

The Mustard Seed*

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

2022



A Few Thoughts from Pastor Beth

The combines have been running pretty steadily in recent days as I sit down to write this. Beans first and then corn. Just as there is a rhythm to planting, there's a rhythm in the church year.

We're coming into those final Sundays of the season of Pentecost, and we have marked the long green season of growth—both in the landscape and in our faith lives. It can be tempting to stay with what we know, with what's comfortable, with doing the same thing over and over again. Yet if we always planted beans in the same field, if we always planted corn in the same field, pretty soon, things wouldn't go so well. Crop rotation happens for a good reason!

In our faith lives, we can count on God, of course. God is dependable, even if we get a little waffly from time to time. In the book *The Hope Chest*, author Viola Simpson writes, "Remember, hope is something you carry with you forever ... Look inside when you need hope most, and it will guide you." We believe that God is the source of that hope, and we can look to God at all times and at any time.

There are days when it may be difficult to have hope, yet hope is exactly what we can have. And hope makes the difference for you, for me, for the church God loves so very much—for the people God loves so very much, including you.

Consider: at a funeral for a friend and mentor the other day, the preacher said something to the effect that churches these days have a couple of options on how they present themselves: one way is to be judgmental, mean and despising of others. The other is to be loving, kind and welcoming. Now I ask you, which do you think is going to make the church more appealing? Which church rhythm would you rather pay more attention to? Being loving, kind and welcoming ought to be a part of every church's DNA.

Sadly, we know that's not the case. But we can be the ones to welcome, to express care, to go outside our comfort zones. Just as we need to move seeds around when we plant to keep the ground fresh, so we need to do those things that keep our faith lives fertile, blossoming and growing. Love, hope and gratitude all do that. I'm thankful that we have good soil here at SJB.

Coming Events

Nov. 2: Confirmation class

Nov. 6: First communion Sunday; Nelson baptisms; Honored Seniors Sunday; SJB Reads; decorate the altar with harvest display

Nov. 9: Confirmation class

Nov. 13: WELCA leads worship; guest speaker from Retrieving Freedom. Noisy Offering Sunday. LYO meets

Nov. 16: Confirmation Family Night

Nov. 20: Sunday School Children sing; Third grade bible distribution; Thanksgiving service; Church Council

Nov. 23: NO CONFIRMATION, Thanksgiving Eve

Nov. 24: Office closed, Thanksgiving

Nov. 27: First Sunday of Advent

Dec. 4: Rottinghaus Baptism; SJB Reads meets

***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!

Highlights & Happenings, 1

In confirmation, we've been learning about the commandments. Below, the class is making gratitude jars. Gratitude jars are used to put notes of thanks in, to remind us of things little and big that we're thankful for. Done in connection with the 9th and 10th commandment, about not wanting other peoples' stuff, the jars also help us realize that gratitude is a wonderful remember to greed and wanting more stuff.



Christmas Program News

This month, the Sunday School will start working on the annual Christmas program.

There's room for parent and family help, too! The students will be decorating a quilt block that goes along with their particular part of the program. Thanks to the Monday quilters for cutting those squares.

We'll need help with learning lines, figuring out costumes, making a couple of signs and working in smaller groups before we put the whole program together.

Please let Bethany Anderson know of your willingness to help.

SJB Helps Feed Others

Below are a couple of pix from the Feed MY Starving Children food pack event held at Westminster Presbyterian. Several folks from SJB helped! Thank you.



Youth and Education

The SJB Youth (LYO) had a busy start to the year. Officers elected at their October meeting include President, Elijah Zuck; Vice President, Corina Gray; Secretary, Joey Snyder and Financial reporter, Clayton Zuck

The LYO led worship on Oct. 9 with special guests from Water to Thrive, Ed and Rennie Scharlau.

Below, the youth are pictured at the end of the service greeting the congregation



After hearing about the need for water access from Ed, below, the youth voted at their meeting to donate \$250 to Water to Thrive.



Discussion is also underway about a youth trip for the summer of 2023. The group decided to explore a service learning trip that would be within an approximately 6 hour drive. Further details will be presented at the November meeting, Nov. 13.

Council Notes

Full minutes are posted in the small conference room Council

It was a full agenda that greeted the council at their October meeting. Highlights are below:

1. Established a memorial account for clarity and transparency. Memorials that had accumulated from 2017-2022 totaling \$10,261 and the CD from 2018 totaling \$4174.25 were both put into the memorial account. Thus, the memorial now stands at \$14,435.25.

2. Education is going well; plans are underway for Christmas program.

3. President shared thanks that had been sent to SJB and expressed his gratitude for the many ways church is making a positive impact.

3. Pastor has been out in community a bit more. Discussion about ways to make it easier to follow liturgy ensued: pastor to create a handout for congregation to test-drive. Baptisms coming up.

4. Deacons and Trustees have completed various projects such as new weather seals under doors, Christian flag in cemetery, mounting new TV and planning for fellowship events. Discussion also about the stained glass window that was pulled down sometime on 10/9. Heavier chains will be used to secure art piece.

Old Business: Dates set for upcoming meetings: a) Budget prep is 11/16; b) annual meeting is 1/29/23 with back-up of 2/5. Discussion about forming a nominating committee at some point in the future (instead of expecting council folks to find their own replacements.) Still working on small window in pastor's office to replace the a/c unit.

See next column for more

Council Notes, continued

New Business: Exploring summer service trip. Stewardship education to be part of November worship. Scholarship fund: SJB needs to change to non-profit agency fund status for clarity. MSC to do this; superintendent and LYO leaders will have access. MSC to obtain debit card for church as several accounts no longer accept checks. Will check on status of posting worship to Facebook.



Women Unwind

By request the "Women Unwind" group will dig a little deeper into spiritual growth. There will still be craft and game options, but the group decided last time to dive a bit more into scripture.

So it is that the topic for this and coming months will be "Significant Women of the Bible." Makes sense, right? October saw the group look at the story of Deborah in Judges 4: 1-24.

SJB Reads

Though the group has met only once, they were in agreement that Emily Carson's book is a joy to read. Conversation questions, provided by the discussion guide, prompted memories and stories.

Next gathering is Nov. 6. Check out the book that PB has if you'd like to read more.



WELCA NOTES:



Pictured above are the 15+ banana boxes that our WELCA and Monday quilters added to the Fall In-gathering for Lutheran World Relief.

This year's totals included 65 quilts, 40 school kits and 4 blankets. Additionally, the women set aside 17 quilts to be shared with Bremwood in Waverly.

An assortment of the quilts and kits were blessed in worship on Sept. 25. Continue to pray for all involved with this vital ministry, both senders and receivers, agencies and individuals who make these gifts to people in need possible.

Plans are also underway for a harvest display at the altar. If you have festive holiday things to share, please label them and bring them to church.

Honored Seniors Sunday

After some time off because of Covid, we will again honor our senior citizens (age 70 and up) during worship and at fellowship on Nov, 6. Watch for an invitation from our WELCA group.

Making Spirits Bright—Gifts of Christmas Joy will start soon. Watch for the fish bowl to help with this good cause.

From our friends at Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI)

November is National Adoption Month, a time to honor families who have opened their hearts and homes to children and teens. For LSI, it is a time to celebrate the families we support through Foster Care and Adoption services, and to raise awareness for the hundreds of Iowa children in need of a safe, healthy home.

LSI Foster Care and Adoption recruits, licenses, and supports foster and adoptive families to ensure every Iowa child grows up in a safe, stable environment. But more work needs to be done. Thousands of children in the U.S. are waiting to be adopted from foster care into a “forever family”.

To learn more about supporting Iowa children in foster care, visit LSIowa.org/Foster, or contact Deb Whitford, LSI Director of Philanthropy and Church Relations, at Deborah.Whitford@LSIowa.org or 563.676.2065.

A Picture of Foster Care and Adoption

The goal of foster care is to reunite children with the parents when possible. The foster family can play an integral part in making that happen, often becoming mentors to the birth parents, helping them learn parenting skills they may not have had modeled to them.

An LSI provider told me about a picture she had recently received. Imagine, if you would, a photo of two women, one on each end of a bench, and four kids with them. All happy. All smiling. It looks like they were enjoying a beautiful day in the park.

On the left is the birth mother of those kids. She will be the first to admit, things haven't been easy – but she loves these kids.

The other woman is the foster mother. She loves these kids too. Two of the kids were adopted by the foster family, one lives with the birth mom, and the foster child on the mother's lap was soon to be reunited with the birth mom. They are celebrating Mother's Day together.

Foster families provide more than a safe place for children to land. This foster/adoptive parent is a wonderful mentor for this birth mom!

Our Mission: Lutheran Services in Iowa responds to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service. We proudly serve people of all ages, abilities, religions, sexes, gender identities, national origins, ethnicities, races, and sexual orientations. Learn more at www.LSIowa.org and www.facebook.com/LSI.iowa.

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