

On Eagle's Wings

St. John's Monthly Newsletter – January 2026

Pastor's Paragraphs

We're almost to the new year – 2026. The new year is often depicted as a baby: fresh and innocent; a chance for new beginnings. New Year's resolutions are chosen in order to make us healthier and better people.

The thing is, why do we picture babies as innocent and fresh? They are dirty messes! As for innocence, it is hard to imagine any creature that is more narcissistic. Babies offer nothing of value. They can't do anything or contribute in any way. They demand what they want when they want it: feeding, cleaning, burping. They don't care if they make a mess. They don't care if it's the middle of the night and everyone else is sleeping. They demand service and they throw a fit until their every need and want is catered to. It's a good thing that babies are cute. Otherwise the future of our species would be in doubt!

In time babies learn respect, civility, kindness, and consideration. They learn how to become contributing parts of their families and their communities. That's good. ...but is it really improvement? I've encountered many psychiatric development theories that suggest that babies don't really improve at all. Instead, they discover that it is still within their best interest so show a certain level of cooperation and contribution. Good behavior gets good results. Bad behavior gets bad results. Perhaps this isn't really improvement. It is just the development of strategic thinking. Certainly some people spend their whole lives in this stage. They figure out how to contribute the very least they can to society yet get the greatest return of benefits. Some people say that all of human societies are basically this way- that everyone is strategizing to get the most for the least. Some are winners and losers.

The same thing can even happen in faith. People calculate that if getting to heaven is the goal, then they will do what God wants in order to be rewarded with it. But is that really faith?

New Years is just ahead of us. Christmas Day is behind us. As Christmas celebrates the birth of God into human form, it is a witness to true love. God got no strategic benefit by coming in the form of Jesus. It was an expression of love; and an example of love for us. True love is self-gift. It does not strategize. It does not keep score whether more has been given than has been received. It simply gives for the benefit of others.

True love is also not blind. While it does not keep score, it is aware of being exploited and unhealthy enabling. When that is discovered the love shifts to take that into account; but the love continues.

In 2026 may the true love of God be the driving force in your life. May it give you energy and wisdom. Lasting joy and fulfillment only comes through love. But again, we do not love for the purpose of achieving even joy and fulfillment. That would be strategic! Those things are the unintended byproduct of love.

Perhaps Baby New Year is a warped way of seeing things. Perhaps a person who is old and wise makes a better image of love. In whatever form it takes, let us welcome Love into our lives for the whole of this new year!

Blessings,
Pastor Jon

Weather Cancellations

If we need to cancel a worship service or event due to weather we will post it on the church's Facebook page and send it to the email list. Please contact Pastor Jon if you have any cancellation questions.

Annual Reports

All committee reports for the Annual Report are due to the church office by December 31st. Email or electronic versions are preferred. You can email your report to: sjlcvictor@gmail.com

Annual Meeting Agenda

All items of business or theology for the annual meeting must be turned in to the church office by December 31st.

Financial Pledge Reminder

A big thanks to all of you who make financial commitments to St. John's! We greatly appreciate your generosity. As we near the end of the calendar year, please make every effort to fulfill your financial pledges. We have done well this year, so let's finish 2025 strong.

January Worship Assistants

	January 4	January 11	January 18	January 25
Greeters & Ushers	Janice Lockwood	Bruce & Connie Stevenson	John and Linda Thompson	Greg and Mary Zuege
Acolyte	Alyssa Young	Charlotte Stroup	Elijah Young	Thomas Bullwinkle
Altar Care (10:30)	Linda Flood		Linda Flood	
Communion Assistants	Linda Flood		Mary Zuege	
Counters				
Coffee Hour			Annual Meeting - Sandwiches	



Worship Readings for January

As we enter the new year we move into a different part of Matthew's gospel. In chapters 3 and 4 we learn more about who Jesus is. Then we have the Sermon on the Mount (covering three whole chapters). From there we move to putting the Sermon on the Mount into action.

- January 4 - Matthew 3
- January 11 - Matthew 4
- January 18 - Matthew 5:1-7:29
- January 25 - Matthew 8:1-17



Worship In-person and Zoom

10:30 is in-person worship in the sanctuary and also by Zoom. The Zoom link for 10:30 is emailed weekly. If you cannot connect to the 10:30 service with a computer you can still hear and participate in the service with any phone.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85898911838?pwd=Ho0hGtKqSjAnRpugabpkQTuY73SbyK.1>

Meeting ID: 858 9891 1838

Passcode: 020293

By phone:

1 929 436 2866 US (New York)



2026 Annual Meeting

The 2025 annual congregational meeting will be held on Sunday January 18th after the 10:30 worship service. There will be the usual items on the agenda: review of reports, elections for church council, and the church budget. If you have any questions please talk to Pastor Jon before the meeting.

Church Council Positions

Three positions are opening on church council that we will be voting for at the annual meeting. The terms are for three years. If you are interested in serving please talk to Mark Wyman, the council president, or Pastor Jon.

Finances (up through 11/31/25)

YTD Income \$169,925

YTD Expenses \$171,600

Difference \$(1,625)

December Council Highlights

The church council held its regular monthly meeting on December 8. Major items on the agenda were:

- 2026 stewardship drive results
- 2026 budget
- Preparing for the 2026 Annual Meeting



Gingerbread House Competition Winner

Congratulations to Thomas Bullwinkle, winner of this year's gingerbread house competition!



- Thank you Mike Ross, Jim Spawton, Tom Urbanic, and Wayne Young for helping in various ways to get the brakes fixed on the snowplow truck.
- Thank you to all who prepared food for the Parish Thanksgiving Dinner. Thank you also to those who helped with set up and tear down.
- Thank you to everyone who helped plow snow in December.
- Thank you those who helped decorate the church for Christmas.
- Thank you to John Cipollina for making repairs to the lights in the bathrooms.
- Thank you to Karn Spawton for playing piano on November 23 when Dongwon was away. And also for playing organ on December 14th for the organ anniversary celebration.
- Thank you to Sue Kaufmann for organizing the shut-in gift bags.
- Thank you to Rev. Alynne Itterly for preaching and leading worship on November 30 when Pastor Jon was in Lyons.
- Thank you to everyone who gave to the food pantry's Thanksgiving dinner meals.
- Thank you to Jim and Karen Spawton for helping to tune the organ and make small repairs for the organ anniversary celebration.

Community Outreach Committee

Thank you so much to everyone that brought items for our "mitten tree". The hand knitted ones are especially beautiful!

We will have a bowl out for "Souper Bowl" donations on February 8th. The money will be sent to World Hunger.



- Alex Clark, friend of the Shulers. He is a 38 year old father who was recently diagnosed with stomach and intestinal cancer.
- Paul Huber as he receives additional treatments to help with bone strength.
- Marilyn Bair who is weak and needs regular care.
- Patty Anderson, niece of Bruce Stevenson, who has congestive heart failure, declining kidney function, and diabetes.
- Pat Eddy, neighbor of the Zueges, who is on hospice care.
- Ella Schuller, who is receiving care for several health issues.



December Bible Trivia Answers

1. In what type of building was Jesus when the Wise Men visit him? Answer: A house (Matthew 2:11)
2. To what nation does Jesus' family flee after the visit of the Wise Men? Answer: Egypt (Matthew 2:13)
3. What convinces Joseph to marry Mary despite her pregnancy? Answer: A dream (Matthew 1:20)
4. What does Emmanuel mean? Answer: God is with us. (Matthew 2:23)

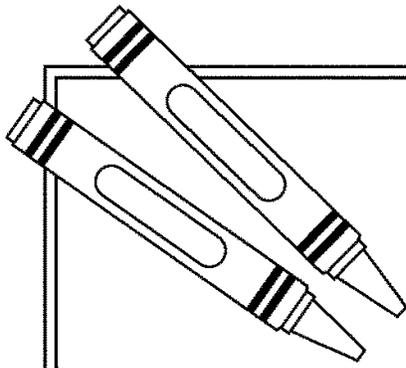
January Bible Trivia Questions

Hint: All the answers may be found in the Bible readings chosen for worship in January.

1. What did John the Baptist call the Pharisees and Sadducees who were coming to him?
2. In what river was Jesus baptized by John?
3. How many days does Jesus spend in the wilderness being tested by the devil?
4. When Jesus moves away from Nazareth in what city/town does he start to live?

January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 <u>The Name of Jesus</u>	2	3
4 <u>2nd Sunday of Christmas</u> 8:30 Service of the Word 10:30 Holy Communion	5 3-7 Violin Lessons 7:00 Boy Scouts	6 <u>Epiphany</u> 1:00 Women's Bible Study 3-7 Violin Lessons	7 8:30 Men's Breakfast 3-7 Violin Lessons 7:30 Alcoholics Anonymous	8 10:00 Bible study at Lyons Church 10:00-2:30 Monarch Homeschool	9 2-7 Cello Lessons	10
11 <u>1st Sunday after Epiphany</u> 8:30 Holy Communion 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Service of the Word	12 3-7 Violin Lessons 6:00 Church Council 7:00 Boy Scouts	13 1:00 Women's Bible Study 3-7 Violin Lessons 7:00 Property Committee	14 8:30 Men's Breakfast 3-7 Violin Lessons 7:30 Alcoholics Anonymous	15 10:00 Bible study at Lyons Church 10:00-2:30 Monarch Homeschool	16 2-7 Cello Lessons	17
18 <u>2nd Sunday after Epiphany</u> <u>Confession of St. Peter</u> 8:30 Service of the Word 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Holy Communion 12:00 Annual Cong. Meeting	19 3-7 Violin Lessons 7:00 Boy Scouts	20 1:00 Women's Bible Study 3-7 Violin Lessons	21 8:30 Men's Breakfast 3-7 Violin Lessons 7:30 Alcoholics Anonymous	22 10:00 Bible study at Lyons Church 10:00-2:30 Monarch Homeschool	23 2-7 Cello Lessons	24
25 <u>3rd Sunday after Epiphany</u> <u>Conversion of St. Paul</u> 8:30 Holy Communion 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Service of the Word	26 3-7 Violin Lessons 7:00 Boy Scouts	27 1:00 Women's Bible Study 3-7 Violin Lessons 7:00 Property Committee	28 8:30 Men's Breakfast 3-7 Violin Lessons 7:30 Alcoholics Anonymous	29 10:00 Bible study at Lyons Church 10:00-2:30 Monarch Homeschool	30 2-7 Cello Lessons	31



Just for **KIDS**

Each child of God is important! Everyone has been given different gifts and talents. Some are musicians; some are athletes; some are good listeners; some are peacemakers.

Here are some other gifts listed in Romans 12:6-8:

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St. John's Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

*We are a community of faith
committed to living and sharing the love of God.*

St. John's Lutheran Church

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The Reverend Jonathan Deibler, Pastor

(585) 924-5192

www.stjohnsvictor.com

Address Service Requested

January Newsletter

1/18 Annual Congregational Meeting