

## From Pastor Dan

What does Christmas really mean? Is Christmas all about young children singing *Silent Night* in a school play? That would be nice but that's not it. Is Christmas all about having a manger scene down on the courthouse lawn? That would be nice but that's not it. Is Christmas all about making Starbucks put "Merry Christmas" on their red coffee cups? I guess that would be nice but that is definitely not it.

No, the meaning of Christmas goes way, way beyond these things. Christmas is about God coming into the world in the lowliest way possible; born in a feed trough in a barn, and somebody else's barn at that. And it is in that base humility that we discover the essence of hope. You see, Christmas is about God coming into the desperation of a refugee camp and bringing hope. Christmas is about God coming into the resignation of a legless veteran and bringing hope. Christmas is about God coming into the sadness of a child living in the back seat of the family car and bringing hope. Christmas is about God coming into the fear of terrorized citizens and bringing hope. And Christmas is about God coming into your life; into your grief, into your illness, into your anxiety, into your ambivalence, and into your pain and bringing hope.

Yes I guess it would be nice if the grade school choir gathered around the manger scene down on the town square and sang *Silent Night* while all the proud parents stood by listening as they sipped hot lattes from their red "Merry Christmas" Starbucks cups. It would be nice, but that is not what you need. What you need is hope; hope which comes to you as a Christian at this time of year by turning your eyes toward Bethlehem and gazing in wide-eyed wonder at a crying baby lying in a feed trough in a stranger's barn. And in that wonderment realizing that somehow, in some way you are staring at the answers to life's questions; you are staring at the embodiment of hope for all humanity; you are staring at the realization of abundant life for you.

God's peace be with you and Merry Christmas to you all,

Pastor Dan

**Council Members.** Here is a list of Council Members. Please contact them with any concerns or issues you may have. Council meets once a month and welcomes input from the congregation.

President: Randy Knapp – 715-581-5558; rknappeoj@gmail.com

Vice President: Sue Cooley – 715-675-8566; cooley1512@outlook.com

Treasurer: Phyllis Seubert – 715-573-9890; grammaphylldogg@gmail.com

Secretary: Sue Rakow – 715-675-7213; suszir@aol.com

Trustees: Laverne Grunenwald – 715-675-6880; mgrunen@yahoo.com

Bob Hoff – 715-675-2442

Evangelism: Heidi Teske – 715-536-6134; heidi.teske2007@gmail.com

Fellowship: Mike Kluetz – 715-218-1357; mdk@airrun.net

Education: Rebecca Voelker – 715-675-0522; voelkerd1@hotmail.com

Worship: Jan Mueller – 715-675-9558; dmjm5455.wau@gmail.com

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**Mission Statement:** “We are called to serve God; serve each other; serve the community; serve the wider church.”

**Serve God** through worship, prayer, and the dedication of our lives to His kingdom.

**Serve Each Other** by mutual care and support to encourage everyone to fulfill their God-given potential. **Serve the Community** by making known the good news about Jesus and the love of God by word and deed. **Serve the Wider Church** through prayer and practical support to help spread the good news about Jesus throughout the world.

***Worship Schedule***

**9:00 a.m. Sunday Mornings**

***Please join us as we worship our Lord!***

**Homebound Parishioners.** The following parishioners are no longer able to consistently attend worship services. I visit them to remind them that they are loved by God and loved by their community of faith, St. John. Sometimes it is helpful to hear those reminders from someone in addition to me.

Betty Tietz 4602 Barbican Ave., Room 106 Weston, WI 54476 715-393-0215	Ann Kieckhafer 1347 Crystal Avenue Room 236-1 Naperville, IL 60563	Orville Anklam Rennes Health Center 4605 Valdres Springs Ct. #511 Schofield, WI 54476
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**Financial Report for October, 2015**

Income Received	Expenses Paid	Difference	Budget
\$9,427	\$13,307	(\$3,880)	11,684

**Year-to-Date**

Income Received	Expenses Paid	Difference	Budget
\$101,708	\$109,398	(\$7,690)	\$116,840

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**Attendance Report**

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
Average Weekly/October	185	135
Average Weekly/Year-to-Date	130	123

**News from South Africa.** Francinah Seleke, her husband Johannes and her daughter, Precious, visited St. John in 2012. We continue to keep up through phone calls. In our global age, this friendship with Lutheran Christians in South Africa is a great gift. Francinah has been very busy. She is the teacher of 21 young people preparing for Confirmation, scheduled for November 14. Last Sunday was their Harvest Sunday when they bring in vegetables and fruits from their garden for a thanksgiving service. However, it has been very dry in South Africa and they had to go to the Farmers Market to buy the vegetables to bring to church. Not only has it been dry, but it is very very hot. All the churches in Rietpan came together to plan a prayer service for rain. Please pray for rain for South Africa. In addition to her church work, Francinah has been helping a neighbor who was in a car accident and is now paralyzed. She asked that we pray for her neighbor who needs your prayers. Their pastor Rev. Ditibane is fine and continues to work hard in Rietpan and Dreifontein (2-point parish).

**150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.** St. John is looking forward to celebrating its 150th anniversary on June 26, 2016. We would like to begin this celebration with a German dinner after worship service on January 24, 2016. If you would like to help with the dinner on January 24 please call or contact:  
Jan Mueller 715-675-9558 clean up committee  
Joanne Zahn 715-675-6458 decorations/set up  
Sue Harris 715-675-6282 food

In addition we are looking for any church memorabilia you would like to share such as:  
photos/old confirmation pictures  
names and addresses of former members and friends  
any other items from St John you would like to share.

**Reminder!** If you are in the hospital and would like Pastor Dan to visit, **PLEASE CALL** and let him know. Because of privacy issues, the hospital will not notify him or the church that you are there.

**Food Pantry.** The food items collected for the food pantry in December will be donated to The Salvation Army. Your donations are appreciated. If you are able to help out with delivering these items to the local organizations, please contact the church office.

**Council Meeting Minutes.** Copies of the minutes from the most recently held Council meeting are by the mailboxes. Please feel free to pick up a copy. If more are needed, please contact the church office.

**Announcements.** If you would like to have an announcement included in our weekly bulletin or newsletter, please submit the information in writing and put it in either Pastor Dan's mailbox or the administrative assistant's mailbox located in the narthex. If it is more convenient for you, you can submit your announcements via e-mail to [stjohnwausau@msn.com](mailto:stjohnwausau@msn.com). The deadline for submitting announcements for the Sunday bulletin is the Thursday before by 9:00 a.m. The deadline for the newsletter is indicated on the monthly calendar.

### **How Far to Christmas?**

How far is it to Christmas Day?  
The journey's just as long  
as taking time to listen  
to a joyful angel song.  
It's just as far as one can go  
in doing a loving deed  
that helps someone feel better  
or that meets their special need.  
For Christmas is a journey  
that the heart makes every year.  
It starts right with your family  
and those you hold so dear.  
It travels on to strangers  
'round the world to everyone  
with the message that God loves us  
and that's why he's sent his Son!  
---Peggy Ferrell