sustained by peace, hope, and joy, with our eyes fixed on Jesus and the life to come.

*Pastor Ben Hollingsead*

# SINNED AGAINST



## Midweek Lenten Services

5PM Supper | 6PM Worship

**ASH WEDNESDAY : FEB 18**



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by  
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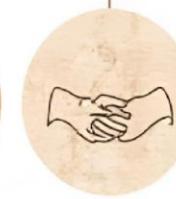
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**FEB 25**

**MAR 4**

**MAR 11**

**MAR 18**

**MAR 25**



# Celebrating 100 years together

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION FUNDRAISING

As we prepare to celebrate St. John's 100th anniversary on September 13, the Centennial Committee is planning a meaningful day of worship, fellowship, and gratitude. Hosting a celebration of this size does come with costs, and we invite the congregation to help support the event through upcoming fundraising activities.

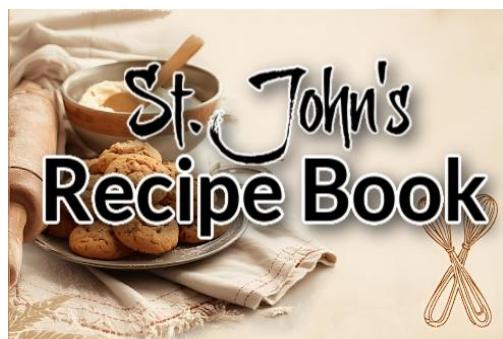
Participation is completely voluntary, and there will be several opportunities to get involved by attending events, volunteering your time, or contributing as you are able. Every bit of support helps make this celebration special for our entire church family.

Thank you for being part of our church's past, present, and future. We look forward to celebrating together!



### READY FOR SOME FOOTBALL?

Join us for a **Super Bowl Sub & Snack sale on Sunday, February 8**. We are offering three ways to support this fundraising effort. **Pre-order subs for the whole family by Feb 1** (order forms in Sunday bulletins), buy snacks that day, or prepare tasty snacks to sell at the sale. If you have any questions, please contact Greta in the office. Thank you in advance for your support!

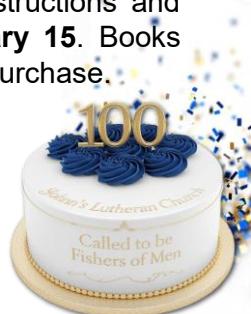


### SHARE THOSE FAVORITE RECIPES

St. John's is creating a "Favorite Recipes Cookbook" in celebration of our Centennial, and we would love everyone to participate. Submit as many recipes as you would like by February 15. Forms can be found in the Narthex under the bulletin board. Please follow the instructions and **turn forms in by Sunday, February 15**. Books will be available by mid summer for purchase.

### CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

Don't forget to mark your calendars for September 13. Watch for more details on everything happening that day. You won't want to miss being a part of sharing this very special day!



All are invited to  
**FAMILY  
BOWLING  
DAY**

SUNDAY  
**MARCH 1**  
**12:00 - 2:45 pm**

**FREE EVENT (paid for with Sunday School funds)**  
includes Games, Shoes & Pizza  
must sign up by February 15 to get accurate count for planning





ST.JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

# YOUTH NEWS



## SLEDDING & POTLUCK LUNCH IS RESCHEDULED!

**Sunday, February 1 | 12:00 PM**

Winter fun is back on! After January's cold weather and illnesses slowed us down, we're excited to reschedule our sledding and potluck lunch for **Sunday, February 1 at noon** at **Bruce and Debbie's**.

Everyone is welcome! That means kids, teens, adults, and grandparents! Bring a sled, invite a friend, and come enjoy an afternoon of outdoor fun and fellowship.

Please bring a dish to share for the potluck. Hot cocoa will be provided, along with a warm spot to relax and enjoy the perfect view of the hill.



Bundle up and come join the fun — we can't wait to see you there!



**Feb 22: Sunday School Sings**

**Mar 01: Bowling at Aitkin Lanes**

**Mar 29: Palm Sunday – Kids sing with Choir**

**TBD: Meal Packing**

## SENDING A BOX OF "LOVE" TO COLLEGE STUDENTS AND THOSE IN THE MILITARY

It has become an annual tradition to send a special box of goodies and "love" to show our support for our members away at college or in the military. This is St. John's way to let them know God is always with them and that we are thinking of them and keeping them in our prayers. **Boxes will be packed by the St. John's Circle and sent out on Monday, February 9.**



If you have a college student or a child in the military, **please let us know their name and address as soon as possible**. Contact the office at 218-927-3170.

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

## AN UPDATE FROM ACT

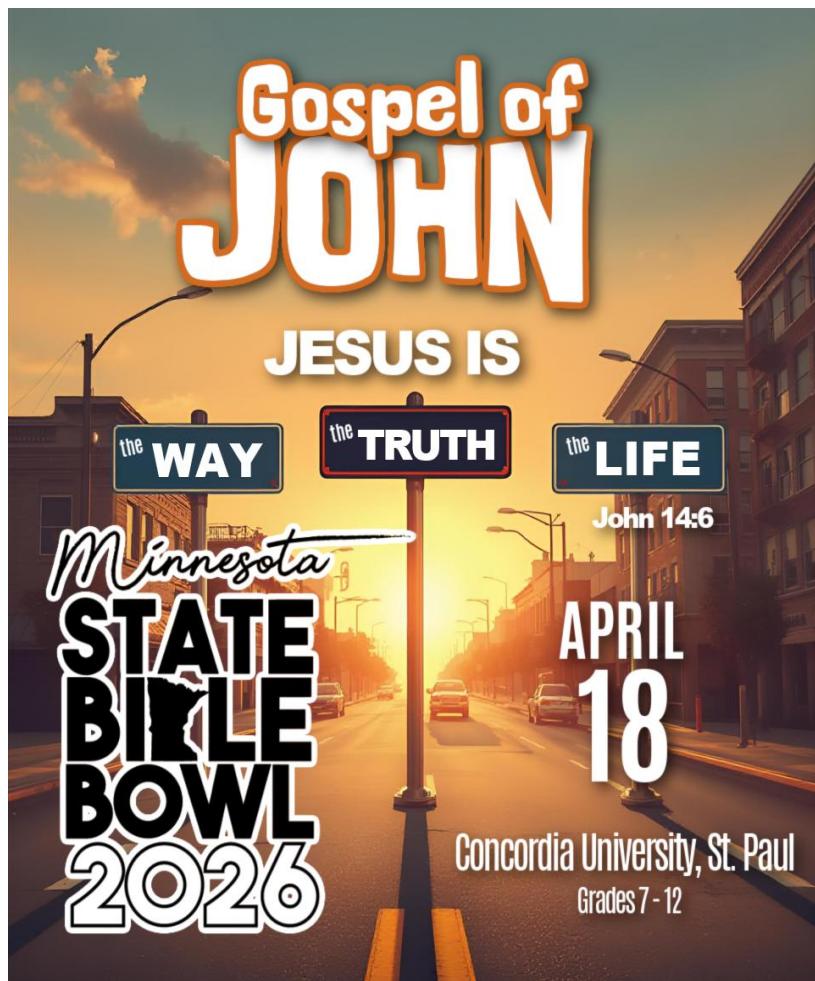
ACT took a short break over the holidays but enjoyed being together for Midweek Advent Worship. As the new year began, we spent time learning about Joseph and helped take down the church's Christmas decorations.

Following Sunday worship, we invite teens in grades 7–12 to join us in the ACT room as we prepare for the 2026 Minnesota State Bible Bowl. This year we'll be studying the Gospel of John, with the competition taking place on April 18 at Concordia University in St. Paul. We encourage teens to join us and to continue studying at home with support of parents. Being part of the St. John's team helps youth grow in Bible knowledge, build meaningful friendships, and become more engaged in worship and church life.

We also have some fun fundraisers coming up. Plans include partnering with Rosallini's Pizza in Aitkin, helping at the Brainerd Jaycees Ice Fishing Tournament, and bagging at Paulbeck's Market. Watch for more details and ways you can support our teens.

The youth of our church are truly a blessing. Please keep them in your prayers as they grow in faith and continue their walk with Christ.

Tony Flerlage





# Membership News

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We are excited to share the news of new members to St. John's! Please introduce yourself and welcome them to the St. John's family.

**Zach & Jessica Spicer and their three children, Isabel, Lyle and Taya.** The Spicer family is transferring in from Shepherd of the Lake LCMS in Garrison, MN.

**Mark Lageson** from St. Stephnus Lutheran Church LCMS in St. Paul.



## A HEAVENLY GOOD-BYE

We lovingly remember **Marilyn Boucher**, who passed away on January 9, 2026. Her spirit, kindness, and the light she shared will remain in our hearts. May she rest peacefully.



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

*Blessings on your special day!*

Michelle Hanson	01	Addison Hollingseed	12	Jim R. Bender	24
Ben Crowther	03	Dayton Hallaway	13	Jane Lenzen	24
Isabella Westerlund	03	Tracy Weston	15	Bunny Dotzler	25
Jacob Redepenning	04	Jean Root	17	Jon Redmann	25
Teri Baty	05	Jessica Carpenter	20	Laura Schlagel	25
Rachel Bartz	07	Jozee Fossum	20	Scott Wold	25
Mikael Perrine	08	Dennis Lamke	20	Ronald Christian	26
Laura Sutton	09	Mark Wold	20	Tim Landrus	28
Jenna Harmon	10	Lois DuChane	21	Jace Novotny	28
Drew Olson	11	Alicen Bartel	23	Steve Shirilla	28
Beth Borseth	12	Alexis Erdman	23	Jeff Ruschmeier	29

\*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.

# Be in the Know



## TRUSTEE UPDATES

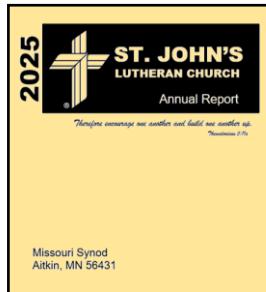
You may have noticed that kneeling during communion is a bit more comfortable. Thank you to Marv and Scott, who replaced all the padding on the kneeler benches.



In addition, a new furnace was installed at the parsonage after the very old one failed and was not repairable. We extend our thanks to Marv and Glen for their prompt and dedicated work to ensure Pastor Hollingseed and his family stay warm and comfortable through the winter months.

We are grateful for the care and service of our Trustees, who faithfully maintain our church and parsonage.

Trustees: Marv Baty: 763-354-9949 Scott Wold: 218-821-7466  
Ray Kaiser: 612-619-8578



## ANNUAL REPORT TO BE MAILED SOON

Annual reports will be mailed soon. Please keep these reports handy, as they include address and phone numbers for our members. They also include schedules for communion fillers and cleaners, head ushers, what group you belong to and other valuable information. Please be sure to update your information with the church office, so that we can keep it accurate and up to date. Thank you.



## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR FELLOWSHIP

We are looking for volunteers to provide refreshments during fellowship time following worship. If you are able to help, please sign up on the sheet posted in the fellowship hall by the kitchen.

Members are part of a group (as outlined in the Annual Report), and you will find a group number listed next to each week. Signing up under your group number helps group leaders coordinate and fill slots efficiently, but you can sign up under any date. We encourage members to work together to share the responsibilities.

Thank you for your willingness to serve and help create a warm, welcoming environment for our congregation!