

The Mustard Seed*

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



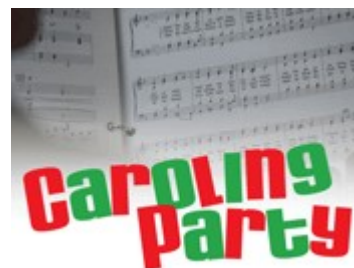
2025



In my message on Sunday, Nov. 23, I closed by reminding us all that no matter the moves we make—in life or a board game, God is always moving toward us. The church year is always moving forward.

This time of year symbolizes that like few other times in our church calendar. Nov. 30 is the start of a new year—a new church year.

Christmas is one of the most profound and poignant times that shows God moving toward us. We welcome and celebrate the one named “Emmanuel.” *see*



Christmas Caroling Dec. 7 at Dunkerton Community Hall

Meet at the Dunkerton Community Hall by 5:30 as we will lead Christmas caroling again this year! Sing inside and then head across the street to lead the caroling at the tree lighting. We'll provide some instruments and song sheets to help!

Dec. 21: A Christmas Baby Shower in Honor of the Birth of Jesus

This year's Christmas program features a “Happy Birthday, Jesus!” theme.

The program is on Dec. 21, 10 am, and includes communion as we celebrate the birth of Christ.

In consultation with Denise at the Dunkerton Food Bank, we invite the congregation to celebrate Jesus' birth by bringing in kid and family friendly foods: pasta, plastic jars of spaghetti sauce, plastic jars of peanut butter, cereal, and muffin mixes that require only water to prepare.

Help celebrate the birthday boy!

Key dates to be aware of:

DECEMBER

- 3:** 7 pm Confirmation
- 7:** 9 am Sunday School Christmas program practice
10 am Worship with communion
5:30 Meet at Dunkerton Community Hall for Christmas Caroling
- 10:** 7 pm Confirmation
- 14:** 9 am Sunday School Christmas program practice
10 am Worship
Pick-up Christmas choir practice after worship
- 17:** 7 pm Confirmation
- 21:** 9:30 SS arrives and gets ready; **10 a.m. Christmas program**
- 24** 6 pm **Christmas Eve with candles, carols, communion and the lighted cross by LYO.**
- 25** **Office closed—Merry Christmas!**
- 28** **NO SUNDAY SCHOOL; 10 AM Worship**
- JANUARY 3: SJB POOL PARTY AT WATERLOO SPORTSPLEX, 3:30-5:30; see page 3 for details**

- 4:** **(NO SUNDAY SCHOOL)**
10 AM Worship with Communion
- 11:** 9 AM SUNDAY SCHOOL STARTS; 10 AM Worship
- 18:** 9 AM Sunday School; 10 AM Worship with communion
- 25:**

***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



Sunday School News: It's been a busy few weeks for our Sunday School. In addition to classroom lessons, we have openings with Ms. Dee, where we hear a story and learn a song and scripture for a monthly "Sing and Share" time during church. **Pictured above:** In November, we sang the Zacchaeus song and shared Psalm 121:2. **Below** are a few pics from our Thankful party on Nov. 23. Children and adults had the chance to make "Thankful garlands" and work on fluffing and feathering the turkey. Other activities, not pictured here, included making harvest of thanks pumpkin, playing an I Spy game for thanksgiving, and working on Thanksgiving placemats. **Bottom right pic** is the finished art for our fluffed and feathered turkey. This reporter doesn't know if the turkey ever had a name.



Updating Ministers for Worship for 2026

Brenda is working on the 2026 Ministers of Worship list for the coming year. Each year, we give people the opportunity to opt in or to opt out. If you haven't already connected with Brenda regarding your preference, please do so now.



We recognize that seasons of our lives change and so want to yearly give people a chance to tell us their wishes.

People are sought yearly for the worship-related ministries of ushering, reading and serving communion. Other opportuni-

ties to serve include making the gluten-free communion bread, serving on the altar guild, staffing the computer during worship and assisting with the sound board.

As we look ahead to the new year, we will also be looking for Sunday School teachers. Sunday School starts on Jan. 11.

Coming in 2026: Additional Newsletter Delivery System Options

The SJB Newsletter, *The Mustard Seed*, will be sent out mostly via email starting in January. We've started hearing from those who still wish to receive the printed copy in their church box of via US Post. If you still wish to receive the printed newsletter that way, please contact the office.

—The newsletter will also continue to be on the church website for the month it's published.

— Those without email will still receive a printed copy in the mail.

—Those who also have email BUT who desire to receive a printed copy are asked to notify the office.

—We also will have a few paper copies available at church as we currently do.

Why the change? As pastor and council talked on 10-19, the rising cost of postage, the efficiency of delivery and the fact that very few churches in the area actually mail out newsletters anymore were among the considerations.

The other thing an email/website combo delivery does is get the news out to you sooner.

You can help facilitate a smoother change by

- 1) making sure the office has your updated email address
- 2) letting the office know if you still want a copy in the mail
- 3) Starting to train yourself to go to the church website. That address is: www.stjohnsbennington.com

The newsletter will then be under the "Download" header.

We may have to tweak some things as we get started, so we thank you in advance for your patience.



Splash into the New Year!

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.



Christmas Choir to Gather

Again this year, we'll have a pick-up choir to sing on Christmas Eve.

First practice will be after church on Dec. 14. Grades 4 and up are welcome to sing in the SJB choir!



Seeking Donations of Candy for the Christmas Sacks

Each year, a group of volunteers assembles Christmas sacks to hand out on Christmas Eve. While many of the items are provided by individuals and groups of the congregation, one thing we ask for from the congregation is donations of candy. Please have your candy here by Dec. 17 as the bags will be assembled after worship on Dec. 21.



Merry Christmas from the SJB Staff to you and yours!

We here at St John's wish you and your families a blessed and meaningful celebration of Christ's birth.

YOU help make Christmas better for so many others. May your Christmas kindnesses come

back to you, and may God's richest blessings accompany and daily attend you!

Olson, from pg, 1

Emmanuel means "God with us." More to the point: God with you.

One of the most meaningful verses in all of scripture is John 1: 14, "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us." God takes on human form and lives among us.

That same God that came to us via Jesus is always with us, too. Loving, leading, guiding, cherishing, accompanying, and meeting us on the journey. As we head into Christmas, may you be heartened by the fact that God is always coming toward you.



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St. John's Lutheran Church (Bennington)
4110 East Mount Vernon Rd
Waterloo, IA 50703
worship@stjohnsbennington.com
319-291-6225

On the web: **www.stjohnsbennington.com**
Find and follow us on **Facebook**, too!