



# Monthly Newsletter

ANCHORED IN CHRIST  
through every season

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS TOGETHER

JANUARY 2026 VOL. XXXIX No. 1 [stjohnaitkin.org](http://stjohnaitkin.org)

## MARKED AS HIS OWN: THE CIRCUMCISION & BAPTISM OF JESUS AND WHAT THEY MEAN FOR US

January brings with it two often-overlooked but deeply important events in the life of our Lord: the Circumcision and Naming of Jesus (January 1) and the Baptism of Our Lord (First Sunday after Epiphany). Though they appear simple on the surface—an infant's circumcision and a man's baptism—Scripture reveals that both moments are loaded with meaning. They are essential chapters in the story of our salvation.

### Why Was Jesus Circumcised?

"At the end of eight days, when He was circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb." — Luke 2:21

On the eighth day, Jesus—true God and true Man—was brought under the Law of Moses. Circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham, the mark placed on every male Israelite. But Jesus had no sin. Why receive a mark meant for sinners?

Because He came to stand in our place.

In His circumcision, Jesus began His lifelong work of fulfilling the Law on our behalf. He submitted Himself to everything God commanded of Israel so that He might redeem Israel—and all nations—from the curse of the Law.

### Why Was Jesus Baptized?

"I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" — Matthew 3:14

Jesus answers: "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." — Matthew 3:15

At His circumcision He took the Law upon Himself. At His baptism He takes our sin upon Himself. Jesus steps into the Jordan not to be washed from sin, but to be washed into our place.

### What Does This Mean for Us Today?

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." — Galatians 3:27

This means:

- His circumcision counts toward us.
- His baptism benefits us.
- His obedience covers us.
- His Sonship is shared with us.

## How This Guides Us Into a New Year

January is often filled with resolutions, fresh starts, and attempts to turn over new leaves. But the Christian does not enter a new year by trying to become a “better version” of oneself. We begin by remembering who we already are in Christ.

1. We begin the year under His Name.
2. We begin the year as forgiven people.
3. We begin the year with confidence, not fear.
4. We begin the year united in Christ.
5. We begin the year as heirs of the promise.

## Marked and Claimed in Christ

In January we remember two moments where Jesus allowed Himself to be marked so that we could be claimed: His circumcision and His baptism. Both point to the cross. Both point to our salvation. Both shape how we live every day of this new year.

You belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to you.

In the peace of our Lord Jesus,  
*Pastor Ben Hollingsead*

## THANK YOU! WE ARE SO BLESSED

As another year comes to a close, the church office would like to extend a heartfelt **thank you** to each and every one of you. We are deeply grateful for the many ways you have supported St. John's throughout the year.

Whether you volunteered your time, shared your talents, offered prayers, gave generously, served quietly behind the scenes, or simply showed up week after week with a willing heart, **you made a difference**. Because of you, our ministries continue to thrive, and our church remains a welcoming place for all.

Your kindness, faithfulness, and dedication do not go unnoticed. It is truly a blessing to part of a congregation that cares so deeply for one another and for God's work in our community.

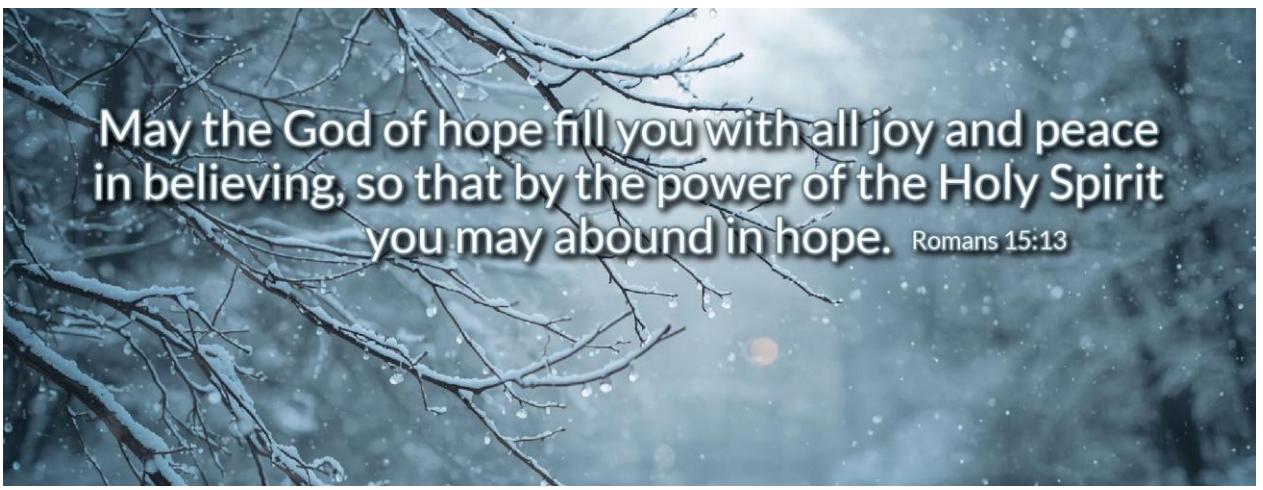
As we look ahead to a new year, we do so with gratitude for what has been and hope for what is yet to come. We not only celebrate 100 years together, but look forward to a strong future together. Thank you for being the heart and soul of St. John's Lutheran Church. We are thankful for each of you and honored to serve alongside you.

Wishing you and your loved ones a blessed New Year.

With sincere appreciation,  
***The Church Office***



*With a  
Grateful  
Heart*



May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13

## CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF BEING CALLED TOGETHER

In 2026, St. John's Church celebrates 100 years of being "Called to be Fishers of Men." This centennial year is about more than looking back; it's about coming together as one congregation to celebrate our shared faith, friendships, and future.

In January, we will be kicking off a year-long celebration, with our **official 100th Anniversary Celebration on Sunday, September 13!** Be sure to mark your calendars now!

Throughout the year, we invite everyone to participate in monthly events designed to bring us together in fellowship and fun, while also helping raise funds for our big anniversary celebration. Each month will offer something special. There will be plenty of opportunities to reconnect, make new memories, and celebrate what makes St. John's such a meaningful church family.

Our centennial festivities begin with a **Birthday Breakfast on Sunday, January 4, following worship.** Come enjoy good food and great company as we kick off this historic year together. In February, we're excited to bring back Super Bowl Subs & Snacks.

Watch for more information throughout the year, and plan to join us often as we honor our past, celebrate our present, and look forward to the future God has in store for St. John's.

*The St. John's Centennial Committee*





Year-long  
**BIRTHDAY**  
Celebration

Join us as we kick off a year long celebration of St. John's 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

**BIRTHDAY**  
**BREAKFAST**      **SUNDAY**  
                            **JAN 4**

**FOLLOWING**  
**WORSHIP**

Freewill offering to raise money for the big event on September 13, 2026

ARE YOU READY FOR  
**SUPER BOWL  
SUNDAY?**



**SUPER BOWL SUB  
& SNACK SALE  
IS BACK!**

Look for order forms in Sunday Bulletins starting JANUARY 4. This event is hosted by the St. John's Centennial Committee. Money raised goes to the St. John's Centennial Celebration on September 13, 2026.





ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

# YOUTH NEWS



## “FISHERS OF MEN” IN THE AITKIN FISH HOUSE PARADE

St. John's had a wonderful time participating for the very first time in the Aitkin Fish House Parade the day after Thanksgiving! We shared Christ with our community as “Fishers of Men,” passing out treats and magnets that shared the message of Christ and St. John's Lutheran Church. Thank you to everyone who came out to be part of the day, whether on the “fishing boat” or cheering from the crowd. It was a joyful day walking together in Christ.



Jan 04: Sunday School & Bells start again

Jan 18: Sledding Party & Potluck

Jan 25: Sunday School Sings & Handbells play



# CHILL & THRILL

## CHURCH SLEDDING PARTY



ALL AGES WELCOME!

**JAN  
18  
12:00 pm**

**POTLUCK LUNCH**

Bring a dish to share  
Hot Apple Cider and Cocoa provided.

**BRING A SLED  
and a FRIEND!**  
snow tubes work the best!

Bruce & Debbie Schultz's  
32310 420th Place, Aitkin  
218-839-4322

All are welcome to join us. There is a great view of everyone sledding from inside the warm house. This is a great time to gather, enjoy a shared meal, sip hot cocoa and welcome in the new year together.

# Together in a Season of Sharing

## ST. JOHN'S FOOD DRIVE – GMNG BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Thank you to everyone who donated during our annual November Food Drive. Your generosity makes a real difference for families in our community. A special thank you, as well to the members of the Men's Bible Study group, who faithfully packed and delivered the donations to the Aitkin Food Shelf. We are truly blessed with such a generous and caring congregation. Giving is not about making a donation, it's about making a difference.



## ST. JOHN'S WOMENS' CHRISTMAS PARTY

We're not getting lost in the holiday rush

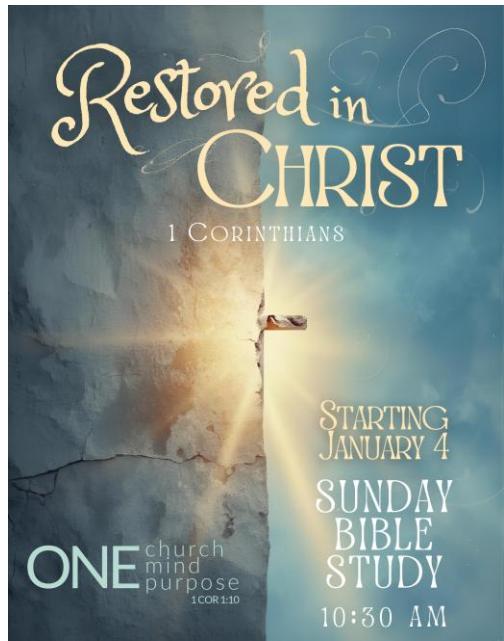
The women of St. John's and Pastor Ben braved the December snow storm and gathered for a beautiful time of fellowship and Christmas joy. They shared a delicious potluck lunch, sang some favorite Christmas hymns, and enjoyed a skit, "Christmas Wrappings" that reminded everyone not to get lost in the holiday rush, but to keep our hearts centered on the true meaning of Christmas... Jesus!



Afterward, several women delivered poinsettias to homebound members, spreading love and encouragement beyond St. John's walls. It was a day filled with warmth, friendship, and Christ's light. May we carry that spirit with us throughout the new year.



# New Year, Renewed Faith



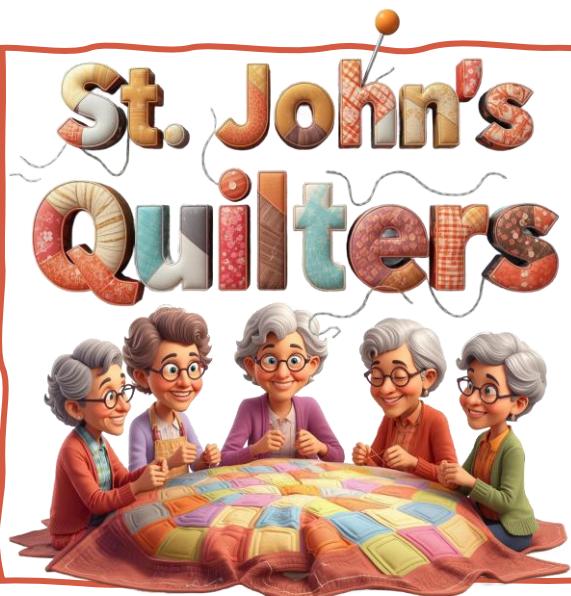
## NEW BIBLE STUDY IN JANUARY

In January, most Bible Studies are back! We are excited to begin a **new Sunday Bible Study** titled **“Restored in Christ”**, a study of 1 Corinthians. We will focus on how the church should live out the gospel with unity, holiness, and love, centered on Christ rather than human pride or cultural values.

Tuesday Women’s Bible Study will continue “Overcoming Life’s Sorrows” from the Book of Jeremiah and men will finish up the Book of Jonah and discuss a few Psalms before beginning a new study in February.

Stay tuned on the Evening Women’s Bible Study. They will not be meeting in January.

All are invited to attend these groups and to grow your Christian faith together with others.



## NEW QUILTING SEASON BEGINS

We’re excited to begin a new quilting season and would love for you to join us! We gather to make warm quilts and share good fellowship along the way. Everyone is welcome, whether you’ve quilted before or not, to help tie quilts that will be given to those in our community who need them.

**We meet on Tuesday mornings starting January 6** and continue through April. We usually pause mid-morning to enjoy coffee and treats together.

Come and enjoy time together while doing something meaningful.



# Be in the Know

## INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS (JAN 4)

On Sunday, January 4, the officers who were elected at the October Voters' Meeting will be installed during the 9:00 am service. We invite the following people to be a part of that installation during worship.

**2026 Officers:** Luke Hamdorf (President), Jason Wold (Vice-President), Teri Bati (Secretary), Debbie Schultz (Treasurer), and Gina Wold (Financial Secretary).

**Deacons:** Dan Borseth & Jacob Redepenning (both re-elected) & Greg Neutz (filling vacancy).

**Trustees:** Scott Wold (re-elected) and Ray Kaiser (filling vacancy)

**Money Counters:** Rachel Bartz and Jolene Quale.

We thank these individuals for their willingness to serve and lead our congregation into the future and thank Paul for his leadership for many years as President and Brian Rushmeier for his work as trustee and during parsonage renovation, Tom Hawkins for his wisdom and guidance as Deacon, and Lisa Flerlage and Paige Beaufaux for their contribution on the Board of Finance. We appreciate everyone's service and commitment to making St. John's Church an inviting place to worship.

## 2026 CHANGE TO CHURCH COUNCIL MEETINGS

To better serve our congregation and community, the Church Council will now meet monthly at 6:00 PM on the first Thursday of each month (except January, when the meeting will be on the 8th), instead of quarterly.

Meetings will include the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Pastor Ben and Greta, and a representative from each of these groups: Deacons, Trustees, ACT, Sunday School, and the Women's Circle. Please coordinate with your group to designate a representative each month.

This change aims to strengthen communication, share vision more clearly, and encourage collaboration among our ministry groups. By meeting regularly and listening to one another, we hope to grow in unity and work together more intentionally in the Lord's work.

We pray this structure helps us care for one another, steward our resources wisely, and serve our congregation and the people of Aitkin for the sake of the Gospel. Please keep all church leaders in your prayers as we walk together in faith, faithfulness, and love.

# Be in the Know



## QUARTERLY VOTERS' MEETING – JANUARY 25



The St. John's Quarterly Voters' Meeting is scheduled for January 25 following our 9:00 am worship service. All new members and confirmed members (age 19 or older) are encouraged to attend and eligible to be voting members.

Come, let your voice be heard, and be a part of the decision-making process of this church. Our church thrives when we come together on big decisions.

**Church Council will meet on Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm to finalize the agenda for the Voters meeting.**

**The Deacons will meet on Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm**



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

## CLOSING OUT 2025 AND LOOKING FORWARD TO 2026

In December, St. John ACT helped the church recognize and wait for Christ's coming through advent. The teens and adults helped prepare and serve the first advent supper. The teens sat with each other during advent services to experience worship with their peers.

We enjoyed partnering with the Sunday school with the church's Fish House Parade float. It was warmer than usual, and most kids were in good spirits.

Coming for ACT is the Brainerd Jaycees Ice Fishing Fundraiser, a Superbowl Party at the church for fun, grocery bagging fundraiser, and a pizza sales fundraiser.

Please help encourage our youth at St. John. Bless them when you see them and pray for them. We are blessed and thankful for the support from our church family.

*Tony Flerlage*



# Be a part of St. John's History



In honor of our Centennial Celebration, St. John's Lutheran Church is putting together a **taste-tempting Centennial Cookbook**, and it wouldn't be complete without *your* favorite recipes! This special cookbook will be filled with beloved dishes shared by members of our congregation – recipes that tell our story and bring people together.

We invite everyone to contribute **three or more favorite recipes**, whether they're family classics, holiday favorites, or everyday go-to meals. Recipe collection sheets will arrive in your mailbox in January. Simply type or neatly print your recipes in ink and return them to the collection box in the Narthex.

Every recipe matters, and we truly hope **everyone will participate** so our Centennial Cookbook reflects the heart of our church family.

Please return your recipe sheets by **February 15**. A box will be located in the Narthex to place them in. If you have any questions please contact Joy Janzen. Let's create something delicious together!



## 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. 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!



# TRUSTEE REQUEST: CREATING MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT SPACES



With the new blinds installed and two fully functional HVAC units in place, please use them wisely to help minimize utility costs:

- **Hot summer days:** Lower the blinds to reduce cooling costs.
- **Extreme cold weather:** Keep the blinds down to retain heat.
- **Sunny winter days:** Raise the blinds to let in natural sunlight and warmth.

Please **keep doors to classrooms/sanctuary and the sanctuary curtain open** except when the space is actively in use. Keeping everything closed can prevent the thermostats and HVAC units from working efficiently. The only exception is the office space that are locked when unoccupied.

Thank you for helping us maintain a comfortable environment while keeping energy use efficient.

Thanks and Happy New Year to you all!

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



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

*Blessings on your special day!*

James Flerlage	02	Atlanta Hagman	14	Greg Rono	21
Jeff Buttler	04	Teddy Hollingseed	17	Jeff Schlagel	21
Maureen Nelson	04	Sabin Christian	19	David J. Wilke	21
Brandon Perrine	04	Stella Sterling	20	Terry Lenzen	24
Belinda Hammond	06	Steven Holm	20	Robert Haugly	26
Rachel Converse	07	Julie Lemire	20	Frannie Olson	27
Tanner Wold	09	Vicki Patrick	21	Brooke Peysar	30
Vickie Fossum	10	Dominick Patrick	21		

*\*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.*