

The Mustard Seed*

Newsletter for members and friends of
St. John's Lutheran Church, Waterloo
(Bennington) ELCA



2026



I write this in the waning days of December, even while looking ahead to the new year. Old and new are intertwined. I thought of that verse from Lamentations 2: God's love never ends, and God's mercies are new every morning. Probably a pretty good word to hold onto as we move into the next year.

Some things from 2025 (and before) will accompany us into the new year, and 2026 will have its own things as yet unknown to offer us.

In the midst of it all, of course, is God. God who loves and (see pg. 3)

Key dates to be aware of:

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 3: SJB POOL PARTY AT
WATERLOO SPORTSPLEX,
3:30-5:30; see right column for details**

Jan. 4 (NO SUNDAY SCHOOL)

10 AM: Worship with Communion

7 7 PM: **Confirmation resumes**

11 9 AM: **SUNDAY SCHOOL STARTS** 10: Worship

14 7 PM: Confirmation

18 9 AM: Sunday School; 10 AM: Worship with communion; Sunday School children "Sing and Share"

21 7 PM: Confirmation

25 9 AM: Sunday School; 10 AM: Worship

28 7 PM: Confirmation

FEBRUARY

Feb. 1 9 AM: Sunday School; 10 AM: Worship with communion

After worship: ANNUAL MEETING

4 7 PM: Confirmation

8 9 AM: Sunday School; 10 AM: Worship

(Annual Meeting back-up date)

11 7 PM: Confirmation

15 9 AM: Sunday School; 10 AM: Worship with communion

SJB Pool Party Jan. 3!

St John's families are invited to start the new year with a splash! We've rented the Cedar Valley Sportsplex for Saturday, Jan 3.

Swimming is from 4-5:30, and includes lifeguards.

Our rental time starts at 3:30. Families can bring snacks & drinks into the party room. NO glass is allowed.

Toys and floaties are fine to use, as are goggles, but only the kind that cover your eyes. (NO over the nose coverage masks allowed.)

Bring your own towels, too! Our VBS pool party got rained out, so now we're going to make a splash as we enter the new year.

Sunday School at church starts on Jan. 11, 9 a.m.



***Why "The Mustard Seed?"** In Matthew 17 and Luke 17, Jesus said that mustard seed size faith is enough. God is the one who makes things happen! Even a little belief is enough from us! This newsletter is a little glimpse into life here at SJB. Enjoy! We're also on Facebook! Look for the church page and the youth and Sunday school page, too

Prepping for Christmas!



From top left and around: crowning the tree, setting up the nativity, confirmands prepping for candlelight, Christmas program with "Happy Birthday Jesus!" theme and special music on flute. Whew! (Pics from Kayla B and Anna W. More pics on church Facebook page.



Council Notes

Snow and schedules complicated meeting in person as a church council.

Prior to not being able to meet in person, the council had discussed distribution of the remaining Helping Hands funds, \$630.

Following a review of previous funding recipients, such as the Dunkerton Food Bank for \$1000 over the course of the last two years, and our ongoing yearly commitment to the NEIA Food Bank (\$275/month), Council voted via email to allocate those funds to Camp EWALU for their special "Close the Gap" appeal.

"Close the Gap" is aimed to help close the gap on the loan EWALU had to take out to renovate the main lodge, Cedar Lodge, despite a successful campaign that raised \$2 million.

Rising construction costs accounted for the funding gap that we and others are now helping close.

Council had also earlier agreed that the annual meeting would be Feb. 1, with Feb. 8 as back-up date.

Olson, from pg. 1

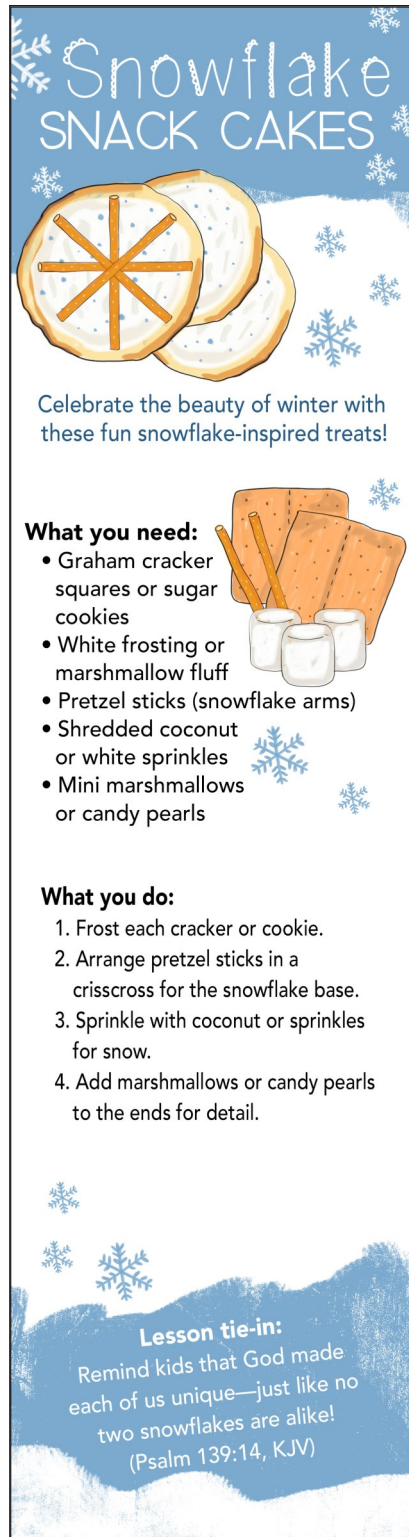
values you and every person. God who shows up when we are at our best and at our worst.

In the Christmas Eve message, I spoke about "God glimmers," inspired by the glitter that fell off a little girls dress wherever she went.

For 2026, in the new and the old, may we see and may we be God glimmers.

An Easy Winter Snack

As of Dec. 28, more snow is predicted to be on the way. Much of the earlier snowfall has melted away. Below is a recipe for a winter snowflake snack that you can make anytime!



Snowflake SNACK CAKES

Celebrate the beauty of winter with these fun snowflake-inspired treats!

What you need:

- Graham cracker squares or sugar cookies
- White frosting or marshmallow fluff
- Pretzel sticks (snowflake arms)
- Shredded coconut or white sprinkles
- Mini marshmallows or candy pearls

What you do:

1. Frost each cracker or cookie.
2. Arrange pretzel sticks in a crisscross for the snowflake base.
3. Sprinkle with coconut or sprinkles for snow.
4. Add marshmallows or candy pearls to the ends for detail.

Lesson tie-in:
Remind kids that God made each of us unique—just like no two snowflakes are alike!
(Psalm 139:14, KJV)

A Christmas Thank You

Thank you, St. John's, for your Christmas kindness. Your cards, family photos, letters, treats, messages, generous cash gift and remembrances helped to make my holiday even more festive. May the blessings you share be a source of blessing to you, also.

Let's keep walking together in God's grace as we move into a new year!

~~Pastor Beth



End of Year Notes

Annual reports due Jan. 15
Please have your end of year reports in to

Brenda by January 15. Annual meeting is slated for Sunday, Feb. 1 with Feb. 8 as back-up.

Serving in 2026

The Ministers of Worship serving schedules for 2026 are in your church box. It also shows up online as part of the newsletter.



Please be reminded that if you have a date

conflict, we ask you to find your own substitute and let someone at church know if time allows.





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