

St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, ELCA
5304 North 44th Avenue
Wausau, WI 54401

Telephone: (715-675-6950)

THE MESSENGER

December 2025



From Pastor Maggie

Beloved Community,

Advent blessings to you all this December. As joyful and wonderful as December can be, it can also be a hard month. It's the last month of the year (even if you, like me, can't believe we are at the end of yet another year) and it's cold. The month of December always challenges us, inviting us into a world of contrasts. The days grow shorter, shadows stretch longer, and yet our hearts turn toward the promise of light. We gather in sanctuaries lit with candles, string bright lights across our homes and streets, and proclaim again that *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it"* (John 1:5).

Advent acknowledges that life is never only dark or only light – rather life carries varying rays of both brightness and shadows. Insisting we look for God within the full spectrum of light – searching for the brightness that bursts from the shadowed corners of our hearts.

This year, Keenan and I stood outside on a few cold evenings, gazing upward as the aurora borealis danced across the sky. Those sweeping waves of color—greens, purples, pinks, even flashes of red—startled us with their beauty. They reminded me that some of the most stunning light we ever witness appears only when the night is at its deepest. The aurora doesn't wait for daylight. It needs the darkness to be seen.

Advent is much the same. The miracle of Advent is not simply that Christ comes, but that Christ comes in the dark. Born on one of the longest nights of the year, entering a weary world aching for hope and filled with fears. God does not wait for perfect circumstances or bright skies. God comes when our shadows grow long and the world grows dim—when we need light the most.

As the kids shared during our First Sunday in Advent Children's Sermon: you **can** see in the dark, you just need a flashlight!

May you find that flashlight this Advent season—maybe as a sudden brightness, maybe as a gentle glow. And if you are weary searching for it, may God's surprising, shimmering light find you.

*With Love & Gratitude,
Pastor Maggie Westaby*

“Council Corner”

Happy Winter St. John!

Some would say it's here way too early, but I think it's right on time. The last few years, we wondered if we would be fortunate enough to have a white Christmas, I have my fingers crossed that Mother Nature will not heat things up and we will enjoy this lovely white blanket until spring.

There is a lot going on this month, so please take a look at the calendar and Pastor Maggie's information. I don't know how she keeps it all straight, but she does a fantastic job! Council has wrapped up the year and boy was it a year! I can't thank everyone enough for the time and dedication put in to all the events and happenings that took place throughout the year.

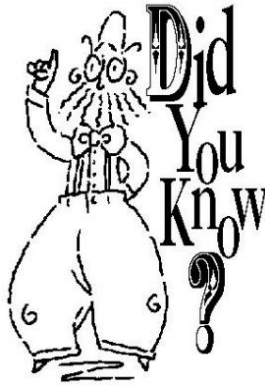
The annual meeting is set for February 1st, following services. We will be voting on the name change due to our merger with Immanuel. If you have questions or concerns, I invite you to discuss with a council member or Pastor Maggie. The annual meeting will be for voting, not for discussion as there is a two month advance notice leading up to this. Please read Pastor's "Did You Know" for insight.

Please plan on attending the Children's Christmas program on December 21st, service at 10:00. Potluck to follow, can't wait to see what Kim has come up with this year!

Lastly, I encourage everyone to slow down and enjoy the festivities and magic of Christmas, there's so much going on all the time, we blink and it's Christmas Eve. Please take time to enjoy your family and friends and always remember Jesus is the Reason for the Season.

From my family to yours, we wish you all a Joyous Christmas season and a Blessed New Year!

Jennifer Schwede
Council President



❖ **Immanuel means “God with us”**

➤ ***If we embrace the name St. John Immanuel – it would mean, St. John God is with us.***

- ***Immanuel is the direct Hebrew translation vs. Emmanuel is the transliteration from Greek in the New Testament.***

- ❖ **In our surrounding area there are 7 St. John churches!** That’s a little confusing, especially since you have to type “St. John Evangelical” into google maps for our church to show up.
- ❖ St. John’s official name is: *St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church ELCA (Village Of Maine) Wausau, WI Inc.* – that is a really long name!
- ❖ **There are no other St. John Immanuel Churches in Wisconsin!**
- ❖ Immanuel has donated substantial finances to our congregation. In addition to general funds, there are two scholarship funds and an endowment fund. Embracing the name St. John Immanuel continues to honor the many ways they have contributed.
- ❖ ***Changing our name to St. John Immanuel provides a way for us all to faithfully live into our merger – recognizing both our histories – while moving forward together sharing God’s love.***
- ❖ Join us for a discussion about changing our name to St. John Immanuel on Sunday, January 11th, 2026.
- ❖ **We will vote on the name change at our Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 1st, 2026.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS & SAVE THE DATE

Noisy offering! The 2nd Sunday of the month! Next Noisy offering: Sunday, December 14th bring your coins (bills also accepted 😊).

Money will be raised and donated quarterly. This noisy offering will go to: *Share Your Holidays*.

Monday, December 1st at 6:30 p.m. The Book Club will discuss *The Book of Longings* by Sue Monk Kidd.

Monday, December 8th at 6:30 p.m. Blue Christmas. A prayerfully cultivated service for those who have lost loved ones, and for those who find the holidays to be a lonely time.

Tuesday, December 9th at 5:00 p.m. St. John's Sisterhood Ladies Christmas Gathering. Please consider joining the Sisterhood crew for our annual Christmas gathering at 2510 Restaurant. "Happy Hour" starts at 5:00 p.m. with dinner to follow at 5:45 p.m. As per tradition, we will be collecting non-perishable items for the Women's Community (toiletries, toothpaste, shampoo/conditioner, etc.) and holding our annual white elephant gift exchange... so start looking in those storage rooms and basements (this will be after dinner – don't forget to wrap your 'gift'!). Sign-up sheet in the Narthex.

Thursday, December 18th at 5:30 p.m. Candlelit Shepherds Meal.

Doors open at 5:00, dinner starts at 5:30. Join us in a simple Shepherds Meal of soup, bread, dried fruit, nuts and cheeses by candlelight. You are invited to bring wine to share with your brothers and sisters in Christ. After our meal, we will move into the sanctuary where we will watch "Journey to Bethlehem," a 2023 "live-action Christmas musical adventure... that weaves classic Christmas melodies with humor, faith and new pop songs in a retelling of the greatest story ever told." \$10/participant paid that evening - money remaining after cost will be donated to the Salvation Army. Sign-up in the narthex. *This is intended for adults and older/mature children.*

Sunday, December 21st Worship @ 10:00 a.m. Children's Christmas

Program – Christmas Lights! *Fellowship Potluck to follow.* Sign up in the Narthex.

Sunday, December 21st at 5:30 p.m. Christmas Pizza & PJ Party. Pizza served at 5:30, "Charlie Brown Christmas" from 6:00 - 8. Kids are welcome to bring a friend! **The event is free, please sign up in the Narthex so we have a head count for dinner.**

Wednesday, December 24th Christmas Eve Worship 2:00 p.m. 4:00 p.m. 6:30 p.m. *Please note we are offering an additional service this year at 2:00*

Friday, January 2nd 5:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. Winter Youth Night for all Middle & High School Students! Pizza dinner at 5:00 p.m. followed by lots of fun: Broomball Outside (bring boots & warm clothes), Church Scavenger Hunt, Taylor Swift vs Lamentations Trivia, Minute-To-Win-It Games, Ice Cream Social, Movie vs Gaming vs Board Games!

Open Council Positions for 2026: President, Treasurer, Trustee, Worship. The current Secretary, Rick Nevers, plans to run for Treasurer (though we continue to accept nominations for Treasurer). Because the Secretary position will be vacated a year early, we will appoint Patti Busche in 2026 (who has agreed to this) to finish out the Secretary term. This way we will ensure the proper rotation of Executive Council Chairs. The Church Council feels this is the best decision for St. John to ensure a smooth transition with the Merger process.

Kwik Trip Gift Cards Sign-up in the Fellowship Hall or on our website! Help support St. John when buying groceries, gas, or getting your car washed at Kwik Trip! <https://stjohnwausau.org/fundraising/>



****Winners of the Chili Raffle****

Thank you to all who donated prizes. Here are the Winners:

There is Always Something to be Thankful For donated by Brenda Tesch	Sue Rakow
Blanket and \$30 Grebe's gift card donated by Jennifer and Bill Schwede	Jeanne Wunsch
Blessings fall décor donated by Rose Rosenau	Patti Busche
Grapevine wreath donated by Everett and Bev Schmidt	Barb Nass
Lantern and \$20 Briq's gift card donated by Jennifer and Bill Schwede	Reina Cottrell
Aloe vera basket donated by Barbara Nass	Jan Carlson
Fall basket donated by Barbara Nass	Dan Zernicke
Buddy heater donated by Patti Bricko	Amanda Grueneberg
Wisconsin-opoly donated by Pete and Phyllis Seubert	Jake Johnson
Placemats set donated by Jody Gehrke	Holly Westaby
Old coins donated by Pete and Phyllis Seubert	1 Dan Zernicke 2 Randy Graveen 3 Lane Bahr
Fall décor donated by Pastor Maggie	Emmie Grueneberg
Love Lives Here sign donated by Brenda Tesch	Karen Voigt
Hello Kitty backpack and beach towel donated by Mike and Sara Stubbe	Vivian Lauersdorf
Nascar #66 donated by Louie Reissman	Bill Schwede
Pint of honey donated by Lee Sillars	Lorie Anderson
Quart of honey donated by Lee Sillars	Lane Bahr
Nascar #55 donated by Louie Reissman	Ryker Cottrell
Puzzle book donated by Linda and Randy Graveen	1 Nate Schmidt 2 Nate Schmidt 3 Emmie Grueneberg
Blanket donated by Holly and Dan Westaby	Briella Grueneberg
Bloody mary basket donated by Perry and Shelley Kufahl	Mary McDonell
\$25 wine box donated by Jeanne Klinger	1 Jim Nolan 2 Don Voelker
\$50 cash donated by Sue Harris	Nancy Frostman
\$20 Walgreens gift card donated by Rose Rosenau	Nancy Frostman
\$25 County Market gift card donated by County Market	Randy Graveen
\$25 Palms gift card donated by Lorie Anderson and Jim Borelli	Don Voelker
\$50 Texas Roadhouse gift card donated by Randy and Debbie Knapp	Randy Graveen
\$20 cash donated by Mike and Sara Stubbe	Ryder Schindler
\$25 Townline Market gift card donated by Patti Busche	1 Mike Stubbe 2 Phyllis Seubert
Fresh cut Christmas tree donated by Louie Reissman	1 Sue Harris 2 Sue Harris
\$25 VISA gift card donated by Connie and Brian Nowak	1 Bev Schmidt 2 Kenzie Cottrell

Coffee goodies donated by Lorie Anderson and Jim Borelli	Kenzie Cottrell
Raspberry jam donated by Linda and Randy Graveen: 2 Brian Nowak 3 Amy Marquardt 4 Lorie Anderson 5 Mary McDonell	1 Crystal Zernicke 6 Mary McDonell
Beet jelly donated by Linda and Randy Graveen: 2 Barb Nass, 3 Lee Sillars, 4 Rose Rosenau, 5 Connie Nowak,	1 Barb Nass 6 Barb Nass
Fall relaxation basket donated by Pete and Phyllis Seubert	Joanne Diestelhorst
Fall fun basket donated by Pete and Phyllis Seubert	Briella Grueneberg
Robot kits donated by Greg and Nicole Melander:	1 Chloe Zernicke 2 Chloe Zernicke 3 Irene Nowak
Two fish fries donated by Palm's Supper Club	Lee Sillars
Epoxy flower holders Donated by Ann Ohrmundt: 2 Aleah Oestreich, 3 Crystal Zernicke, 4 Maci Landwehr, 5 Emma Nowak	1 Briah Landwehr
Epoxy tea light holders Donated by Ann Ohrmundt	1 Patti Busche 2 Amy Mielke 3 Jake Johnson
Coffee basket donated by Joseph Duginski and Kaylee Sischo	Lane Bahr
Epoxy bowl donated by Ann Ohrmundt	Chris Reetz
Man's stuff donated by Joseph Duginski and Kaylee Sischo	Kenzie Cottrell
Wine and glasses donated by Joseph Duginski and Kaylee Sischo	Jan Carlson
Americana décor donated by Tim and Ann Ohrmundt	Bruce Knox
Charcuterie board donated by Tim and Ann Ohrmundt	1 Kenzie Cottrell 2 Kenzie Cottrell 3 Bill Schwede
Cribbage board donated by Tim and Ann Ohrmundt	1 Sue Harris 2 Kenzie Cottrell 3 Greg Melander
Cutting board donated by Tim and Ann Ohrmundt	Kenzie Cottrell
Epoxy river board donated by Ann Ohrmundt	1 Greg Melander 2 Kenzie Cottrell
Quilt donated by Joe Duginski	Jennifer Schwede
\$100 2510 gift card donated by Louie Reissman	Shelli Jenkins
\$100 photo session donated by Photography by Mandy Rae	Kaylee Sischo
Quilt donated by Karen Ohrmundt	Phyllis Seubert

Candy cups won by: Vivian Lauersdorf, Levi Hirn, Briella Grueneberg, Cash Herning, Reina Cottrell, Laney Johnson, Wyatt Hirn, Eleanor Grueneberg, Lucy Nass, Easton Oelke, Jake Johnson, Hunter Zernicke, Henry Marquardt, Chloe Zernicke, Emelia Grueneberg, Aleah Oestreich, Eddie LaVake, Ben Grueneberg, Ryker Cottrell, and Lyla Lauersdorf.

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: Jennifer Schwede – 715-432-6079; jenniferschwede@aol.com

Vice President: Karen Ohrmundt – 715-370-0645; tkohrmundt@frontier.com

Treasurer: Perry Kufahl – 715-675-1383; 715-409-0524; pnskufahl@outlook.com

Secretary: Rick Nevers – 715-574-0288; rlnevers57@gmail.com

Trustee: Ryan Landwehr – 715-212-3540; ryanlandwehr@aol.com

Trustee: Scott Oestreich – 715-675-4360; scottsmachinellc@gmail.com

Evangelism: Connie Nowak – 715-675-1577; bcdenowak@gmail.com

Fellowship: Jeanne Klinger – 715-675-9939 Jeanjam9939@gmail.com

Education: Greg Grudznske – 715-212-6529; gregorylinda@gmail.com

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

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.

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Live Streaming and Photography Notice. When you enter a St. John Church service or event, you will be entering an area where photography, video and audio recording or live streaming may occur. If you prefer not to be recognized on camera, the back row inside the church is not within viewing distance of a camera and communion will typically be only on a wide shot where it may be difficult to recognize congregants. Parents, please note our children's sermons are being recorded and live streamed. If you do not want your child to be recognized on camera, please refrain from having them participate.

Attendance Report

	2025	2024
Average Weekly/November	126	110
Average Weekly/Year-To-Date	98	97

Homebound Parishioners. The following parishioners are no longer able to consistently attend worship services. Pastor Maggie visits 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.

Carol Fitzke Wood Aven 1821 N 4th Ave #311b Wausau, WI 54401	Marlene Opichka Renaissance Sr. Living 4602 Barbican Ave. #105 Weston, WI 54476	Harley Goetsch Rennes Health/Rehab Ctr. 4810 Barbican Avenue Weston, WI 54476
Jim & Barbara Leffin Primrose 2100 Townline Rd Apt. 217 Wausau, WI 54403	Fritz Poeske Amethyst Health of Wausau 1010 E. Wausau Ave. #84 Wausau, WI 54403	Mary Anne Klinker Rennes Health/Rehab Ctr. 4810 Barbican Ave #301 Weston, WI 54476
Alene Howe Acorn Hill Apartment 430 Orbiting Dr. #19 Mosinee, WI 54455	Dorothy Westfall 4205 Fleet Dr. Wausau, WI 54401	Marlene Bahr 238456 N 84 th Ave. Wausau, WI 54401
Jeff Groethe Riverview Tower 500 Grand Ave. Wausau, WI 54401	Joan Bonstead Forest Park Village 2901 N. 7th Street #W503 Wausau, WI 54403	Carol Hettinga Bell Tower Residence 1500 O'Day St. Rm. 307 Merrill, WI 54452
Judy Blanchfield Mt. View Care Center of Wausau 2400 Marshall Street, Rm #4007 Wausau, WI 54403	Thelma Bursik Primrose Retirement Community 2100 Townline Rd, Apt #101 Wausau, WI 54403	Ann Kurth 2806 Polzer Drive Wausau, WI 54401
Jeannette Petterson 905 E Grant Street #10 Marshfield, WI 54449	Carolyn Viergutz Fairway Knoll N112 W17500 Mequon Rd. Germantown, WI 53022	





December Birthdays

12/01	Drew Detert	12/19	Rev. Doug Helling
12/01	Brenda Tesch	12/19	Ken Parsch
12/03	Thomas Ohrmundt	12/19	Jeremy Switlick
12/04	Robbie Haroldson	12/20	Braxtin Borth
12/04	Lisa Scobell	12/21	Carol Hettinga
12/05	Ryder Schindler	12/22	Ashley Parsch
12/05	Hudson Voigt	12/22	Rebecca Voelker
12/06	Dan Detert	12/23	Jane Reilly-Smith
12/07	Bruce Knox	12/23	Madison Voelker
12/07	Sarah Sala	12/24	Dan Graveen
12/08	Jesse Pagel	12/24	Cherish Oestreich
12/10	Tari Harter	12/24	Jacob Paulsen
12/11	Maci Landwehr	12/25	Barbara Nass
12/12	Avery Oestreich	12/27	Michael Dellenbach
12/13	Glenn Rusch	12/27	Debra Maley
12/14	Levi Ohrmundt	12/27	Linda Swenson
12/14	Luke Saari	12/28	James La Vake
12/15	Holly Westaby	12/29	Alex Zahn
12/16	Mark Anderson	12/30	Jill Cohrs
12/17	Lane Hoeft	12/30	Jesse Hein
12/17	John Rakow	12/30	Joyce Lohr
12/18	Rebecca Case	12/30	Luciana Nass
12/18	Pete Seubert	12/30	Tammi Walter
12/18	Serena Ugoretz	12/31	Mary McDonell
12/19	Andrew Harter		

December Anniversaries

12/05	Tomas & Karen Ohrmundt
12/18	Hannah & Neumann
12/26	Bob & Kara Rode
12/29	Chad & Tammi Walter

Sunday School / Confirmation Schedules

2025 – 2026



December 2025

Sunday School

- 12/7 Christmas Program Practice
- 12/14 Christmas Program Practice
- 12/20 Saturday - Christmas Program Practice 9:30am-10:30am
- 12/21 *Christmas Program* 10am
- 12/28 No Sunday School

Confirmation Schedule

- 12/3 Class
- 12/7 Community Dinner First United Methodist Church 3:30 – 5:00
- 12/10 Class
- 12/17 Class
- 12/24 No Class – Christmas Eve
- 12/31 No Class – New Years Eve



Meaning of Christmas

Christmas is a Christian holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, which is also a worldwide cultural event. For Christians, it is a religious observance of Jesus's birth, which signifies God becoming human. Beyond its religious meaning, Christmas is also a cultural phenomenon marked by traditions like gift-giving, decorating trees, and spending time with loved ones, often including secular and commercial elements.

Religious meaning

- Celebration of Jesus's birth: Christmas is a sacred holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, a central figure in Christianity. Christians believe his birth was a fulfillment of prophecy and a pivotal event where God entered human history.***
- Incarnation: For believers, Christmas celebrates the concept of incarnation, where God took the form of a human in the birth of Jesus.***
- Sacrifice and salvation: Many Christians also connect the meaning of Christmas to Jesus's subsequent sacrifice on the cross to save people from their sins, as expressed in verses like John 3:16.***

Cultural and secular meaning

- Festive traditions: Christmas has evolved into a global cultural event with popular traditions, including decorating trees, exchanging gifts, and sharing meals with family and friends.***
- Winter celebration: The timing of Christmas on December 25th coincides with ancient winter festivals that celebrated the return of the sun, and many current traditions are rooted in these historical celebrations of light and rebirth.***
- Giving and gratitude: For many, Christmas is a time for generosity and showing appreciation for one another through gifts and acts of kindness. It is a time to connect with loved ones and celebrate community.***

Last Envelope Reminder!!

To be better stewards of our resources, we are changing our envelope system at St. John. Due to an increase in offerings through Vanco, envelope needs have significantly decreased.

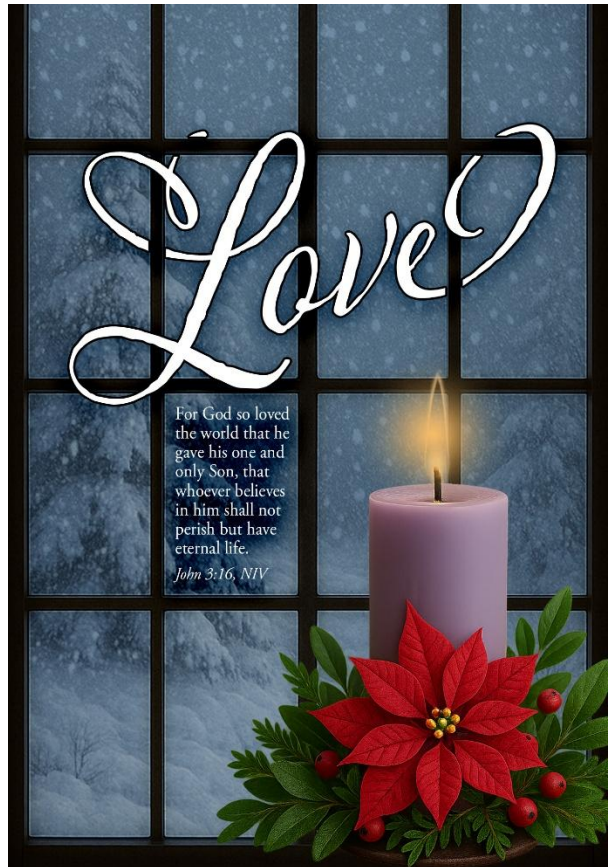
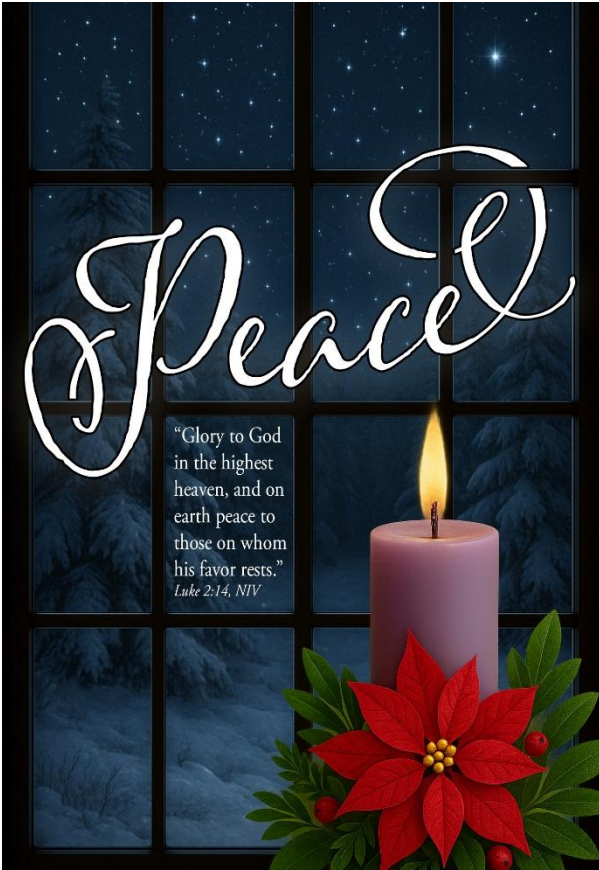
Please let us know if you would like envelopes for 2026 or if you prefer to give through Vanco.

Everyone who wants envelopes will be given envelopes; we just need to know who those are. Please email stjohnwausau@gmail.com or call St. John 715-675-6950 if you would like envelopes.

All that we have is a gift from God. Rooted in Christ, we give joyfully and generously—not out of obligation, but in gratitude for God’s grace. Your gifts support the ministry we share and help Christ’s love reach our neighbors near and far.

Thank you for your faithful giving!





Worship Schedule

Sunday Mornings

9:00 a.m.

Sunday School

10:15 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.

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



Pastor Maggie Westaby

St. John Office: (715) 675-6950

Cell Phone: 1(608) 345-9616

E-mail:

Pastor.maggie.westaby@gmail.com

E-mail: stjohnwausau@gmail.com

Web Address: stjohnwausau.org