



The Mustard Seed

January 2026

Newsletter of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Church Council

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See us on facebook:
St. John's Lutheran Church Arnprior
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"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field; which indeed is smaller than all seeds. But when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in its branches." - Matthew 13: 31-32

Reflections from our Pastor

Dear friends,

As 2026 begins, changes unfold, personal and in the life of the church. Change is a sign of life, and opportunity!

Personally, many of us start the year by looking back, and then looking forward with ideas for things we hope to do, change, or accomplish. Resolutions, or intentions can help us focus, but it isn't a success/failure concept - we try things out, and some things work out, others ask us to try again. Such is life.

As a church, we are looking at a year of intentional strengthening of lay leadership while reducing pastoral service hours. A new way of serving Christ together.

25+ years ago when in seminary we read "An Unnecessary Pastor" as part of our studies - not exactly the concept I was hoping for as I had committed 5 years to graduate studies after completing my undergrad degree. And yet, it made sense then, and now. Luther believed and encouraged "the priesthood of all believers" - in part, a concept that affirms that every person is gifted to serve God's purpose and invited to trust in where Jesus is leading. It doesn't negate the importance of clergy for specific roles and purposes, but it celebrates that all can serve.

As my ministry schedule is reduced, please rest assured that I am available and will make time. Please do not assume that I am "too busy," or that your concern isn't "big enough." But, what I can't do responsibly within a shorter time is keep up and chase down information about daily life. I need you to contact me as needed.

Continued —>

Pastor's reflections continued.

So, here is a list of "when to call the pastor," adapted from the work of a wise mentor many years ago.

1. If you are going to the hospital, or are there unexpectedly;
2. When life has tough moments: your marriage is struggling; substance abuse (yours or someone else's) is impacting your life; employment or housing challenges;
3. When a difficult decision arises;
4. When there is a death in the family;
5. When grief feels overwhelming and endless;
6. When you feel spiritually spent or unwell;
7. When marriage plans are being made that include the church;
8. When you want to simply talk to your pastor.

Pastors cannot "fix" things, but serve as resources and reminders of the support of the community of believers.

Your council is also available for logistical and/or business questions.

So, as I look towards 2026:

Confirmation: Please contact me if you have a youth who is interested in learning more about their baptism, faith, the Bible and Luther's Catechism and their life within their church family.

Our year together holds much promise. May all we do be pleasing in God's sight.

In service,

Pr Sylvia

2 Corinthians 5:17

17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being!

DATE	EVENT
Muslim Community	Weekly Prayers: 1:00-2:00 p.m.— each Friday in the Lounge.
Music 'N Motion	Wednesdays. Music 'n Motion. Time: TBC contact Enid 613 623-7017
Sunday Jan 4th	10:30 a.m.—Worship Service with Holy Communion Music: Lynne Z. Coffee Hour— Pr. Norine & Karen Greening
Monday Jan 5th	1:00—Council Meets
Sunday Jan 11th	10:30 a.m. — Intergenerational Worship Service Music: Electronic
Saturday Jan 17th	9:00—Men's Breakfast at Jim's
Sunday Jan 18th	10:30 a.m. — Worship Service—Lay led Music: Karen P.
Sunday Jan 25th	10:30a.m.— Worship Service with Holy Communion Music: Craig B.





St. John's Lutheran Church
Arnsprior

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Arnsprior

Draft Minutes of Nov 17th, 2025 Council Meeting

Attendance:

Pr. Sylvia Poetschke	Karen Greening
Andy Kalnins	Debbie Witt
Enid Blackwell	Fred Steinke
	Mellissa Watt

Meeting was called to order at 1:00 pm. Pastor Sylvia opened with a reflection and prayer.

Previous Minutes: Debbie moved that the October 27, 2025 minutes be accepted as distributed. Seconded by Mellissa CARRIED.

Financial Report –Oct.: Commitments up some \$6,500, over 600 more than Sept. Operating expenses up \$6,125, deficit down \$400 to \$5,700. 3rd quarter Charitus income increase of \$851. Bank account \$17,214.84, Charitus is \$79,822 and cashable GIC is \$5,022. Enid moved that the financial report to end of October be accepted as presented. Fred seconded. CARRIED

Finance AGM: 2025 year end estimates: maximum \$9000 deficit, excluding any Nov/Dec year end gifts above average per month. Estimated Bank account \$16,000, Charitus \$80,400 and cashable GIC \$5,047. 2026 draft budget with data by ministry distributed: Proposed commitments ask, \$78K (3% over monthly average in 2025, excluding year end gifts.) Expenses maximum projected \$98K. A proposed reduction to 75% of full time for Pastoral Ministry, shared with St. James, which Pastor Sylvia has sanctioned; \$59K compared to \$77K if remained fulltime. Worship \$4,200, music up to 42 occasions, with honorarium increase to \$65. Youth \$1,845, plans developing. Property \$21,995, includes 7K reserve. Administration \$3,330. Benevolence 2.5% up to \$5022. Outreach seed remains \$400. Mellissa proposed that this draft 2026 Budget be presented for membership approval at the AGM Finance meeting on November 23. Seconded Karen. CARRIED

Pastoral Report: Pr. Sylvia's report was received for October.

Pastoral Care: Christmas platters are to be assembled on December 12 for delivery.

The Longer Table: Prepared food is in a freezer in the board room and will be picked up for delivery. Andy will pick up a lock for the freezer.

Christmas Eve: Will be at 7:00. The children's pageant is within the service, close to the beginning. The Christmas float is going ahead for the parade on November 29.

Meeting closure: Meeting closed with prayer of thanks by Pastor Sylvia. Next regular meeting: December 22, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.

Message From the Chair

Our building, 47 MacLachlan Street has a heart and soul. I truly believe in that. Buildings are not like humans who have a heart and a soul at birth. Buildings start as brick and mortar and lumber and metal and glass and wires and cables and are as formless as the earth was on the morning of the creation described in Genesis. But over time, the building absorbs the hopes and fears and aspirations of the people that pass through it.

Think of Westminster Abbey. Think of the Alhambra in Spain. Think of our own Pier 21 in Halifax. My parents and my sister, along with a million other people, entered Canada by walking into that ugly hall first. I wonder if the excitement outshone the terror, or if it was the other way around.

So it is with 47 MacLachlan: sometimes the best time for me, is sitting alone in a pew in an empty church. It is then I hear the voices of all who were baptized here, those who were married here, those who mourned here. I feel the excitement and toil here of the builders and the renovators. Sometimes I hear the discussions and enthusiasms of all those who maintain and care for the church and the alter guild and the hospitality team. That time in the church to me, acts like a balm for the soul. The daily assault of news clips, the incessant commercialization and commodification of food, water, space, and the air we breathe, the constant noise, all make me crave for quiet and serenity.

I soon come to the realization that the building is just reflecting the love and energy of all the people who have passed through it. So many people with tears, laughter, and wisdom have sat in our pews and I am convinced it is all there for the taking.

So why take it? Because we need it. We need the collective wisdom in those walls, in those pews to guide us. Just as the pages flip on our earthly calendar, just as our tiny puny sand grain of a solar system drifts through space, so do we. We have no choice but to move ahead.

We will be talking about that at our Annual General Meeting. We will be attempting to discern where the spirit is leading us. For most, that would be a tough task, as they would be doing it alone. But we have the strength and spirit of all who have ever passed through our doors. We are blessed indeed.

Andy Kalnins

Chair of Church Council

Congregational Meeting on Finances, November 23, 2025

Please see the data table and notes below which provide more detail on the following summary:

- A \$9000 deficit is projected for Dec. 31, somewhat reduced by year end offerings, gratefully received.
- The budget for 2026 was approved, with a projected deficit of about \$11000.
- We have money in our reserves, close to \$100,000, to cover deficits and shortfalls.
- Because we have strong lay leadership and committees, we determined the professional ministry needs can be reduced somewhat while continuing to offer vibrant ministry.
- The congregation approved having Pastor Sylvia serve 3 weeks out of 4 in a month, 4 out of 5 in 5 Sunday months. This helps keep the projected deficit at a manageable level and introduces intentional "Creative Ministry Sundays", once per month, led primarily by laity with pastoral support.

While the full 2025 Annual Report will include financially reviewed statements and 2026 budget, our AGM we will focus on mission and ministry. Some flexibility within the approved budget possible.

You are welcome to contact Enid with any questions. eblackwell.ca@gmail.com

Ordinary Income/Expense	2025	2025 ⁽¹⁾	2026 ⁽²⁾
	Budget 100% Pastor	Year End Projection	Approved Budget 75% Pastor
INCOME			
Commitment Budget = \$7.4K/month which was a 4.2% increase from 2024		Commitment to date=\$6.3K/month plus a \$10K donation	Commitment 2026 Budget=\$6.5K/month which is 3% over 2025 actual
COMMITMENTS	\$98,350	\$85,600	\$78,000
IN-Fund Raisers for C	\$400	\$425	\$500
IN-Rental	\$3,150	\$2,886	\$2,990
IN-Youth	\$1,138	\$558	\$200
Outreach	\$37	\$37	-
IN-Grants NR	\$3,000	-	\$5,000
Total Income	\$106,075	\$89,506	\$86,690
EXPENSES			
Pastoral Ministry less St. James portion	\$67,218	\$69,500	\$59,352
Worship	\$2,350	\$3,224	\$4,200
Commun/Ad Ed-St. James	\$1,965	\$1,700	\$1,703
Youth Ministry	\$2,300	\$675	\$1,845
Property:	\$23,330	\$15,044	\$21,995
Administration less St. James	\$3,412		\$3,330
Benevolence	\$5,100	\$5,100	\$5,227
Outreach	\$400	\$300	\$400
Total Expense	\$106,075	\$98,320	\$98,052
Net Ordinary Income	-	-\$8,814	-\$11,362
 Other Income -mostly investment income.	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$2,500
 Other expense- Outreach	FaceBook, TAP	CLWR, FaceBook, TAP	TBD

(1) & (2) See Notes on next page.

Accounts: : 2025 Yr. End Estimate
 Bank acct: est. \$16,000 (2 mo. needs)
 Charitus Inv.: est: \$80,400
 Cash GIC: est: \$5,047

Notes:

(1) - 2025 Yr End Projection: conservative, *likely lower deficit*

Commitments: \$10,000 estate gift, + \$6,300 monthly average, of the \$7,400 monthly ask. **No year end gifts here yet.**

Fundraising: - all dance/motion community programming;

Rental: 94% is from the Muslim community, the rest from rentals to the Union and Choir.

Youth: Some of the held youth monies were used; no Vacation Bible Camp.

Grants: No washroom build in 2025; grant is being held for the future.

Expenses: Pastoral ministry—expect some adjustment; music budget doubled, confirmation camp, roof and windows.

Other: + inv. return, gd. accounts, > \$2,000 to others, (+ benevolence. \$5,100)

(2) - 2026 Budget as Approved: conservative, *likely lower deficit*

Commitments: 3% ask over the 2025 actual = \$6,500 monthly average. **No year end gifts here yet**

Fundraising: Motion community prog/oth.

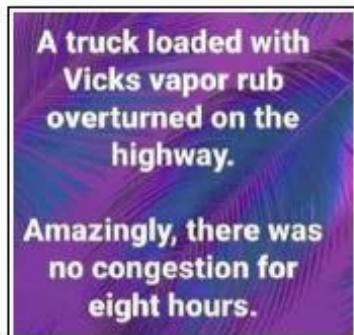
Rental: 93% from the Muslim community; \$200 rest

Youth: Vacation Bible Camp +, plans developing

Grants: Charitus \$3,000; other \$2,000; perhaps for food security, environmental, accessibility

Expenses: Pastoral ministry down an estimated \$11,000; music 42 Sundays; cleaning increase; \$7.000 property reserve

Other: conservative investment return estimate; Outreach: TBD; Benevolence: +2.





Many thanks to Lynn Rosien for the creation of the many "**Santa ornaments**" for the younger members of St James & St. John's.

We all appreciate the care and detail that our Altar Guild takes in preparing our church for the Advent & Christmas Season. Many hands make beautiful work. **Joanne & Lorne, Randy and Cathy, P+Norine, and Lorne Rueckwald.**

The **Pastoral Care Team** created a dozen cookie plates that were delivered to members who are ill or are unable to attend church in person. **Enid, Debbie W. P+ Norine** with help from **Maureen & Debbie K.**



We are grateful to the following families for their gracious donations of flowers for December and earlier in the year: **Ed & Carol Chippior** & family in memory of deceased members of the Jahn family. **Bob & Debbie Witt, Gwen Steinke, Jeff & Debbie Kargus, and Mel & Marion Bretzlaff.**

Many thanks to the "grounds snow crew" of **Randy, Lorne R. and Jeff** for keeping our walkways safe! Also to **Judy** who carefully cleans up after us every MONDAY morning.

And thanks to **Dave** our faithful electronic station-master, shown here at the console for an Advent Worship time.





STARRY STARRY NIGHT

AN EPIPHANY CELEBRATION

The Ottawa Valley Lutheran and Anglican churches are invited to gather for an epiphany worship service.

ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH 454
MILLER STREET PEMBROKE

SUNDAY JANUARY 4, 2026 4:00PM



Special Contributions

Over the course of the year, some members choose to contribute 'special' donations for specific ministries within our current operating budget and/or for Outreach causes, in addition to giving their regular offerings.

In 2025, over \$4,000, plus some freely donated items, have been received this way for: communion, altar, office, printing, property and youth program supplies, flowers, music (for organists, music licence, organ tuning), Outreach team costs, Eternity for Today booklets, special occasions (e.g. Easter and Thanksgiving), for benevolence (to Eastern Synod), and for the Food Bank, Teachers Against Poverty, and Canadian Lutheran World Relief. On the rare occasion that any 'special' donations for an operating ministry exceed its cost, funds support other ministries in our approved budget.

Thank you to the many who provide such contributions for our own ministry expenses and for the support, empowerment and dignity of others locally, nationally and worldwide!

The Treasurer, on behalf of Council



A special service of **Healing and Hope** was held on November 22nd. This was an opportunity for people to bring their needs, the needs of the world and their hopes and fears for a time of sanctuary.

The Best Advice

- Nothing changes if nothing changes.
- If it's meant to serve you, and it doesn't (and it's affordable), replace it. Daily things like your bag, your water bottle, your socks. Find ones you actually like using.
- You don't need to tell everyone everything that goes into making the chicken soup.
- Don't think harder, breathe deeper. Most of us are surviving on shallow sips of air.
- Never second-guess going to a funeral.
- We tend to forget that baby steps still move us forward.
- It'll be fine or it'll be over.
- Ask yourself: What if there was no problem to solve right now?
- Write what's bothering you down on a piece of paper; put it in a little box. A year later, read what's in there and see if you don't start laughing.
- Best advice for decluttering: If you didn't own it, would you buy it again?
- Stop trying to calm the storm. Calm yourself, the storm will pass.
- Always have a bottle of Champagne chilling in the fridge.
- Sometimes, you have to let people lie to you. You don't always have to be right or call people on their nonsense.
- Put away your phone whenever there is a human being in front of you.



January 2026



January 3rd—Shaundra Craig

January 4th—Tessa Roberts

January 15th—Floss Obst

January 31st—Lynn Rosien



Thanks to our musicians!

Lynne Zander, Craig Burkett and Karen Prince.



On Christmas Eve Craig Burkett was our musician and Nate Zimmerling played the Hymn of the day on piano and Katie and Emily Burkett played the Postludes on the violin and organ..



ADVENT: HOPE, PEACE, JOY, AND LOVE



Thanks to our Advent Candle lighters:
Blake, Karen, Andy, Melissa and Cory.



PHOTOS

Our Outreach Team of Andy, Karen, Jeff, Maureen, Pastor Sylvia, (guest) Anda and social convenors Debbie K. & Cathy Z. created a lovely "Dickens" evening. The church was filled with the local community participating!



PHOTOS



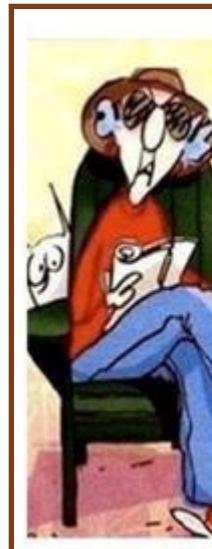
Once again St. John's entered a float in the Arnprior Christmas Parade. Thanks to all who helped with this great event.

Our Sunday School presented "*The birth of Jesus*" for us on Christmas Eve. What a wonderful time to see the children participate in their faith community. Thanks to Director Ryan and Costume Mistress Alison.





"It's just a backup system
for your pacemaker."



Rest Your Mind

I know you have been laying awake at night wondering why baby diapers have brand names such as "Luvs", "Huggies," and "Pampers", while undergarments for old people are called "Depends".

Well here is the low down on the whole thing.

When babies crap in their pants, people are still gonna Luv'em, Hug'em and Pamper' em. When old people crap in their pants, it "Depends" on who's in the will!

Glad I got that straightened out so you can rest your mind.



© Bored Panda

I just realized
that I haven't
done the "Hokey
Pokey" in over
10 years. I guess
when you get
older, you just
forget what it's
all about.

FB/TakethePiss

"Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it." Albert Einstein

A big pack of toilet paper fell on me at the store. I suffered soft tissue damage.



VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

January 2026

DATE	READER	ALTAR	COMMUN- ION ASSIS- TANT	MUSIC	GREETERS	COUNTERS	SOCIAL
Jan 4th	Seth Malina	P+Norine	Greg	Lynne Z.	Elmer & Marion	Elmer & Marion	P+Norine & Karen
Jan 11th	Cathy Z.	P+Norine	P+Norine	TBC	Elmer & Marion	Elmer & Marion	
Jan 18th	Cheryl	P+Norine	-	Karen P	Elmer & Marion	Elmer & Marion	TBC
Jan 25th	Joy	P+Norine	Cory	Craig B.	Elmer & Marion	Elmer & Marion	TBC

Two Branch Managers at work

