

# The Mustard Seed\*

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

February

2026



Lent and Easter are early this year. We'll observe Ash Wednesday on Feb. 18 at 7 p.m., and we'll share the imposition of ashes and have communion at the rail.

Other services for Lent will include Maundy Thursday worship on April 2, 7 p.m. This worship service will also include the first communion for our students in 2nd grade and their families. Instruction will be offered 2 separate times, and families of second graders will be contacted regarding the time that works best (see right for more)

## **Olson, continued**

for them. I'm tentatively targeting March 28 and March 29 for two identical sessions, of which families need to attend 1. A parent or grandparent attends the class with the student. More details to follow.

Good Friday worship will be on April 3 at 7 p.m.

Easter worship will be on April 5, 7 AM and will be followed by the LYO Easter Breakfast.

This annual Lenten cycle coincides with the lengthening of days and the renewal that comes with Spring. As seeds get planted in the ground and then die in order to produce, so Lent reminds us that we are buried with Christ and then raised to new life at the resurrection reunion that awaits.

The love of God, revealed in Jesus, is still our hope, our strength, our joy and our song. Even when things get dicey, are concerning or painful, the promises of God are sure and can be trusted. We are, after all, people of faith and hope.

In Jesus, God enters in to all the suffering of the world and then God transforms it. God brings beauty from ugliness, hope from despair, life from death. This is our Lenten and Easter journey, and we are not alone.



## **Key dates to be aware of:**

### **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 Valentine's-Love Party; 10 AM: Worship  
**(Annual Meeting back-up date)**  
**LYO after worship**

**11** 7 PM: Confirmation

**15** 9 AM: Sunday School; 10 AM: Worship with communion &  
Sunday School Sing and Share

**18:** 7 PM: Ash Wednesday worship with imposition of ashes and  
holy communion at the rail; NO confirmation.

**22:** 9 AM: Sunday School; 10 AM: Worship

**25:** 7 pm: Confirmation

### **March**

**1:** 9 AM: Sunday School; 10 AM: Worship with communion

**4:** 7 PM: Confirmation

**8** 9 AM: Sunday School; 10 AM: Worship; LYO After worship

**11** 7 PM: Confirmation

**15** 9 AM: Sunday School Green-St Patrick's Day party; 10 AM: Worship with communion & Sunday School Sing and Share.

**\*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



Kids and grown-ups alike enjoyed our make-up VBS pool party at the Cedar Valley Sportsplex on Jan. 3. Around 50 people attended! We weren't able to capture everybody in the photos, but these from Bethany Stafford give some idea of how much fun the group had! A nice way to start the new year! Thank you, all!

## Church Council Notes

It was a “catch up and look ahead” gathering when the council met on Jan. 18.

Reports and minutes were received and approved.

Reviewed were the use of the remaining Helping Hands funds, given to Camp EWALU for their close the gap campaign on renovating Cedar Lodge, the main gathering space at camp.

Pastor gave updates on Sunday School and it was noted that the current system with two classes seems to be working. Having her teach the “Bigs” frees up others to teach the “Littles” class.

Looking ahead, council discussed annual meeting and how we’re positioned for the Feb. 1 meeting. May need nominations from the floor.

Council also voted to recommend adoption of the budget to the congregation at annual meeting.

There was constructive conversation about reducing Lenten services to the big events of Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

Doing this allows flexibility for confirmation classes to meet, frees up the pastor, who is part-time, for other ministries and is also a better use of stewardship monies in regards to utilities.

Annual meeting on Feb. 1 to include thank you to those who have served and welcome to those who are coming on board and those who remain in their terms as well.

Meeting closed with The Lord’s Prayer.



## Second Semester Sunday

### School News

There's still time for you to let Bethany know which Sunday you want to be a teacher in the Littles classroom!

Thanks to those who have already signed up. Sunday School wraps up at the end of April.

High school and junior high youth are welcome to teach and/or assist in the classroom!

## For Feb. 14 Family Fun

After a long January, many could use a few laughs. Here are some Valentine chuckles for you and yours to enjoy! (Used with permission from Church Art Online)

### Valentine's Day Jokes

What did one sheep say to the other? *I love ewe!*

And how did the other sheep respond? *You're not so baaa-d yourself.*

Why do skunks love Valentine's Day? *They are very scentimental creatures.*

What did the enamored deer say? *I'm very fawn-ed of you!*

What question did the penguin ask on February 14? *Waddle I do without you?*

What do you call two birds in love? *Tweethearts!*

What did one bee say to the other? *I love bee-ing with you, honey!*

## Lutheran Services in Iowa Shares Megan's Story\*

Six years after journey through foster care to eventually find a loving and permanent home with the Johnson\* family, Megan is thriving, confidently sharing her story, and living proof of what is possible when a young person is given stability, encouragement, and someone who believes in them

Megan says, "I entered foster care at just 17 days old. From the very beginning, my life was shaped by change, uncertainty, and trauma. Though I was adopted at age five, the years that followed were filled with strict rules and isolation. By age ten, I was told I was "too much" and was sent away, carrying unhealed wounds I wasn't able to explain yet. I then moved through various treatment facilities and foster placements. While those years were difficult, they also became a turning point. For the first time, I began to see my own potential. I discovered things I loved, committed myself to school, and watched my grades improve. Education became the one constant in my life, something I could rely on no matter where I was living."

At fourteen, I entered high school and moved into a foster home with people I barely knew. I arrived guarded and afraid to hope, but slowly, I began to open up. I joined cheer, choir, and theater, finding confidence and belonging through school. Despite everything I'd been through, school never gave up on me, and I refused to give up on myself.

When I was fifteen, I began searching for a permanent home. After countless interviews, visits, and conversations, I met a family in April 2020. In the middle of an incredibly uncertain time, they took a chance on me, and changed my life. What started as a weekend visit turned into the place I finally called home.

They believed in my dream of becoming a teacher. When I nervously asked if I could take college courses during high school, they didn't hesitate. Their belief in me made all the difference. Six years later, I am still student teaching at a local elementary school, a dream made possible because someone said, "Yes, you can do this."

College wasn't easy. There were tears, late-night phone calls, and moments when I feared losing the home I had waited so long to find. But I never lost their support. Hearing the words "We are proud of you" reminded me how far I had come and gave me the strength to keep going.

To foster youth and foster families alike: don't give up. Fight for yourself. Let your voice be heard. Be who you are - the right family will love you for it.

And to my mom and dad: thank you for giving me the chance to be myself and helping me discover who I am. You gave me the opportunity of a lifetime, and I couldn't have done this without you.

\* Names changed to protect privacy



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