

St. John's Newsletter

1804 Highland Ave. Eau Claire, WI
715-834-9571
August 2026



Are we members or disciples?

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Mark 8:34

Now that we are taking time to dig into our constitution and bylaws here at St. John's, and will recommend some changes in the next one to two years, I have been giving a lot of thought about what it is to be a member of a church body. Although technically the word "member" comes from one who is baptized (they become a member of Christ's church), I have not really liked that word "membership" much these days as it pertains to belonging to a church. Along the way, it has grown into something fairly nebulous. What does it mean to be a member and what does it mean not to be? To me, the word membership feels more like being part some sort of club. At a club, like the YMCA, a person pays dues or submits some payment of some sort and in return, they receive a service. That person may then participate in the club, but ultimately, membership to that club is what the person gets out of it more than what they put into it. This is only an example, of course, and I would never say there is anything wrong with being a part of a club like that!

That being said, although we do hope that people will be financially generous and give (much like dues), and we do have an initiation rite (that is, Holy Baptism), on the outside then, it may seem like we are a club. Yet, according to scripture, it doesn't really signify. Instead, I'd like to think of ourselves as disciples. I like this word better as it represents who we are. Think of it this way: If someone were to give of their time and money to the Scouts of America because they believe in its values, how does that make them different than us as an organization? I think this is not only a good question. It's the essential question to ask.

So, what makes being a member of a church different than being a member of another club? Well, the answer is often one that makes many "members" uneasy but it is the right answer. Membership is about putting yourselves into something that in turn, grants you a service of some kind. But, discipleship is about denying oneself, taking up the cross, and following Jesus. That's not my definition. It's the definition Jesus uses from Mark chapter 8. So, what does that mean? It means that the church is not a group of people who are served but instead serve, just as Christ came to serve and not to be served. Sometimes we serve each other (Fountain of Life to all who gather) and sometimes, we serve others in the world (Flowing into a River of Compassion). The church, then, is not about what "I" can get out of it, meaning what can the "club" do for me, but what can "I" do to serve Christ. Therefore, discipleship requires a kind of commitment that clubs don't. Since Christ requires my all, then that means every aspect of my life is a life of discipleship. That is different than a membership to something. Another sticking point that I have observed is that even some of the most amazing and dedicated Christ followers can sometimes describe themselves as members of a church rather than disciples of Jesus Christ, meaning that we tend to use church membership as our language to describe what discipleship is. Believe me; I do this all the time! I include myself in this as I'm discerning this. But, this is a nuance and it is a language the church has used for years to our own detriment. Having a constitution and bylaws helps create this scenario. Yes, we do need order. Yes, we do need structure and a church constitution creates that for us. And yes, we must have a constitution according to the ELCA and Wisconsin State for the sake of our Non-profit status.

But, it also leads to a conundrum in language. For the membership model really doesn't require much from us. Our constitution maintains very little expectation of us to be a member of this faith community. However, we do already know that discipleship requires that I look at everything I am, from how I spend my money to whether or not I have a prayer life. Discipleship requires a change in attitude from what I get out of a membership or club, to how I respond as a disciple.

I would like to suggest to us as the people of St. John's, that we continue to move away from the membership mentality of a church to a theology of discipleship as a people. While as I know that many of us already are disciples, in what ways do we fall into being more like a club? Our mission statement says: "St. John's Lutheran Church is a people formed in the waters of Christian baptism to be a fountain of life for all who gather here, overflowing into a river of compassion for the world." A member can't do this. Only a disciple can. This is my challenge for us all as we approach this new season of autumn. Let's see if we are up for that challenge, no matter what the future may hold for our "membership".

Pastor Christine

Why does the newsletter look different?

Lydia's computer decided it would be funny to crash during an Adobe outage and it all vanished. Oops.

We will be back to the normal newsletter format next month!



How Does Nature Nurture Us?

From: Caretakers of Creation

Nature has Physical Benefits for Us: Forest Bathing is when you enjoy a forest through your senses. The smell of wild-flowers, the sight of sunlight filtering through the canopy, the tickle of a leaf brushing your arm or leg, the trickling of a brook. These can help lower your blood pressure and stress.

Nature provides Intellectual Benefits: Walking in different environments can impact our brain's attention and memory capabilities. Nature can captivate our attention and allow the brain to rest and reset itself.

Nature is Full of Emotional Benefits: Forest Bathing can improve your mental health by reducing and preventing painful emotions. Spending time outside in Nature can boost your mood and can make you feel more positive and happy.

Nature may never feel completely 'Natural' to you, but that doesn't mean you should avoid it and forgo nature's gifts to your health. Challenge yourself and family to experience these things by taking a trip to a park, a forest, a walk around the neighborhood and take the time to use your senses and enjoy God's nature around you.

John Price - Excepts from 'Earthday.org'

Good morning from Luther Park Bible Camp!

As we approach the end of the summer season here at camp, we would like to invite you to Heart for Luther Park. This is Luther Park's largest fundraiser of the year, featuring a live quilt auction and silent auction as in past years, as well as new features like a maker's market, live music, raffles, and a food truck lunch.

Each summer, children and youth from our congregation grow in faith at Luther Park Bible Camp, where camp extends the ministry of the church and home. Support this shared ministry by joining us for Heart for Luther Park on Saturday, August 1, from 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. This annual fundraiser for all ages features an outdoor live quilt auction, silent auction, maker's market, two raffles with prizes including a Solo Stove, a handmade quilt, and a free week at camp, plus live music, a food truck lunch, friendship bracelets, gagaball and nine-square, and more! Every bid, purchase, and raffle ticket helps ensure Luther Park can continue sharing the life-changing love of God with campers of all ages. Learn more about lutherpark.org.

Tee Off for Luther Park

Support Luther Park's ministry on the links! Join us for the Luther Park Golf Outing on Thursday, August 6, at Sioux Creek Golf Course in Chetek. Gather a team for a fun 9hole scramble (\$50 per golfer, cart included) with check-in at 8:30 a.m. and a 9:00 a.m. shotgun start. Stay after golf for a silent auction, prizes, and awards. Proceeds support Luther Park's ministry with campers and guests of all ages. Register today at lutherpark.org/golf-outing.

Questions? Call our office at 715.859.2215 or email Heather at heather@lutherpark.org

Heather Day, Development Director - Luther Park Bible Camp

Diner's Club will meet Tuesday evening August 18th at 5:30 pm at Grizzley's near the mall. We have a limit of 20 diners. Please call Louise Alt 715-834-1693 or email RSVP to altlk@charter.net by Monday August 17th.



LWR Kits & Quilts - 2026 Sharon Price, Ruth Kruschke

Continuing the work of the LWR committee, Ruth and Sharon would like to thank Lois Mai for the 18 years she has sewn up to 100 kit bags for LWR. Thank you Lois!

EMPTY BOXES - The boxes and cupboards are nearly empty and need refill to send off to Lutheran World Relief this fall.

CONGREGATION, as you begin your school and family care shopping this summer, please keep Lutheran World Relief kits (school and personal care) in mind.

Here is the reminder list of needs for school supply kits and personal care kits. Thanks for all you've given in the past and again this year. *note: LWR will not accept notebooks with any number of sheets other than the 70! Thank you!!

DROP OFF all items in labeled boxes in the narthex on Sunday mornings in the appropriate labeled boxes and also on weekdays during church open hours. The last day for drop-off will be September 9.

-Sharon Price

List of items needed for each Personal Care kit:

- One light-weight bath-size towel between 20"x40" & 52"x27" (dark color recommended)
- Two bath-size bars (4-5 oz.) of soap, any brand
- One adult-size toothbrush (for multipack toothbrushes we can separate and seal each in a business envelope)
- One sturdy comb
- One metal nail clippers

St. John's Cemetery Update

St. John's Cemetery is nearly 150 years old, and although the roadway is not that old, it is worn out and needs to be replaced. A capital improvement campaign was initiated in 2025 to replace the half-mile cemetery road system. We were fortunate to receive several large gifts including a \$10,000 matching donation, bringing our current total to a little more than \$53,000.

I'm asking you to consider making a contribution to help reach the goal of \$75,000. No gift is too small, and every dollar helps. Any excess funds received will be used to reset sunken headstones and trim the large trees.

St. John's Cemetery is more than a piece of land. It's a place of faith, peace, and remembrance. It's where we go to honor parents, grandparents, spouses, children, and friends that have gone before us. Together, we can make sure St. John's Cemetery remains a beautiful, welcoming place.

Thank you for your support, and your consideration.

-Donna Meier, Cemetery Manager

List of items needed for each School kit:

- Four 70-sheet notebooks
- One box of 16 or 24 crayons
- One 30-centimeter ruler with inches on the other side
- One pencil sharpener
- One pair of blunt scissors
- Five unsharpened No. 2 pencils with erasers
- Five black or blue ballpoint pens (no gel ink)
- One 2 1/2 in. eraser



August 16th – November 8th 2:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.

GriefShare is a 13-week program that provides weekly support for those grieving the loss of loved ones. The program incorporates elements of faith, a weekly video, and conversations among group members to find support. The GriefShare program will begin on

GriefShare®

SUPPORT GROUP

Sunday, August 16th, ending with the last session on November 8th. The sessions will be held from 2:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M. in the St. John's conference room/Library.

There is no cost to participants, as the GriefShare books, journals, and treats are being provided by St. John's Helen Brougham Fund, SJ's Fountain of Life Fund, and St. John's Caring Ministry. There is a limit to the number of participants, so please sign-up for this fall 2026 session on the bulletin board in the Gathering Area, or check the GriefShare website (griefshare.org) to pre-register or to check for other days and locations in the Chippewa Valley.

If you would like to speak with someone about the program, call the church office 715-834-9571 and leave a message for: Jean, St. John's GriefShare Facilitator OR Mary, St. John's Caring Ministry Chair.

Mary Spryer

St. John's Archive & Collections

Some new items have been donated to our St. John's Archives and Collections.

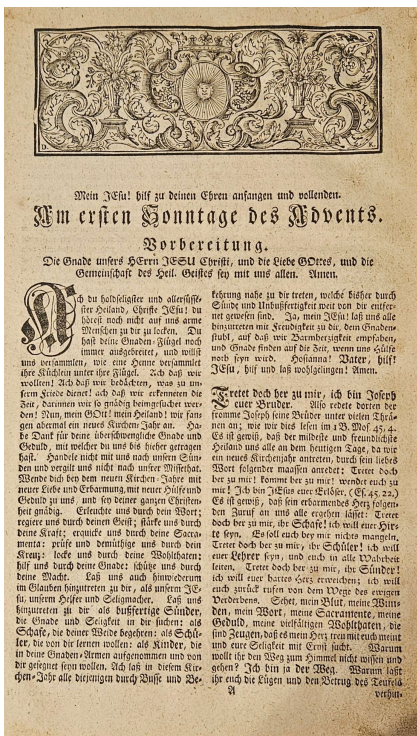
Thanks to:

Marlo Orth for his well-used Senior Catechism (Confirmation) book. Marlo was confirmed at St. John's in 1946.

Marlo also donated 3 hymnals: "Hymns and Songs for Church Schools" from 1962, "The Junior Hymnal" from 1947, and a hymnal of "Selected Funeral Hymns" published in 1932, and used by his wife, Eileen Orth, who was a much requested soloist at St. John's.

Norma Gordon for copies of Pastor Schmeichel's sermons on The Lord's Prayer. Schmeichel divided up "that great prayer" into two parts and preached them on consecutive Sundays.

Sandy Nimsger Paus, former St. John's member, for a plate with the St. John's church building on Dewey, which was made to celebrate St. John's 75th Anniversary.



Ron Mastin for a large German "Prayer Book" from 1789. We are still investigating its origin and are working on translating parts of the book's Germanic print and the German script, written by its former owner(s). It seems to be a Lectionary as the first chapter is titled: "Am ersten Sonntage des Advents." On the First Sunday of Advent.

We are still looking for:

- Pictures of the Hammond organ in the Highland church sanctuary. It might be in a family photo of the nave or chancel from a wedding BEFORE 1964, or a picture taken from the church balcony.
- Pictures of the stained glass windows that were removed from what is now the gathering area.
- Pictures of rooms in their original condition from 1955 (before they were consolidated, or changed).
- Pictures of functions that are no longer happening at St. John's (baseball teams, dartball teams, plays, musicals, holiday decorations in the sanctuary, bulletins or programs from events, etc.)

cont. next page

-Stories (funny or informative) about St. John's Lutheran. Please write them out with as much detail as you can remember.

Bonus credit if you know the date the photos were taken, and/or the names of people who are in the pictures

If you come across any pictures or items you think should be in our church archives, please contact Mary Spryer 925-876-3520 or maryspryer@gmail.com
Mary Spryer

Thrivent Choice Dollars

Thrivent Choice Dollars allows eligible Thrivent Financial members to direct Thrivent Financial's charitable dollars to St. John's Lutheran Church. To be a benefit member with Thrivent Financial, you must own one of the following Thrivent products: life insurance, health insurance, disability insurance or annuities, and based on your premium and cash value, your Thrivent Choice dollars will be calculated. Letters or emails are sent annually to these members indicating the amount of charitable dollars available to them. If you believe that you qualify and have not received a letter, please contact your Thrivent Financial representative. For the period September 1, 2025 to August 31, 2026, St. John's is designating the Thrivent Choice contributions to our general operations fund to help support our ministries, programs and maintain our day to day operations.

The Thrivent Financial members who have directed their "Choice Dollars" to St. John's Lutheran Church for June was Jacklyn Hansen, Gary & Cora Klawiter and Mike Torud. For July was Mary Haukeness-Mack, Erv & Linda LaFave, Lois Mai and John Price. When you are contacted by Thrivent Financial, please prayerfully consider directing these charitable dollars to St. John's.

St. John's thanks you for doing this.

Memorials & Honorariums

JuBellation: IMO Rochelle Catlin by Ed & Emily Severson

TV Ministry: IHO our 69th wedding anniversary on June 8th by Ralph & Margaret Kinderman

TV Ministry: IMO Elaine Krause by Larry & LaVonne Krause

TV Ministry: IMO Bill Watson by Cheryl Watson

General Operations: IMO Harold Mueller by The Mueller Family

General Operations: IMO Rebecca Cardinal by Gary & Cora Klawiter

General Operations: IMO my husband, Arnie by Margaret Johnson

General Operations: IMO Betty Halbesleben by Vicki Fox

General Operations: IMO Harold Mueller by Gary & Cora Klawiter

General Operations: IMO Harold Mueller by Kent & Leann Walbeck



We Welcome Our New Members To St. John's



Richard & Geraldine Long

Rick and Geri, who have been married for nearly 46 years, are Eau Claire natives and graduates of North High School and UW-Eau Claire. They enjoy spending time at the family's rustic cabin in northern Wisconsin. Rick is a retired professional photographer and continues to capture photographs for his personal pleasure. Geri currently serves as Director of Elderlife at First Congregational UCC (where she often is on Sunday mornings). She is a registered nurse who has enjoyed working in a variety of care and academic settings including service as Parish Nurse at First Lutheran and Spirit Lutheran Churches for over 21 years. Rick and Geri feel blessed to now be members of St. John's and look forward to meeting all of you!



Lucas & Jessa Duce, Ada

Lucas & Jessa love spending time outside hiking and going to their family's cabin. They also enjoy traveling and spending time with family.



Bryce Strandt

Bryce recently married Kelly Carlson in May. They have two cats named Mike & Doc. Bryce was born & raised in Eau Claire. He is currently going to school for programming and works in IT. In his spare time, Bryce enjoys walks, fishing, movies, and time with friends and family.



Renee Simpson

Renee is married to Randy and they have two adult girls who live in Minnesota and they also have two dogs. Renee enjoys sports, biking, camping, and kayaking. Renee has been a teacher at the Elk Mound Middle School for the past 18 years.

St. John's Christian Preschool
Hello St. John's!



It is that time of year. We continue to register children for the school year. Lessons and activities are being planned. Classrooms are being cleaned, and we are looking forward to working and playing together here at SJCP. Our hearts and minds are eager to gather - in love - to learn!

The teaching staff this year are:

Amanda Schroeder 3-year-olds MWF mornings and Amanda Downing 3-year-olds TTh mornings, Nancy Hanson continues as the director and teaches 2.5-year-olds on TTh mornings and 4K on MWF mornings. Bria Lindstrom is the Assistant teacher.

We have 2 openings in the MWF classes for the 2026-27 school year! Please tell your friends, families and neighbors about SJCP. Registration forms are available on our website or by calling or emailing Nancy for more information

715.834.9571 Email Nancy@stjohns-ec.org

Upcoming Dates:

Monday, Aug. 24th 7PM Parent Orientation

Tuesday, September 8th 9-11AM "Come & See" for TTh Classes

Wednesday, September 9th 9-11AM "Come & See" for MWF Classes

September 10-11th First Regular Class days

CYF News

Blessing of the Backpacks - August 30th

Sunday School Registration Begins - August 30th

Sunday School Begins - September 13th!

Looking Ahead:

Confirmation Orientation (all grades and families) - Wednesday, September 2nd

We Celebrated the Baptism of

Ryan Tyler Davis, son of Tyler & Kristin Davis

Azul Maya Koutnik, daughter of Adam Koutnik & Amairani Alvarez Cortez

Abril Mar Koutnik, daughter of Adam Koutnik & Amairani Alvarez Cortez

We Mourned the Death of

Jane Helland, 74

Becky Cardinal, 76

Dee Dotson, 101



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR MEALS ON WHEELS PROGRAM
Deliver More Than Just a Meal

Become a Meals on Wheels Volunteer Driver and bring warmth, connection, and nourishment to our neighbors in need. You can make someone's entire day brighter.

Flexible scheduling and routes generally take 1 to 1 ½ hours with mileage reimbursement.

CONTACT US TODAY
📞 **715-839-4886**
✉️ **adrc@eauclairecounty.gov**



FINANCIAL SUMMARY			
MAY	2026	2025	2023-25 Average
Income	\$ 35,347	\$ 39,589	\$ 34,778
Expense	38,722	33,191	33,797
Surplus(Defidt)	\$ (3,375)	\$ 6,398	\$ 981
YEAR-TO-DATE	2026	2025	2023-25 Average
Income	\$ 200,521	\$ 213,864	\$ 202,377
Expense	213,369	176,926	182,737
Surplus(Defidt)	\$ (12,848)	\$ 36,938	\$ 19,640

August Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
2 9:00 Worship 5:00 VBS Training	3 1:00 VBS 4:00 Preschool 6:30 Book Study: Offsite	4 9:45 Staff 1:00 VBS 7:00 STEP Group	5 11:45 Quitting @ Johnny's 1:00 VBS 3:00 Men's Bible Study	6 1:00 VBS 1:30 St. J's Apt. Services 6:00 Youth
9 9:00 Worship 10:15 Pray & Play in the Park	10	11 9:45 Staff 2:00 Sr. & Home Visitation 5:00 Preschool Task Force 7:00 STEP Group	12 8:30 WELCA Bible Study @ Spirit Lutheran 12:00 Chippewa Valley VIP 3:00 Men's Bible Study	13 7:00 Property
16 9:00 Worship 10:30 Caretakers of Creation 2:00 GriefShare	17 10:00 Personnel 1:00 Blue Christmas Planning 3:00 Bible Study @ The Classics 5:15 Education	18 9:45 Staff 3:00 Finance 5:30 Diner's Club @ Grizzley's 7:00 STEP Group	19 3:00 Men's Bible Study	20 9:00 Volunteer @ the Community Table 5:30 Council @ Jean Jirovec's
23 9:00 Worship 10:30 Community & World 2:00 GriefShare 5:30 Boy Scouts	24 10:00 Constitution 5:00 Stewardship 7:00 Preschool Orientation	25 9:45 Staff 6:30 Church of the Wild 7:00 STEP Group	26 9:00 Quitting 3:00 Men's Bible Study	27 10:30 Oakwood Health Services
30 9:00 Worship 2:00 GriefShare				