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# January Chatterbox Newsletter



## Go And "Rest"

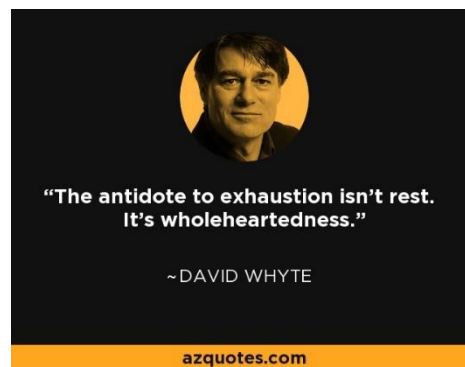
Living through the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have recognized that many of the "demands and obligations" we felt tied to in our lives "pre-Covid" are actually self-constructed and self-imposed expectations of how to accomplish the things we wish to see in our lives. We have found that we don't have to drive 40 minutes, through traffic, into an office every day to accomplish the workload needed to achieve our desired outcomes. And the time that we spent having to be away from our homes "pre-Covid," can now be spent running a load of laundry, or mowing the lawn, or playing a card game with our kids, who also now have more time at home instead of being scheduled to the hilt with traveling to private lessons, and multiple school functions. All of a sudden, we do, in fact, have more hours in a day to accomplish all the things that "need" to be done.

Time, and the demands we place on it, seem much more flexible as we look forward, realizing that we have much more control over how we use our time than we ever thought. Our expectations of ourselves and how we relate to one another and the rest of the world are changing too. The very notion of "rest" is changing, and this reframing of "rest," or Sabbath living, is exactly the liberating expression Jesus speaks to in much of his ministry.

In the sixth chapter of Mark, Jesus and the disciples intentionally take a break, away from the crowds, to physically rest, but, Mark tells us in verse 34 "As he (Jesus) went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things." And then, again in verse 56 "And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed."

Jesus had compassion for them because "they were like sheep without a shepherd." Jesus does not engage these people out of obligation or demand, but rather from a sense of mercy, or shared humanity. This ministry **with** others is not work that fulfills a daily quota, but rather is the very purpose of his being - joining **with** God, in God's mission for creation. When you are **acting with** others, rather than **acting for** others, your activity is not work, but rather your very identity. It's is living into who you were created to be. And being most truly yourself, in a world seeking authenticity and fullness, is the "rest" Jesus is offering, not only here, but throughout the narrative gospels we have in our scripture.

Matthew's Gospel (11:28-30), shares this same sense of *me all who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest* not about being left alone, or not having to work. True rest in these comes through being in relationship with everything and everyone engaging the world, in order to participate with God in the ongoing of God. Healing, curing, feeding, and teaching are activities of with the world that bring us most fully together as creation, and allows expression of the Kingdom of God among us. For Jesus, this activity It's a rest from all the misguided activities done out of obligation, fear of one another, and instead allows us to enter the flow of creation continues creating. When you are not working double-time, swimming



"rest." "Come to "Rest" here is scriptures around you, creative activity engagement for the fullest actually is rest. selfishness, or as God upstream

against the current, just laying back and allowing yourself to move with the direction of the ongoing current can feel just like heaven. This is what Jesus shows us throughout his ministry. This reframing of our expectations of who we are and how we relate to one another is the transforming power of our Gospel, opening up for us, the very present possibility of the Kingdom of God.

The Poet David Whyte says, “*The antidote for exhaustion is not rest, but wholeheartedness.*” In this New Year, may we follow Jesus’ lead into wholeheartedness, and in this, find our true rest.

Peace – Pastor Chris



At the start of the new year, we are pushed to get organized, exercise more, and make New Year’s resolutions. How do we take rest among all this? What does it mean to be like Jesus? It means taking time to pause, rest, and embrace the day. That might mean taking a nap, getting together with old friends, reading a good book, or enjoying the arts as we recognize God makes all things new.

**Questions to consider:**

- What brings you rest?
- What does Sabbath mean for you? What does it look like in your life?
- Let GO, what are you going to give up this year so that you can rest?

**Prayer:** O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils and joys unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Suggested Song:** In the Lord, I’ll be Ever Thankful (Taize hymn)



**Annual Meeting**

St. John’s Annual meeting has been set for after the service on Sunday, January 28, 2024. All committee reports need to be emailed or given to Pat Cuda by January 18<sup>th</sup>. Financial audits will be done the week of January 15<sup>th</sup>, so please get your books to Brian Bunkers.

**St. John's Lutheran Church Council  
December 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

**Opening**

St. John's Lutheran Church Council met with Pastor Chris, Brian Bunkers, Larry Wennekamp, Dave Groteluschen, Denise Stevenson and Tracey Moore present. Bethany Wilke was absent. President Tracey Moore called the meeting to order. Pastor Chris led the Council with an opening prayer.

**Minutes/Financial Reports**

Dave Groteluschen made a motion to approve the November meeting minutes. Brian Bunkers seconded the motion. Motion carried. The November financial reports were reviewed. Brian Bunkers made a motion to approve them. Larry Wennekamp seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Beginning Monthly Balance \$17,821.07  
Monthly General Income \$8,875.65  
Monthly General Expenses \$12,110.74  
Ending General Balance \$14,607.56  
YTD Income Required to Meet Budget \$144,392.05  
YTD Behind 2023 Budget \$27,310.50  
Memorial Fund \$1,114.08

**Old Business**

We have a couple of people that may be interested in the open cleaning position at St. John's. Council will be contacting them.

There was discussion on having Communion 2 times a month, on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of each month. We have had some comments regarding this. Please pass your thoughts regarding this on to a member of the Worship and Music Committee. Then they will report to Council in January about the input they have received. Worship and Music Committee members are: Sam Welch, Greg Schneekloth, Pat Cuda, Sharon Hartman, Pam Goering & Denise Stevenson.

**New Business**

Council decided to give \$50 gift certificates to our janitors, organists, secretary and Pastor Chris for Christmas.

Council approved a request by Deb Runge to use the church hall on Christmas Day evening.

**Pastor's Report**

Christmas is definitely coming! Our Angel tree is up, and all of the ornaments have been chosen to purchase gifts for those families we have adopted for our Christmas giving this year, as well as to purchase plants to be delivered to all of the folks who live in senior residential facilities or those who find it hard to be with us on Sunday for morning worship. Our worship series for Advent has been exploring how Christ is revealed through our Christmas Carols and we have had several families participating in worship by lighting the candles on our Advent wreath as they read and say a prayer each week. We have distributed Advent calendars to our children in Sunday School, as well as to our adults, and we have weekly Advent devotional booklets available for those who wish to participate in Advent through prayer practices.

Our Children's Christmas program is scheduled during our worship time on December 17<sup>th</sup> and the children have already been practicing, and are very excited about their presentation.

Our community is invited to be with our ecumenical church partners on Thursday December 14 for a "Blue Christmas" service, designed for those folks who have lost a loved one, a job, or have ended a close relationship, and find it hard to find joy in the midst of their grief during the holiday season. This service is open to all and will be held at the Federated Church in Columbus, beginning at 6:30pm.

St John's will be celebrating with two separate services on Christmas Eve this year: the first one is at 10:00am and we will be focusing on Mary's Magnificat song with special music by Donna Jaixen. The second service is our candlelight Lessons and Carols worship at 5:00 that evening. There will be no Christmas Day service this year, since we had two services the day before, and this will allow everyone a little more time with their families on Christmas morning, whether they are traveling far distances for a visit, or are just going around the corner.

Pastoral visitations continue with our folks in residential facilities and those in their homes. The weekend of Dec 17-19, I will be visiting and delivering communion, as well as delivering the flower arrangements ordered by the Social Ministries Committee. These gifts help keep our homebound residents connected to our community and they are greatly appreciated.

Adult Bible Study and Confirmation continues through December 18 and then they will both be on break throughout Christmas and New Year's, resuming the week of January 7.

Our Music and worship team is surveying the congregation about the possibility of having communion in worship twice a month instead of just on the first Sunday of the month. The committee will present a report at the January council meeting, and if it is approved, we will begin this practice in the month of February and continue it throughout the Lenten and Easter church seasons. We can then review this practice again at the May Council meeting and see if this should become a permanent practice for our congregational worship.

Thank you all for continuing to support our ministry together here at St John's Lutheran Church, and I wish you all a joyful Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## **Committee Reports**

-Christian Ed. – Children's Christmas program Dec. 17 at 10 a.m.

-Worship and Music – People please contact the committee regarding Communion 2x a month.

-Evangelism – no report

-Property Committee – The center driveway culvert issue has been temporarily repaired. The committee will check into costs for permanent repair and address the issue more in the spring. A walk through of the parsonage was completed and all was in good condition. Thank you to Jack Lehman for doing a lot of electrical work for St. John's. Outside Christmas decorations were put up. We also set the sanctuary tree up for the Altar Guild to decorate.

-Finance Committee – Presented a 1<sup>st</sup> draft of the 2024 proposed budget to council for consideration. They will have the final proposed budget for Council in January.

-Stewardship/Time and Talent – The Sloppy Joe dinner following church on Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> went well. Thank you to Karol Swan for all her work on the dinner.

-Social Ministry – Candy sacks were put together after church on Sunday, Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>. Thank you to everyone for helping with this. Twelve Angel Tree gifts were purchased for children. Flowers were also purchased for our homebound friends. Thank you to everyone for participating in the purchasing of these gifts.

January Council Reps are Denise Stevenson and Brian Bunkers

The next council meeting will be on January 16, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

Dave Grotelueschen made a motion to adjourn. Brian Bunkers seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Council closed with the Lord's prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Tracey Moore for Bethany Wilke

**WELCA Winter Retreat**



The Winter Retreat will be held on Saturday, January 13<sup>th</sup> at St. Paul's in Grand Island from 9:00am-3:00pm. Registrations are due by January 3<sup>rd</sup>. More information and forms are posted on the bulletin board in the narthex.



**Tabitha Circle**

Tabitha circle will be meeting AT CHURCH on January 16<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30 (note time and location) for a soup supper and bible study. Any questions please call Kendra Bunkers.



**2023 St. John's WEE SINGERS SCHEDULE**  
**(KIDDOS AGE 4-GRADE 2)**

**SAVE THE DATES...**

**OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL KIDDOS, WHO ARE ALSO THE ST. JOHN'S WEE SINGERS, PRACTICE SINGING SONGS DURING SUNDAY SCHOOL DEVOTIONS EACH SUNDAY. WE WILL BE SHARING OUR VOICES SINGING SUNDAY SCHOOL SONGS ONCE A MONTH IN CHURCH ON THE 2ND SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH.**

**JANUARY 14<sup>TH</sup>**  
**FEBRUARY 11<sup>TH</sup>**  
**MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup>**

**Thank You**

Thank you to everyone that supported St. John's Angel Tree!  
Also, a huge Thanks to all the helpers that filled the treat bags.  
We had a lot of young "elves" this year!!  
The Social Ministry Committee





## Children's Christmas Program 2023

On Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup> our Sunday School and Confirmation kids did an excellent job of retelling the Christmas Story from "Head to Toe"!!

They explained how our different body parts related to the story of Jesus's birth.

Thank you to all that participated and helped, and to the parents for letting your child be a part of this amazing story told every year.





# January



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<u>Office Hours</u> Tues. and Thurs 9:00 AM-1:00 PM  Pastor is in Columbus on Sun. to Tues	1  	2	3	4	5	6
7  8:50AM Sunday School 10:00 AM Worship Service	8  Adult Bible Study 6:30PM	9	10	11	12	13
14  8:50 AM Sunday School 10:00 AM Worship Service Wee Singers Worship & Music Mtg.	15  No Adult Bible Study	16  Council Meeting 6:30 PM Tabitha Circle 6:30 PM	17	18  Eve Circle 1:30 PM	19	20
21  8:50 AM Sunday School 10:00 AM Worship Service	22  Adult Bible Study 6:30PM Ruth Circle 7:00 PM	23	24	25	26  Wedding	27
28  8:50 AM Sunday School 10:00 AM Worship Service Annual Meeting	29  Adult Bible Study 6:30PM	30	31			
		<u>Council Reps</u> Denise Stevenson Brian Bunkers	<u>Altar Guild</u>	<u>Lectors</u>	<u>Lectors</u>	<u>Cleaner</u> Deb Runge

Congregation Officers 2023  
 President: Tracey Moore  
 Vice President: Brian Bunkers  
 Secretary: Bethany Wilke  
 Financial Secretary: Doug Hartman (income)  
 Treasurer: Pam Goering (expenditures)

Council members: Denise Stevenson, Dave Groteluschen,  
 Larry Wennekamp  
 Please put your committee and organization meetings on the  
 calendar in the Narthex on the information desk or send to  
 Pat Cuda at [stjohnshellcreek@gmail.com](mailto:stjohnshellcreek@gmail.com)



ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH  
10785 280<sup>TH</sup> ST  
COLUMBUS, NE 68601

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

"A COUNTRY CHURCH WITH A WORLDWIDE MISSION"

SUNDAY SCHOOL  
School Year, Sunday at 8:50 A.M.

WORSHIP  
Sunday 10:00 A.M.

Cell Phone 701-226-8140 Pastor Alexander  
Office Phone 402-564-8707

Website: [www.stjohnlutheranshellcreek.weebly.com](http://www.stjohnlutheranshellcreek.weebly.com)  
Email: [stjohnshellcreek@gmail.com](mailto:stjohnshellcreek@gmail.com)  
10785 280<sup>th</sup> St.  
Columbus, NE 68601-8745

From Hwy 30: 5 Miles North on 18<sup>th</sup> Ave 4 1/2 Miles east on 280<sup>th</sup> St.