



The Loveletter

St. John Lutheran Church, 201 Fourth Avenue, Keystone, Iowa 52249

January, 2026

THE LOVELETTER

Published Monthly by

St. John Lutheran Church
(Missouri Synod)
201 Fourth Avenue
P.O. Box 176
Keystone, Iowa 52249
Phone: 319-442-3514

Church E-Mail:
stjnluth@netins.net

Church Website:
www.stjohnkeystone.org

OUR STAFF

Rev. Josiah Schultz
Pastor
Phone: 913-223-8261

Donna Busch
Parish Assistant
319-721-0952

Relda Pickering
Custodian
319-442-3742

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday Worship
9:00 a.m.

BIBLE STUDIES

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

Sunday Adult Bible Class
The Book of Acts
10:15 - 11:15 a.m.

Thursday Bible Class
Studying *1 Timothy*
9:30 - 10:30 a.m.

SWADDLING CLOTHES

Store open second
Saturday of each month
from 9 to noon,
the following Monday
afternoon from 4:30 - 5:30.

Epiphany - January 6th

December 25 (Christmas Day) begins the 'season' of Christmas which lasts **12** days until the festival of Epiphany on January 6. Epiphany, along with Easter and Pentecost is one of the three oldest and most important festivals observed by the early Christian church. The word Epiphany comes from the Greek word *epiphania* which can be translated as **appearing**. Epiphany has a variety of meanings closely related to one another; the shining of a light, a manifestation, an appearance, or a revelation. Epiphany "illuminates" or reveals to us the divinity of our Lord who was made known to the whole world for the first time by the visit of the magi from the east. There is no mention of how many wise men visited but tradition says three, probably because there were three gifts mentioned (gold, frankincense and myrrh). The Hebrews expected for centuries a star as sign of the birth of the Messiah. It was the shining of the **light** (the star) that brought the magi to Jesus who is the "a **light** for revelation to the Gentiles" Luke 2:32. Epiphany is a festival day of **light** and is denoted by the liturgical color **white**. It ushers in the season of Epiphany which lasts until the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday. Jesus said of himself, "I am the **light** of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the **light** of life." (John 8:12) Here at St. John, we will be observing The Epiphany of Our Lord during our Sunday, January 4th, worship service.

Installation of the 2026 Church Council

The 2026 St. John Church Council will be installed during the worship service on Sunday morning, January 4th. We have no one leaving the council this year, but are welcoming our newest member to the Church Council, Brad Sievers. Our other council members include Richard Oehlerich, Kent Silhanek, Doug Buch, Jordan Silhanek, Byran Kimm, Barbara Hennings, Ann Franzenburg, Mary Sievers, and Adrieonna Reddick. At the Church Council meeting held on January 11th a decision will be made as to which committees these council members will be serving. We are very thankful that these members have agreed to serve on our council. Please keep them all in your prayers.

Offering Envelopes

2026 offering envelopes are located in the southeast corner of the sanctuary. If you wanted envelopes but there are none in your name, please contact the church office and we will get them for you. Please discard your 2025 envelopes and use your 2026 envelopes now as most numbers have changed. Contribution statements will be available for pick up mid-January. We don't mail our contribution statements unless you request them to be mailed by letting the church office know.

Packing Things Away

It seems that we were just asking for people to help put up the Christmas decorations that so beautifully adorned our church. Now it is time to be putting all those things away until next year. We are asking for your help on Monday, January 5th, at 9:00 a.m. to do just that. If you are available, please help us. The more hands helping, the faster the task can be completed. If you have any questions, please contact Relda.

Midweek/Confirmation Class

Benton Community does not have a Wednesday early dismissal on January 14th which means that there will be no Midweek/Confirmation Class that day.

Thank You

Thanks to all those who purchased the poinsettias that adorn our sanctuary this Advent and Christmas season. These 20 beautiful poinsettias were donated by:

- Denny and Susie Albers (1) in memory of Art and Lorene, and Delbert and Madelene.
- Dennis Andresen (1) in memory of wife, Joyce Mae, and other loved ones.
- Don and Eleanor Roquet (2) in memory of Don W. and Carol Roquet, and Herbert and Edna Bauer.
- Mike and Rhonda Seeck and Joan Seeck (1) in memory of loved ones.
- Ruth Oehlerich (1) in memory of Darwin Oehlerich and Brandon Stockdale.
- Dale and Dorothy Selk (1) in memory of family.
- Pam England (1) in memory of Robert Reinhardt.
- Karen Noe (2) in memory of Harley Noe.
- Delbert Selk (1) in memory of loved ones.
- Darlys Rusk (1) in memory of loved ones.
- Darlene Harder (1) in memory of Roger Harder.
- Dan and Donna Busch (1) in memory of loved ones.
- Brad and Mary Sievers (1) in memory of loved ones gone before us.
- Keith and Wendy Junge (2) in memory of Milford and Ethel Wardenburg, and Curtis and Ruth Junge.
- Phyllis Steinbeck (3) in memory of Bill Steinbeck and Bill and Fran Whipple.



Please feel free to take your purchased poinsettia home with you. Plastic sleeves are available in the overflow. Please leave the plastic drain pan at the church.

Sewing for World Relief

The Quilters will begin sewing on Tuesday morning, January 13th, in the lower level. If you'd like to help, bring a scissors, needle with a large eye for tying, and a sack lunch if you plan to stay over the noon hour. Come for as long as you'd like, they usually quit around 2:00. They work each Tuesday morning during the winter months. Invite others to come with you. Questions, contact Cindy Oehlerich.

Giving Tree Wrap Up

 The Giving Tree was a success again this year. We were able to provide gifts for 34 people living in Benton County this year and also provided meals to 10 families who otherwise may not have had a Christmas dinner. The names for the Giving Tree were provided by Benton Community Schools and Benton County HACAP. The 10 Christmas Dinner baskets contained enough food to feed a family of 6. The meal was packed in a laundry basket that the recipient got to keep along with a ham, a 5# bag of potatoes, 2 cans of corn, a large can of fruit, a 12 count bag of Hawaiian sweet rolls, and a large pumpkin pie. The gifts and food baskets were all delivered to the recipients on December 17th. We thank everyone who donated to make these projects successful. Also, thank you to the members of the committee who helped shop for the names not taken from the tree and also who helped purchase the food and prepared the food baskets for delivery. To God be the glory!

Preschool Visitors

On Tuesday, December 17th, we had 2 classes of preschoolers (54 in all) come to visit our *Swaddling Clothes*. For the last few years, Mrs. Happel, the preschool teacher at Benton Community's Keystone Center, and her students have come to visit us at Christmas time. Rather than hold a gift exchange in their classroom, each child brings in items that *Swaddling Clothes* can use, like baby wipes, baby shampoo, pacifiers, blankets, etc. After a tour and presentation about *Swaddling Clothes* given by Pastor, each child received a goodie bag from the church to take home with them, along with a brochure about *Swaddling Clothes* to give to their parents. A wonderful lesson in giving to those in need!

Wise Men Still Seek Him.

Thank You

Thanks to all who have joined us to celebrate our Savior's birth! We have so many people that we'd like to thank for helping make our Advent and Christmas Services so memorable. Thanks to the people who provide such beautiful music in this place – Eleanor Roquet, Ann Franzenburg, Deb Kromminga, the Oehlerich family, Aaron Huesmann, Jodi Bierschenk and the members of our choir, Cheyenne Silhanek, and the Sunday School Children. St. John has wonderful volunteers! To all those who provided the food for our Advent Soup Suppers, decorated our sanctuary, and took care of the many behind the scenes tasks, we thank you. Hope you all had a very Merry Christmas and many blessings in the new year!

Thrift Store Prom

Attention all youth in 6th through 12 grade! You are invited to attend a St. John - Newhall Youth Group event to be held on Saturday, January 24th, from 7-9 p.m. It's a Thrift Store Prom and should be lots of fun! It will be held at Central Lutheran School. Bring a friend. There will be games and dancing, prizes for best outfits, and snacks. What to wear? Anything OLD, doesn't have to be prom style, anything thrift store, or a random costume! Questions, please call Vanessa Palmer at 319-361-7378. Should be a fun time!

Dorcas Guild Card Shop

The Dorcas Guild Card Shop, located outside the church office in the overflow area of the education wing, has available cards for all occasion—birthday, get well, anniversary, sympathy, baby, baptism, wedding, confirmation, and more. These cards are available for just 50¢ per card or \$5.00 per box of 12 cards.

Children's Christmas Service

Our Children's Christmas Service was held on Sunday, December 14th, at First Lutheran in Belle Plaine. The service included children from St. Andrew, Van Horne; St. Paul, Luzerne; First Lutheran, Belle Plaine; and St. John, Keystone. What a great job these children did in reenacting the birth of our Savior along with singing some traditional Christmas hymns. For those who weren't at the program, we were able to hear a few of their selections sung by our Sunday School children before the service at St. John on December 28th.

Christmas Caroling

On Wednesday afternoon, December 17th, a group of carolers met at the church to head out to do some congregational Christmas caroling. The weather was great to be outdoors. We were able to see lots of smiles on people's faces as we sang Christmas carols to them, first to those in the Care Center and then to shut-ins around Keystone. Following the caroling we returned to church for the soup supper and then our last midweek Advent service.

Bible Studies at St. John

†Sunday Mornings from 10:15 - 11:15 - Book of Acts

†Thursday mornings at 9:30 - 1 Timothy

Please join us for these interesting and informative studies.

Let's get to know Jesus better this year!



HyVee's Ca\$h 4 Students

HyVee's Ca\$h for Students helps support Central Lutheran when you save your HyVee receipts from purchases made at Cedar Rapids/Marion HyVee stores from April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026. HyVee donates \$1 for every \$200 in receipts collected. There's a box in the narthex for your receipts. Thanks for your help!



Swaddling Clothes Update

Our next *Swaddling Clothes* "shopping day" is scheduled for the second Saturday of the month which is Saturday, January 10th, with shopping from 9 a.m. to noon. For those who can't attend on Saturday, we will be open on Monday afternoon, January 12th, from 4:30 until 5:30 p.m.

We are taking donations of good, gently used winter children's clothing size newborn to size 10, along with maternity clothing, and items used for raising children, like highchairs, cribs, baby swings, etc. If you'd like to donate but don't have the clothing, baby items, etc., here are some other needs we have. We need zipper bags sandwich through jumbo size, batteries (AA, AAA, C, and D), baby wipes, diapers, Pull-Ups for both boys and girls, baby wash, and diaper cream. *Swaddling Clothes* has a wishlist gift registry for non-profits at <http://www.myregistry.com/organization/swaddling-clothes-keystone-ia-keystone-ia/4144665>

Here are a few other ways to help out our *Swaddling Clothes* program:

*Drop off unwanted household items and furniture at *Stuff, Etc.* Consignment Store in Cedar Rapids. *Swaddling Clothes* has a "charitable store account" there. What this means is that you can bring in your gently used, unwanted items to the *Stuff, Etc.*-Cedar Rapids location and donate your items under *Swaddling Clothes*-St. John Lutheran Church, Keystone account #36081. This is an opportunity for you to purge unwanted household items, and furniture and help *Swaddling Clothes* raise money for ongoing expenses. After your items are sold, a portion of each sale is deposited into the *Swaddling Clothes* consignment account. We can use the money as store credit at *Stuff, Etc.* to purchase needed items or withdraw the money to purchase needed items elsewhere. Keep in mind that we still need your maternity clothes, newborn thru size 10 children's clothes and any baby-care related items to be brought here to the church for our "shopping days".

*Pass along unwanted gift cards and coupons to *Swaddling Clothes*. We may be able to use them to benefit *Swaddling Clothes*.

*When out shopping, ask yourself if *Swaddling Clothes* could benefit from some of the sale, clearance items.

*Use your reward points or rebate cash to purchase baby-care items. A couple of great examples of this is something like Kohl's Cash. Rather than letting it expire without using it, perhaps pick up something that *Swaddling Clothes* could use or Menard's 11% rebate that provides in store credit to make purchases. That could be used to purchase toothbrushes or stocking hats, etc.

*If you are a Thrivent member, perhaps you can form a Thrivent Action Team to purchase items needed by *Swaddling Clothes*.

*Most of all, please pray for the *Swaddling Clothes* program that we may continue to provide items that some can't afford to purchase on their own.

If you have any questions about the above information, please feel free to ask a member of the committee or contact the church office.

We are so thankful for the group of volunteers that we have who come in when asked and help sort, clean, repair items, repackage diapers, write thank you notes to those who donate, etc.

We are also thankful to those who donate. We know how quickly kids outgrow their clothing. We receive some beautiful, almost brand-new clothing. We couldn't keep going if it weren't for donations!

We have some interesting stats to share with you about what has happened at *Swaddling Clothes* in 2025. Over the year, 426 families came in to shop, with 41 of those being first-time shoppers. During 2025, we gave out 598 packages of baby wipes. (Each of those packages of wipes contains 100 wipes, so that's 59,800 wipes for 2025!) We also gave out 557 packages of diapers/Pull-ups with each package holding 20 diapers/pull-ups so that's a total of 11,400! During the months of October through December, a total of 87 coats were given away. Many of those coats were brand-new because of shoppers who found year-end bargains to donate the year before. Surprisingly, our busiest month was September with 44 families coming in to shop. Our slowest month for 2025 was February when 26 families were helped.

To God be the Glory for this awesome mission here at St. John. In September of 2026, we will celebrate our 7th anniversary!

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Matthew 19:14

Quarterly Voters' Meeting

A Quarterly Voters' Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 18th, following our worship service at approximately 10:15 a.m. On the agenda will be the presentation and approval of the budget for 2026 and also the vote on where our "mission offerings" should be sent for 2026. Please plan to stay following worship to take part in the business portion of St. John.

Reminder of our Winter Weather Policy

Our policy for cancellation of services due to weather has not changed from previous years. Services will be held if at all possible; however, if you are in doubt about whether services will be held call the church office at 319-442-3514 and listen to the phone message there. If it is the normal message, there will be services held as planned; otherwise a cancellation message will be heard. The cancellation message will be recorded at least one hour before the scheduled service. The cancellation will also be posted on the KCRG website (www.kcrg.com) and television station (channel 9), on our facebook page (St. John Lutheran-Keystone), and on our webpage at stjohnkeystone.org. Pastor Schultz should be able to get to the church no matter what the weather; however, if you feel it is unsafe for you to come in person because of the weather the service can be watched online.

St. John Board of Elders

St. John has a Board of Elders in place. The purpose of the Board of Elders is to be a liaison between the church and our pastor. Of course, Pastor Schultz is available anytime to meet with you about issues in the church. If you need to speak with someone other than pastor about issues that need attention, please contact one of the elders, knowing that matters of a private nature are kept strictly confidential. Members of the Board of Elders include Jim Buch, Dave Gahring, Bill Hennings, Bob Albertsen, Dan Busch, Dennis Schwab, and Richard Oehlerich.



Central Lutheran School, Newhall, IA January 2026- Monthly Newsletter



+Providing students with a quality education built on a firm Christian foundation, so they grow in the knowledge of Jesus as their Savior and become loving servants to others.

Motto: See Jesus, Seek Knowledge, Serve Joyfully +

As we enter 2026, the CLS Staff and Board of Directors would like to wish everyone a Blessed 2026! Thank you for your support in 2025 through prayers, donations, and talents shared!

May God continue to bless CLS in 2026!

Epiphany Greetings from Central Lutheran School!

PARENT INFORMATION MEETING - Thursday, January 22, 2026, 6PM

I pray every parent or at least one parent from each family will attend this meeting on Thursday, January 22. The CLS Board of Directors will be sharing with you about the cost to educate a child at CLS, next school year's tuition, other fees, the state of our school, and enhancements to our school, as well as dates for registration. This information is for EVERY parent incoming to CLS preschool - 7th grade for the 2026-2027 school year. Tell your friends and neighbors as well in case they are thinking about applying here for next school year. One night only, so please plan to attend!

CLS Staff Openings for the 2026-2027 school year

Central Lutheran School is looking for names to fill the following positions for the 2026-2027 school year.

- Preschool teacher (Mrs. Becky McKinney is retiring.)
- Part time PE teacher for K-8.
- Part time Ag teacher for 6-8th grade.

All teachers must be able to pass a background check as well as be licensed in the state of Iowa.

If you have a name or could encourage someone you know, please have them contact Principal Parris at principal@centrallutheranschool.org, or call 319-223-5271.

Philippians 1:3-6

Franklin O. Parris – Principal, principal@centrallutheranschool.org

Central Lutheran School, Newhall, IA,

January

Ushers and Greeters

January 4 (9:00 a.m.): **Greeters:** Dean and Kathy Scheel. **Ushers:** Barbara Hennings, Doug and Colin Buch.
 11 (9:00 a.m.): **Greeters:** Greg and Carlene Silhanek. **Ushers:** Eric and Ann Franzenburg, Byran and Tracie Kimm.
 18 (9:00 a.m.): **Greeters:** Rita Pickering and Pam England. **Ushers:** Denny and Susie Albers, Brad Sievers, Robert Albertsen, Colby Lennie.
 25 (9:00 a.m.): **Greeters:** Dan and Donna Busch. **Ushers:** Wayne Ritscher, Rick Pickering, Todd and Cheryl Hennings.

Acolytes

January 4 (9:00 a.m.): Emma
 11 (9:00 a.m.): Kenna
 18 (9:00 a.m.): Lauren
 25 (9:00 a.m.): Ciara

Videographers

January 4 (9:00 a.m.): Rich Oehlerich
 11 (9:00 a.m.): Dan Busch
 18 (9:00 a.m.): Dave Gahring
 25 (9:00 a.m.): Jim Buch

Altar Guild for January

Donna Busch
 Missy Lennie

Deacons

January 4 (9:00 a.m.): Doug Buch
 11 (9:00 a.m.): Jordan Silhanek
 18 (9:00 a.m.): Jordan Silhanek
 25 (9:00 a.m.): Rich Oehlerich

Hospitality Committee for January

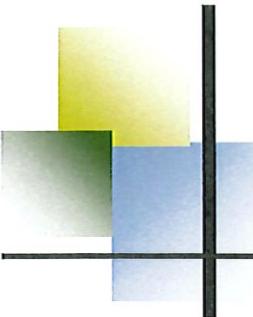
(January 11)

Bake: Amie Slapnicka
Bake and Serve: Darla Kromminga
 Beth Hartkemeyer



We Need Volunteers

We are in need of volunteers to serve as ushers, videographers, people to serve on the altar guild, the Hospitality Committee, etc. If you need more information or would like to volunteer, please contact Donna in the church office (319-442-3514) as soon as possible.



January, 2026

St. John Lutheran Church
 P.O. Box 176—201 Fourth Avenue
 Keystone, Iowa 52249
 Church E-mail: stjnluth@netins.net
 Rev. Josiah Schultz, Pastor
 Pastor's Cell: 913-223-8261

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
<i>Epiphany of Our Lord, Observed</i> 9:00 a.m.—Divine Service with CC installation 10:15 a.m.—Sunday School / Adult Bible Class	4	5 2:00 p.m. - Lutheran Communion @KNCC	6 1:30 - 2:30 - Midweek / Conf. Class	7 9:30 a.m. - Bible Class	8	9 10 9 a.m. to noon - <i>Swaddling Clothes</i> Shopping Day
9:00 a.m. - Divine Service 10:15 a.m. - Sunday School / Adult Bible Class 11:00 a.m. - Church Council Meeting	11 12 4:30 - 5:30 p.m. - <i>Swaddling Clothes</i> Shopping Day	13 9 a.m. -2 p.m. - Sewing for World Relief	14 1:30 - 2:30 - No Midweek /Conf. Class; (No early dismiss at Benton)	15 9:30 a.m. - Bible Class	16	17
9:00 a.m. - Divine Service 10:15 a.m. - Sunday School 10:15 a.m. - Quarterly Voters' Meeting	18 19 9 a.m. -2 p.m. - Sewing for World Relief	20 1:30 - 2:30 - Midweek / Conf. Class	21 9:30 a.m. - Bible Class	22	23 7-9 p.m. - Thrift Store Prom at CLS	24
9:00 a.m.- Divine Service 10:15 a.m. - Sunday School / Adult Bible Class	25 26 9 a.m. -2 p.m. - Sewing for World Relief	27 1:30 - 2:30 - Midweek / Conf. Class	28 9:30 a.m. - Bible Class	29	30	31

Birthdays

January 2 - Austin Teneyck
 3 - Rick Andresen, Korbyn Metz, Boyd Oehlerich
 5 - Raegan Junge
 6 - Cathy Graf
 7 - Alexis Lyne, Mason Vargason
 8 - John Sintt
 10 - Richie Loy III
 11 - Mary Pohlman
 13 - Eleanor Roquet
 14 - Darold Sintt
 15 - Teri Geiger, Grace Wiese, Rick Wild
 16 - Leah Cleemann, Betsie Niebes, Tiffany Sawyer
 17 - Adam Albertsen, Mike Seeck
 18 - Denise Schwab



Birthdays (continued)

January 19 - Nikki Steffen
 20 - Wayne Ritscher
 23 - Simeon Schultz
 25 - Matthew Brunssen, Tinley Jones, Scott Schroeder
 27 - Connie Baumgard, Calvin Franzenburg, Kassie Mather
 31 - Kathy Ebert

Anniversaries

January 2 - Don and Relda Pickering
 22 - Rick and Dorothy Wild
 26 - Terry and Denise Schwab
 28 - Jordan and Kimberly Silhanek