

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2025 VOL. XXXVIII No. 08

www.stjohnaitkin.org

A Lot Can Happen in a Year

Just over 12 months ago, we found ourselves standing at a crossroads. After 36 years of service, Pastor Becker announced that God was leading him in a new direction—retirement. His departure brought with it a mix of emotions—gratitude, sadness, and uncertainty about what would come next.

But in this season of transition, something unexpected began to grow.

The church didn't retreat. We rose together, through both the good times and rough times. Leaders stepped up. Ministries pressed on. Prayer deepened. People began to see each other with fresh eyes—not as strangers, but as co-laborers. What could have been a season of pause became a season of movement.

We clung to God's promises. And through it all, we heard His quiet, powerful voice: "*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?*" (Isaiah 43:19). Indeed, He was.

From within, new life began to rise. Volunteers served with new purpose. Bible Studies and other groups became places of care and connection. We were blessed with amazing pastors each week. Worship echoed with gratitude, not just for what had been—but for what was unfolding.

Then, in God's perfect timing, we are getting ready to welcome a new pastor. Not as someone to fix what was broken, but as a fellow traveler joining a church already learning how to be the body of Christ in a deeper way.

Now, as we look around, we see that the wilderness has given way to a path. Dry ground has become fertile with new beginnings. Not because we had every answer, but because God was faithfully doing something new all along.

A lot can happen in a year. And the story isn't over. In fact—it's just beginning.

We are excited to welcome Pastor Ben Hollingsead, his wife Amber, and children Addison, Eden, Theodore and Augustine to St. John's and the Aitkin community. All are invited to his Installation on Sunday, September 7 at 4:00 pm (followed by dinner). Pastor Ben's first service will be Sunday, September 14 at 9:00 am.

A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS AT ST. JOHN'S

At the end of June, we received joyful news: Pastor Ben Hollingsead had accepted the call to serve as the next pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church. In his letter Pastor Ben stated, "I am confident that the Lord is now calling me to a new field of service among His people at St. John's."

We look forward to getting to know Pastor Ben and his wife, Amber, and their four children, Addison (12), Eden (9), Theodore (5), and Augustine (2). They will be moving to Aitkin the middle of August.



All are invited to Pastor Hollingsead's installation service and worship.

INSTALLATION
SUNDAY
SEPT 07

4:00 pm service
dinner to follow

FIRST SERVICE
SUNDAY
SEPT 14

9:00 am worship

GET TO KNOW PASTOR BEN HOLLINGSEAD

I was born on December 20, 1985, at Offutt Air Force Base Hospital in Bellevue, Nebraska. As an Air Force brat, I had the opportunity to live in many places growing up, including Fort Walton Beach, Florida (1991–1998), Wichita, Kansas (1998–2003), and finally Papillion, Nebraska, where I graduated from Papillion-La Vista South High School.



I began my college education at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha and completed a Bachelor of Science in Business Management at Bellevue University in 2008. While in college, I worked at Offutt Air Force Base with the 55th Contracting Squadron as a Contract Administrator through the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP).

In June of 2009, I moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, to attend Luther Seminary. I was ordained on February 9, 2013, in Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC). My first call was as Associate Pastor at Christus Lutheran Church in Clintonville, Wisconsin, where I served from April 2013 to May 2018. I then accepted a call to serve as Pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Stacy, Minnesota, from May 2018 to July 2021.

In 2021, I completed the colloquy process to become a pastor in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). I joined the LCMS because of its strong confession that the Bible is the Word of God and its deep commitment to the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord. My first call in the LCMS was serving the saints of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Eden Valley, Minnesota, from September 2021 until coming to St. John's Lutheran Church in Aitkin, Minnesota, where I will be installed as Pastor on September 7, 2025, at 4 PM.

I am blessed to be married to Amber (née Dahl) Hollingsead, who was raised in North Branch, Minnesota. We were married on January 15, 2011, and together we have four children: Addison (12), Eden (9), Theodore (5), and Augustine (2).

Outside of ministry, I enjoy fishing, traveling, and cheering for the Minnesota Vikings and the Nebraska Cornhuskers. My favorite Bible passage is Romans 8:31–39, a powerful reminder of the unshakable love of God in Christ Jesus. I also love a good laugh and firmly believe the Lord gave us humor as a gift to use wisely and well.

I look forward to getting to know the people at St. John's Lutheran Church and the Aitkin Community.

Pastor Ben Hollingsead

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.

YOUTH HEAD TO 2025 LCMS GATHERING IN NEW ORLEANS

On July 17, St. John's sent 16 teens and 7 chaperones to the 2025 LCMS National Youth Gathering in New Orleans! May God protect them on their journey and bless them as they grow in faith and fellowship. We look forward to hearing all about their trip upon their return.

Some of the teens and chaperones were part of a special Participant Commissioning Service led by Pastor Petersen on Sunday, July 13 during worship to bless and send off the group. (Not all participants were able to attend the service.)



Chaperones: Tony Flerlage, Russ Crowther, John Novotny, Kara Crowther, Paige Beaufeaux, Janice Hawkins, and Cara Samuelson.

Teens: Natalie Crowther, Isabel Cartie, Branden Bartel-Wagner, Colter Popkes, Quinten Crowther, Natalie Samuelson, Jace Novotny, Taya Hawkins, Molly Franke, Adah Williams, Benjamin Crowther, Brittany Hacker, Linzy Beaufeaux, Hannah Hunter, Eva Williams, Tenley Crowther, and Adalyn Samuelson.



**On our way to
New Orleans!**





ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

YOUTH

NEWS



EPIC ADVENTURE RECAP

In June, we explored the wonders of Australia in Vacation Bible School. During our adventure, we were reminded that Jesus guides us through life and is the only way to eternal life.

We looked in the Bible, God's Holy Word, and explored five Bible accounts that teach how God, the Father, loved the world so much that He sent Jesus, His only Son, to save us. These accounts showed us that Jesus calls us, leads us, teaches us, saves us, and send us.

Every day we heard how Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. We rejoiced in the Lord through songs such as "Jesus is the way"; "Who's that calling"; and "God's Love". We made crafts such as Isaiah 43:1 Photo Frames, Jesus Saves Suncatchers, Good News Flyer boomerangs. We also enjoyed different games and ate delicious snacks.

We had an awesome time at Epic Australian Adventure VBS! Jesus worked in and through the servant hearts of many people to share His saving love. Thank you to all the volunteers, parents, grandparents, and teens that made our Epic Australian Adventure for Vacation Bible School possible. Thank you to the congregation for continually supporting the children of the church and community. We had 16 amazing volunteers that helped share God's Word with 23 youth.

We look forward to continuing to share the Word of God with our youth in Sunday School and next Summer at VBS.

Brea Hamdorf, VBS Director





PASTOR SCHEDULE

God is at work at St. John's. Thank you to all our amazing guest pastors for helping us out. Please know that the below list is subject to change.

VACANCY PASTOR

Pastor Thomson
218-900-7164

SHUT-IN VISITS

Pastor Thomson

SUNDAY WORSHIP PASTOR SCHEDULE

08 / 03 Pastor Carnicom
08 / 10 Pastor Milo
08 / 17 Pastor Petersen

08 / 24 Pastor Thomson
08 / 31 Pastor Biegner
09 / 07 Pastor Carnicom



THANK YOU FOR STOPPING BY!

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who stopped by St. John's booth at the Aitkin County Fair! Though the days were hot, we were blessed to welcome many fairgoers with ice-cold water, fun giveaways, and a relaxing spot where kids could enjoy a craft. One of the most meaningful moments was handing out bracelets with Bible verses—and watching teens search for and share their favorite ones.

We are especially grateful to all who made our fair presence possible.

Thank you to those who welcomed visitors at the booth, planned and organized the event, helped with setup and takedown, and generously donated water and treats.

We truly couldn't do this without our amazing church family. Your support and service helped make this outreach a blessing to many.



QUILT WINNERS

Several hundred people signed up to win one of four beautiful quilts provided by our St. John's Quilters. This year's lucky winners were our very own **Caleb Nuetz**, along with **Linda Danielson**, **Nelly Briley** and **Chiane Kowalske**. Each winner was surprised and excited to pick up their beautiful quilt.

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH ANNUAL BAZAAR & BAKE SALE

ST. JOHN'S FALL BAZAAR & BAKE SALE

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4 | 9 am to 2 pm

Never too early to start thinking Fall Bazaar and Bake Sale. It will be here before we know it. As you clean your home, don't forget to pull things out to donate. Let's fill Grandma & Grandpa's Attic full of treasures that will intrigue all ages.

How's the Garden growing? Be sure to set aside some produce, if possible. Rainy days (or too many mosquitoes) got you stuck inside? How about making some crafts to sell at the bazaar? We will keep you posted with more information in the coming months but start thinking about it now. This is a huge event and helps our church financially in many ways. Please consider helping us in this event.



TIME TO GET CRAFTING



Let's get together each week starting

**Tuesday,
September 16**

to craft together.

Meet at church starting at
9:00 am.

DONATE TO THE ATTIC

Start gathering items for the Grandma & Grandpa's Attic (no clothing or large electronics)

LET'S MAKE THIS AN EVENT TO REMEMBER!





ST. JOHN'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

In 2026, St. John's will celebrate its 100th Anniversary — a truly special milestone in our community's history. Planning an important occasion takes time, creativity, and teamwork, and now is the time to begin.

We are forming a planning committee to help organize the celebration, and we would love your help. If you are willing to serve on the committee, please contact Greta in the office.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to contribute and help make this celebration a meaningful and memorable event for all!



FELLOWSHIP SERVERS NEEDED

We are looking for volunteers to provide refreshments for fellowship time following worship. If you are able to help, please sign up on the sheet posted in the fellowship hall by the kitchen. Thank you so much for your willingness to serve and help create a warm, welcoming environment for our congregation!

FUNERALS IN JULY

Merle Peterson passed away on Friday, May 9, 2025. Murph was laid to rest alongside his wife, Laura and in-laws, Nick & Barb Skorich at a graveside service at St. John's Cedarbrook Cemetery on Monday, July 14. We pray that God will comfort her family and friends in this time.

Mary Mikes passed away on Wednesday, June 18, 2025. Her funeral was held at Sorensen-Root-Thomson Funeral Home on Tuesday, July 15. We pray that God will comfort her family and friends in this time.





HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Blessings on your special day!

Paityn Hawkins	02	Gary Fageroos	09	Amanda Anderson	16
Pam Evans	03	Jonathan Hamdorf	10	Judy Peyser	16
Tony Flerlage	03	Dorothy Perrine	10	Krista Olson	17
Scott Bartz	04	Donna Hasskamp	11	David Rom	17
Linzy Beaufaux	04	Trenton Torgerson	11	Lisa Blume	19
Mason Ruschmeier	04	Jordan Moore	12	Sage Sinchak	20
Ray Kaiser	05	Levi Perrine	13	Sophia Geist	20
Mike McGillis	05	Gail Ruschmeier	13	Natalie Flerlage	21
Brooke Nelson	05	Richard Fenner	14	Chursten Hagman	21
Judy Parker	05	Greg Neutz	14	Kelli Nelson	26
Kyle Bender	05	Brittany Packer	14	Easton Haugly	30
Jenna Futhey	06	Kara Crowther	15	Stacy Westerlund	30
Sheryl Wold	06	Austin Elmquist	15	Linda Bakken	31
Glen Bakken	09				

**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.*

PARSONAGE AND CHURCH FACILITY UPDATES

We're excited to share some recent improvements to both the Parsonage and the church building:

Parsonage Updates: In response to the new Pastor's needs, a fifth bedroom and a storage closet have been added to the parsonage. These new spaces are nearly complete and will be finished shortly. Additionally, a new support beam has been installed in the basement. This structural enhancement has stabilized and strengthened the entire house.



Church HVAC Upgrades:

Two new HVAC units have been installed at the church by PJ Mechanical. The unit serving the south office area is now fully operational. The second unit has also been installed and will become operational soon, pending an electrical panel upgrade with new breakers. We're grateful for these improvements and for everyone helping to make our facilities safer, more comfortable, and more functional.