

### **From Pastor Dan**

Zoos are not my favorite places. They are not bad places; after all, they can educate us about the wonders and majesty of animal creation. But given the choice, I would much rather see those wonders and majesty in their natural habitat. For example, whenever I drive through Yellowstone Park, as I did last summer; I eagerly anticipate encounters with wild animals whether they are bison, bear, elk, or even a red fox. Experiencing animals in the wild is enlightening because we have the chance to see those animals for who they really are. It is not only enlightening but also exciting because those encounters are accompanied by an element of the unknown; the unknown which can be real danger, as is most certainly the case in a close encounter with a bison. Or possibly the excitement of the unknown comes from a tingling sense of realizing I just may not be in total control of my little universe.

However, since we prefer to be in control, we have a tendency to try to tame our animals. And that tendency spills over into the rest of our lives as we desperately try to tame everything into which we come in contact, including our God. Because in so doing we can avoid direct and often uncomfortable encounters with life and we can avoid direct and often uncomfortable encounters with our God. In the book of Exodus, the Bible relates one such close encounter. Moses has returned from the top of Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments in hand and is sharing them with the people. However, they are not alone, God is present; in thunder, in lightning, and in uncomfortable proximity God is present. And the people don't handle the situation well, "...they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us or we will die.'" (Exodus 20:18, 19 NRSV)

We can be like that also can't we? We too might have a tendency to be afraid of a close encounter with God especially in his natural habitat away from the confines of our preconceived notions. Barbara Brown Taylor in *When God is Silent* writes of pastors' reluctance to come face to face with God; a reluctance I think is legitimately shared by us all, "...plenty of us have concluded that we are not up to a direct encounter with God. We want it but we don't want it. We want to be warmed, but not burned, except where God is concerned there is no such thing as safe fire. Safe fire is our own invention. It is what we preach to people, who like us, would rather be bored than scared." (p.66)

Zoos are not bad places but I prefer my encounters with animals to be in their natural habitat; encounters which are more enlightening, more exciting, and obviously more freeing for us all. So as we begin yet another New Year, maybe you can use this possibility to advantage in your journey of faith. Maybe you can look for God from a new vantage point beyond the bars of your theological cage. Maybe you can seek God in the wild. Maybe, this year you can allow an unfettered God to roam free in your life and in so doing experience a closer and a truer encounter with your Lord.

The peace of God be with 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!***

**“Council Corner”**  
**Mike Kluetz**

**Our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year**

***“God’s faithfulness continues through all generations.” – Ps. 100:5b***

By the time you read this it will be within a few days of the exact date 150 years ago that the fledgling *St. Johannes Gemeinde* (Congregation) acquired 1 acre of land on which to establish its first dedicated church building and cemetery (Jan. 9, 1866). Some would translate *Gemeinde* as ‘Community’ – and I think we are truly a Community in Christ, and have been for a century and a half. We are excited to support the upcoming celebration events, and should feel honored to be representing this ‘Community’ as your Council during this historic time. Much more will be communicated about the Anniversary throughout the year, but I’d like to start where we left off, with a portion of then-Pastor Karlen’s message for the Centennial celebration in August 1966 –

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”*

*“In 1866 fifteen families established St. John Lutheran Church as the Holy Spirit inspired them to carry out this Commission. They gave to their children and their children’s children the gift of life through the treasure of the church. In retrospect we see this has been a most cherished gift down through the generations. We see it in this*

*Congregation's growth and development as God continuously blesses His people. The celebration of our Centennial Anniversary is a joyful occasion because we can look back and see that surely 'God has dwelt among us'.*

*"May the services of this Centennial celebration awaken in you a firm resolve to carry out a faithful ministry of the Gospel, which will instruct the young, counsel the inquiring, strengthen the weak, seek the lost and reclaim the erring, comfort the sorrowing, care for the needy, visit the sick, minister to the dying and ever have at heart the spiritual welfare of every individual."*

*-Rev. Marloe Karlen, 1966*

I left the area shortly after that event, and missed most of the next 50 years of St. John's work in ministering to this community, but I can see that you took Pr. Karlen's challenge to heart, and have passed this resolve on to the next generation and given them the 'gift of life through the treasure of the church'. Let's keep it going!

- Mike Kluetz

### **Upcoming Anniversary Events**

#### **German-themed Service and Dinner – January 24<sup>th</sup>**

**Service:** A couple notes – first, the service will be at 10:00 a.m. since there is the dinner immediately following. Second, in addition to a German prayer and hymn(s), we want to re-enact a few of the old traditions. Therefore we are asking that the MEN sit on the RIGHT and the WOMEN on the LEFT of the Sanctuary (this is how it was until the '40's). Though we won't enforce any "dress code", remember that Church was an opportunity to wear one's "Sunday Best". For women, especially on Communion Sundays, this also meant a hat; so if any of you still have a hat around, please wear it!

**Dinner:** In preparation for the German dinner we would like to know who might be able to help out in a few areas. First of all, we need you to sign the sheet in the Narthex indicating if you plan to attend or not, and if you know of any guests who might be interested as well, so that we have an estimate of how many to expect.

Second, we need help with the meal itself. The main meal will be two entrees prepared by us with help from some of the great cooks in our congregation! In addition, we will be looking for people to bring raw vegetables, Jell-o salads, rolls and German desserts. Finally, as always, we need volunteers to help set-up, prep food, serve, and clean up.

Look for these sign-up sheets next to the attendance sheet in the Narthex soon. (Note: in lieu of a fixed charge for this meal, we will be suggesting a free will donation.)

Questions? Call Sue Harris (715-675-6282) or Mike Kluetz (715-218-1357).

### **Memories of St. John**

We are compiling a brief history to include members sharing memories of life at St. John. This could include stories of events at St. John in years past and the present, and what being a member of St. John means to you. If you are interested in sharing your story, please contact Linda Graveen at 715-675-7739 by January 18th.

**Annual Meeting.** Our Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, February 7, 2016, following the 9:00 a.m. worship service. (All confirmed members are eligible to vote at this meeting.) **All articles to be included in the annual report are due to the church office no later than Monday, January 11.**

**Men's Brotherhood Christmas Dinner.** The Men's Brotherhood is planning a post-Christmas meal on **January 17 (note date change!)** after church at Schmidt's Ballroom. Cost will be approximately \$20. Everyone is invited to attend even if you are not a man or a brother. If you are interested, please contact Don Prochnow at 715-675-7398, **BY SUNDAY, JANUARY 3!**

**Long Range Planning Committee.** As a congregation, last spring we voted to undertake several projects to refresh and refurbish our facilities. After voting to proceed, one of our objectives was to complete as many of the projects by Christmas as possible. We have an item or two to finish, but as you look around, please notice:

1. The stonework,
2. The painting in the sanctuary (especially the now former yellow divider wall), the narthex and the entry way,
3. The lighting of the cross,
4. The changes in the parish hall, paint (especially the former yellow divider wall, could be a theme here), doors, baseboard and de-cluttering.

Most of the comments that I've heard suggest that the work that has been done meets the expectations that we outlined at that voter meeting.

My thoughts – as a congregation you have done a wonderful job of supporting the projects that we have undertaken. Thank you. Paint, stone or lights are not what makes a God-loving congregation but improving facilities does say that we care about our place of worship and helps to launch us into our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016.

Contributions to the building fund for Christmas and Sunday, December 27 were \$455.00. Total building fund contributions to date are \$12,116.00. Thank you for your support.

**St. John's Family Tubing.** We are able to tube with other churches on **Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup>** from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at Sylvan Hill. You must be 42” tall to ride a tube with a maximum of one person per tube. No child may ride in the lap of an adult. Cost is \$9.00 for adults (14 years and older) and \$6.50 for youth (up to 13 years old). You must be 42” tall. Come and enjoy the evening with the hill all to ourselves. If you have any questions, contact Schmidty at 715-573-7691.

**6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Jr. High Youth Gathering.** The Synod Jr. High Youth Gathering is **Saturday, February 20<sup>th</sup> – Sunday, February 21<sup>st</sup>**. The “Lane of Life” gathering is at the Riverwalk Hotel in Neenah. Included are a t-shirt, Saturday’s dinner, Sunday’s brunch, music by Dakota Road, speaker Dan Scharnhort, a DJ dance, and all the hotel life they can handle. This annual event for the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade youth offers our youth a meaningful weekend and ends with worship on Sunday. You need to turn in your registration forms and \$40.00 to Schmidty by Sunday, January 17<sup>th</sup>. If you have any questions, contact Schmidty at 715-573-7691.

**9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Mission Trip 2016.** Our 2016 mission trip will be **Saturday, June 25<sup>th</sup> – Friday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016** – Youthworks! At the Red Lake Reservation in Minnesota. Cost is \$225.00. Our serving will be painting, cleaning, yard work or other simple work projects and planning and leading kids programming for children in the community, including Bible lessons, games, crafts and reading. We only have ten openings for youth. You need to turn in a registration form and \$75.00 deposit to Schmidty as soon as possible to reserve your spot. This is a great opportunity for our high school youth to serve others. If you have any questions, contact Schmidty at 715-573-7691.

**Community Shabbat Service.** Mt. Sinai Congregation is inviting groups and individuals to their Community Shabbat service on Friday, January 15, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. You are welcome to attend and experience a Jewish Shabbat service along with our confirmation classes. The Jewish temple is located at 910 W. Randolph Street here in Wausau. We will meet there.

**The Sisterhood of St. John.** Thank you to everyone who attended the Christmas get-together at Carmelo's Italian Restaurant. Thank you also to those who brought items to be donated to the Women's Community and to Sue Harris for delivering those items. Thank you to Linda Graveen who was in charge of the white elephant gift exchange. On January 26 at 6:30 p.m. (weather permitting) we will put together fleece blankets. If you have any questions, contact Marlene at 715-675-2598.

**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

Ellen Kruit  
3312 Terrace Court #19  
Wausau, WI 54401

**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 January will be donated to The Women’s Community Center. 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.

**Financial Report for November, 2015**

Income Received	Expenses Paid	Difference	Budget
\$9,854	\$10,948	(\$1,094)	11,684

**Year-to-Date**

Income Received	Expenses Paid	Difference	Budget
\$111,662	\$120,340	(\$8,678)	\$128,524

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**Attendance Report**

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
Average Weekly/November	106	120
Average Weekly/Year-to-Date	119	123