



St. John's Newsletter

December 2021



God's Grace Never Ends

In those days, John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near!" Yes, this is he of whom this was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: A voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord. Make his paths straight."

Matthew 3:1-3 - EHV

Over the years, I've become used to the commercialism of Christmas. I almost expect people to talk about the warm, fuzzy emotions of the season and the importance of gifts at the expense of talking about Christ. We regularly listen to songs talking about jingle bells and frosty snowmen, only to hear about Jesus' birth on occasion.

I've been somewhat surprised recently that retailers have moved in to now capitalize on Advent. In the past it was enough to have a little window to open up on an Advent calendar or, at best, a piece of waxy chocolate. Now you have Advent calendar with a new micro-brew, glass of wine, Lego toy, or premium chocolate for each day of Advent.

I'm not entirely sure why this is the case. Is it just because stores want to sell more? Is it because people want Advent to feel more special? Are they just trying to heighten the anticipation of Christmas? Regardless of the reasons that people are buying and selling more during Advent, we need to make sure that we never lose the focus of this season.

Are you looking for something to do to make the season of Advent special? Do you want to prepare yourself for Christmas? Don't head out to the store. Instead, open your Bible and take to heart John's timeless Advent message, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near!" and "Prepare the way of the Lord. Make his paths straight."

While Christmas is celebratory, Advent is preparatory. It's a time to reflect on all those sins we've conveniently ignored for so long. It's a time to stop living on autopilot. Ask yourself, What bad habits have I fallen into? What good habits have I ignored? The more honest you are with yourself, the more you'll cherish God's gift of a Savior at that first Christmas. The more thorough you are in your contemplation, the more your heart will be filled with awe when you get to celebrate Jesus' birth.

I should fully disclose that we have not one, but three chocolate Advent calendars sitting in our pantry, waiting to be slowly opened as the days of Advent unfold. That's not necessarily bad. The solution isn't necessarily throwing away whatever Advent purchases you've made. Just make sure that you don't ignore the more important—and far more beneficial work of Advent—preparing your heart to celebrate the greatest gift this world has ever seen! God's blessings as you enjoy this special season.

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ALTAR GUILD

Kathy Schabo	920-427-2990
Betty Randall	920-858-9918
Wendy and Natalie Raschka	920-460-9373

GREETERS

8:00	Kristine Thomas and Jane Cleven	12/5
10:30	Eileen Defferding and Nancy Bruhn	
8:00	Pat Schabo and Carrie Cleven	12/12
10:30	Stephen and Katie Sielaff	
8:00	Mitch and Ginger Kobussen	12/19
10:30	Phyllis Gresens and Sheryll Techlin	
1:00pm	Charlie and Rose Miller	12/24
3:00pm	Jeff and Cheryl Bohl	
5:00pm	Dan and Kathy Kreutzman	
7:00pm	Dennis and Kris Neumann	
9:00am	Kristine Thomas and Linda Sipple	12/25
8:00	Gary and Kathy Schabo	12/26
10:30	Betty Randall and Diane Schabo	
6:30pm	Bob and Lynn Ziegert	12/31

INFORMATION ABOUT PASTOR MATTHEW SCHOELL

Pastor was born in Milwaukee but raised in the town of Libertyville, IL, a suburb about 30 miles north of Chicago. During this time he attended grade school at St. John's, Libertyville. Heidie was born in Libertyville, IL but raised in Lake Geneva, WI where she attended grade school at St. John's, Burlington, WI. Both Pastor Schoell and Heidie attended high school at Shoreland Lutheran, in Somers, WI. They also attended Martin Luther College together in New Ulm, MN. After college, Pastor finished schooling at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, WI, which included a vicar year in Hastings, MN.

After graduating from MLC Heidie taught grade school at Trinity Lutheran, in Waco, NE. After seminary, Pastor Schoell was assigned to Zion in Rhinelander, WI. During this time Pastor Schoell and Heidie were (finally) married and Hudson was born. After six years, God called him to serve at St. Matthew's in Winona, MN. Here both Emmaline and Cody were born. During this time Emmaline was diagnosed with a mutation on the BCL11B gene which makes some things, like talking, difficult for her. Even though she can't talk yet, she's happy to smile and wave at you. Both Emmaline and Hudson now attend school at St. Paul's in Appleton.

Pastor and Hudson both enjoy learning about trains and model railroads. Heidie enjoys baking and cooking.

Hudson is also a big fan of playing games on our Nintendo Wii. Emmaline enjoys playing outside and her toy kitchen. Cody just learned to walk and happily eats everything we feed him (or he finds on the floor). The whole family spends time together outside in the backyard (with the chickens), gardening, playing in the snow, checking out parks, reading, and playing games together. They look forward to getting to know the St. John family and exploring the Appleton area.

BIBLE CLASSES On Sunday mornings we are studying the book of Galatians. This book is a beautiful review of the key teaching of justification that we are saved by God's grace and not by any of our works.

Our Monday/Tuesday Class is being led by Pastor Schoell.

MID-WEEK ADVENT SERVICES Our Advent mid-week services will be on December 1st, 8th and 15th at 10:30 am and 6:30 pm. Plan to attend these mid-week services as we prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of our Savior. This year's theme will be "Where Do I Begin?" We will look at three of the Gospel writers that God used to show how God brought us salvation.

December 1 — Matthew: "Just As It Is written"

December 8 — Mark: "God for Us"

December 15 — Luke: "A Matter of History"

CHRISTMAS FOR KIDS Our Christmas for Kids will be held Saturday, December 11th from 9:00 – 12:00. All children ages 3 – 6th Grade are invited. The true meaning of Christmas will be taught, snacks will be served, and a light lunch will be served. If you will be attending or would like to help in anyway, please sign up on the sheet at Church.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS SERVICE Our Children's Christmas Service will be similar to last year's. Our children will sing parts of two Christmas hymns and recite a few Bible Passages together as one large group at the beginning of the service before sitting back in the pews with their parents. The date will be the same as it always is—the Sunday before Christmas—December 19th at 8:00 and 10:30 am. The children will sing and recite during both services.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP We plan to hold our Christmas Eve Worship services at 1:00, 3:00, 5:00 and 7:00 pm. We are looking for a few men to usher at the 1:00 pm service. Please contact the church office at 920-733-1307 or email church.office@stjohn-appleton.org if you want to usher for the 1:00 pm service.

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TIMES OF WORSHIP FOR CHRISTMAS

Sunday 12/19 8:00 am Children's Christmas and Advent Service
 10:30 am Children's Christmas and Advent Service

Monday 12/20 6:30 pm Advent 4 Service

Friday 12/24 1:00 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
 3:00 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
 5:00 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
 7:00 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Saturday 12/25 9:00 am Christmas Day with Lord's Supper

Sunday 12/26 8:00 am Worship Service w/Lord's Supper
 10:30 am Worship Service w/Lord's Supper

Monday 12/27 **No Worship Service**

Friday 12/31 6:30 pm New Year's Eve w/Lord's Supper

CHRISTMAS DECORATING We will decorate the church for Christmas on Saturday, December 11th at 8:00 am. All are welcome to come and help. Please contact Pat Gowey at 920-595-0056 if you have any questions.

CHRISTMAS CARDS are available for purchase. The boxes of cards will be on a table in the narthex, along with a container for your payment. All boxes will be \$5 each and it will be self-serve. There will also be individual cards in the spinner rack for 50 cents each. The cards will be out every day if you'd rather look at them on a day other than Sunday. All the cards we have will be on the table so when they are gone, they are gone.

ADOPT-A-FAMILY We will be adopting families for Christmas from our congregation. If you would like to give a monetary gift, the money will be used to purchase appropriate gifts. Please give any money to Pastor Gartner or Pastor Schoell by **Friday, December 10th**.

WELS APPLE VALLEY FOOD PANTRY The pantry thanks everyone who donated to or prayed for the pantry this year. For December, the pantry needs canned vegetables (corn, green beans, peas), jam, cookies, all crackers, canned tomato products, cake and brownie mixes and frostings, hamburger, tuna and chicken helper meals, hand and body lotions, men's and women's deodorants, household cleaning products (toilet bowl cleaners and kitchen and bathroom cleaning products), Kleenex and paper towels. Please drop items off at church by **Friday, Dec. 10, 2021**.

WOMEN OF FAITH/MEN'S BIBLE STUDY All families of the congregation are invited to join us Wednesday, December 15th at 11:30 am for a potluck lunch for Christmas and to welcome Pastor and Heidie Schoell and their family. A sign-up sheet is in the entryway for you to indicate what you plan to bring.

SHUT-INS Following is a list of St. John shut-in members if you would like to send them a Christmas greeting card.

Ann Bruneau, 721 E. Bronson Road, Seymour, WI 54165
 Arlene Hahn, 5800 Pennsylvania Ave. #238, Appleton, WI 54914
 James Main, N5086 Rexford Road, Shiocton, WI 54170
 Verna McGlin, 410 E. Mary Street, Black Creek, WI 54106
 Sandra Peterson, W6298 Midway Road, Hortonville, WI 54944
 David Rahmlow, N4135 Meade St., Appleton, WI 54913
 Pastor Gerhard and Lois Schapekahm, 825 E. Greenfield Drive, #109, Little Chute, WI 54140
 Nancy Schroeder, 1781 Copperstone Pl, Neenah, WI 54956
 William Schroeder, W3497 County Road O, Freedom, WI 54913
 Roland Stuedemann, 131 E North Water St, #4413, Neenah, WI 54956
 Joyce Wichman, W4558 Pleasant Road, Appleton, WI 54913
 Marcie Wright, W4271 Wege Road, Appleton, WI 54913

GIFTS TO OUR LORD DURING OCTOBER

		Expenses
General Fund	\$30,015.00	\$20,804.00
General Fund Year to Date	\$320,894.00	\$278,166.00
Building Fund	\$4,551.00	
Land Development Fund	\$265.00	
Missions (WELS)	\$2,724.50	
Christian Family Solutions	\$670.00	
Institutional Ministries	\$680.00	
FVLHS Operational	\$875.00	
FVLHS Debt Retirement	\$995.00	

***"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income."
 1 Corinthians 16:2***