



The Loveletter

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

December, 2025

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

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.

Midweek Advent Services and Preservice Soup Suppers

Our Midweek Advent Services started on Wednesday, December 3rd, at 6:30 p.m. Our theme for this year's midweek series is *Every Heart Prepare*. We do so much to prepare for Christmas. One way we prepare is by decorating our homes, yards, and churches with evergreens, lights, the crèche, and presents. This season we will reflect upon these common Christmas decorations and how they help us see Christ and prepare for His coming. Christmas gives us many opportunities to tell about Jesus. We can share the Good News in the cards we send, in the ways we care, and in the songs we sing. Even our decorations can help us think about Jesus! What do your family decorations teach about the Son of God, the Savior of the world?

We also plan to hold Midweek Soup Suppers just prior to our worship service those Wednesday evenings during Advent. These will be simple meals with a soup, bread, and dessert/bar. We are asking for 2 volunteers who could each bring a crockpot of soup, 2 volunteers who could each bring bread to serve 15-20 people, and 2 volunteers who could each bring dessert or bars to serve around 20 people. There are sign-up sheets in the narthex for the 10th, and the 17th. The church will provide styrofoam soup bowls, small plates for the bread and dessert, cups, napkins, plastic silverware, margarine, crackers, and coffee. This will be self-serve. Crockpots can be plugged in on the counter if need be, bread and desserts can be served out of the container that they arrive in. Food will be available from 5:30 to 6:15. Those who choose to eat will need to clean up their table as they leave and dispose of their table service in the trash before heading upstairs to worship. Direct any questions to the church office. Thank you in advance for volunteering! Please join us and invite others!

Advent Devotion Booklets

Advent Devotion Booklets entitled "*Every Heart Prepare*" are available for pick up from the table in the narthex. These daily devotions connect our common Christmas decorations with our anticipation of Jesus' birth. From December 1-January 6, take time to ponder these profound readings featuring Scripture, a short message, and a prayer. These booklets go along with the theme of our midweek services. Make sure to pick up a copy for your family to use in family devotions or for personal use. If you have small children in your family pick up a copy of *Preparing for Jesus*, an Arch Book for children, telling the story of Jesus' birth based on Matthew 2:1-12 and Luke 2:1-21.

Children's Christmas Service

A Children's Christmas Service is being planned for Sunday, December 14th, at 6:00 p.m. at First Lutheran Church, 1523 Sunset Drive, Belle Plaine. This is a joint service between St. John - Keystone, St. Andrew - Van Horne, and First Lutheran - Belle Plaine. The kids will be telling the story of Christ's birth with many traditional Christmas hymns and light refreshments to follow. Everyone is welcome to join us. **PARENTS PLEASE NOTE:** The children will practice on Saturday, December 6th, and again on Saturday, December 13th, both from 1:30-3:30 at First Lutheran Church in Belle Plaine.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services

Our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be held on Wednesday, December 24th, at 4:00 p.m. There will be no communion offered at this service, but lots of Christmas carols and readings of the Savior's birth. On Christmas Day, Thursday, the 25th, we will be worshipping at 9:00 a.m. and celebrating Holy Communion. Join us to celebrate our Savior's birth! Please note that this year we will not be holding a worship service on New Year's Day.

Congregational Christmas Caroling

Congregational Christmas Caroling is planned for Wednesday, December 17th, at 4:00 p.m. Meet at the church and we will carol at the care center and to shut-ins around town. You don't need to be a great singer, just someone who loves to put smiles on the faces of the residents and shut-ins. Following the caroling we will have our soup supper with serving from 5:30 until 6:15 and then our midweek Advent service at 6:30.

His Love - Our Response Food Drive

Our *His Love—Our Response* Food Drive ended at Thanksgiving. All the food was packed up on Monday, December 1st, and was delivered to the Benton County Food Pantry in Belle Plaine. We will also be sending a check soon to the food bank after we are sure that no more donations are coming in. As of the time of this Loveletter being typed, the amount is \$900.00! We want to thank all who donated either by a cash donation or by bringing in non-perishable food items. A special thank you to Brad and Mary Sievers who took time out of their busy schedules and during a not-so-nice weather day to haul the food items to Belle Plaine. All is much appreciated!



Offering Envelopes

Look for the 2026 offering envelopes that will be available for pick up starting the first part of December. If you received offering envelopes in 2025, but don't wish to have them for 2026, please let the church office know. If you wanted envelopes this year, but didn't receive them last year, please let us know that as well. The envelopes will be located in the southeast corner of the sanctuary and will be in alphabetical order so yours should be fairly easy to find. Don't start using the new envelopes until after the first of the year as more than likely your number on the envelope will change. Year-end contribution statements will be available for pick up sometime mid-January. Remember that we don't mail out these statements unless we are specifically asked to.

Cancellation of Services

Winter weather has arrived! Here's a reminder of our policy on cancelled services. 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 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 to come in person because of the weather the service can be watched online.

Board of Elders

St. John now 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, but if you need to speak with someone other than pastor about issues that need attention, please contact one of the elders. Please know 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.

**Christmas is the celebration of the greatest gift ever given:
Jesus Christ!**



The Giving Tree

The Giving Tree has been set up in the narthex. Our goal is to make Christmas special for those less fortunate, not only with a gift but a gift with a Christian message attached to it. This year we have contacted Benton Community Schools and also HACAP, located in Vinton, to provide us with 34 names of those in need. There are a few ways you can help with this project:

- 1) If you don't care to shop, you can make a donation and have the committee do the shopping for you. If you choose option 1, please DO NOT take a name from the tree. Donations may be dropped at the church office or placed in the offering plate clearly marked with "Giving Tree".
- 2) You can take a name (or names) from the tree. On the back of the Christmas Card ornament that you take from the tree there is a pocket that contains information with gift suggestions, including sizes. These are suggestions, purchase what you wish from the list. There is also a coded name tag label included in the pocket which needs to be attached to your wrapped gift before it is placed back under the tree in the narthex. Gifts need to be back in the narthex by December 12th. That isn't much time!
- 3) We are putting together Food Baskets that are available to purchase for those less fortunate. The basket will feed a family of 6 with the fixings for a Christmas Dinner. Included will be a 3# ham, 5# bag of potatoes, 2 cans of vegetables, large can of fruit, dinner rolls, and a pie. The cost is \$30.00 this year. If you would like to donate to this cause, please mark your envelope with "Food Baskets". We will also be asking for a few volunteers to come in and help pack these baskets. Watch upcoming bulletins for the exact date.

Each year we have helped many less fortunate individuals in the area - *Serving the Lord by Serving Others*. If you are interested in becoming a member of the committee to help with the shopping, please contact Wendy Junge at 442-3483. We are always looking for people who like to shop or help prepare the baskets.



Swaddling Clothes

The last couple of months at Swaddling Clothes have been pretty busy. We have had a lot of coats, snow pants, boots, mittens, and winter clothing go out! Our plea for winter clothing has been answered with some very nice donations. Our next shopping days will be Saturday, December 13th, with shopping from 9:00 a.m. until noon and again on Monday afternoon, December 15th, with shopping from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. If you or someone you know have donations that Swaddling Clothes could use, please contact the church office for

drop off. We are so appreciative of all donations!

We have the best group of volunteers! They have helped so much with getting our clothing and items ready to be displayed! We can't thank you enough!

If you have household items to donate, why not take them to Stuff, Etc. in Cedar Rapids and have the items listed on Swaddling Clothes St. John Lutheran Church Keystone charitable account? When those items sell, our Swaddling Clothes would get the money for the items and we can use that money to purchase needed baby items from Stuff, Etc. If you need instructions on how to donate at Stuff, Etc., contact the church office.

Lastly, you can help by telling others about our program. We have brochures in the narthex to take and share with others or you can direct them to our website at www.stjohnkeystone.org or to our Facebook page Swaddling Clothes-St. John Lutheran Church, Keystone, Iowa. We just ask that to come in you have children in your custody either by birth or court order. We offer a sleeve of diapers and baby wipes for each of your children that are in need of them. Thank you for your continued support of Swaddling Clothes!

*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

Thank you

Thanks to all who attended our Thanksgiving potluck on November 23rd. There was a lot of great food brought in and enjoyed by many. Thanks to those who worked in the kitchen cooking the turkeys, decorating the tables, serving, cleaning up, etc. It's greatly appreciated!

ILSTO Update

The Iowa Lutheran School Tuition Organization is the program whereby you can in effect send your tax dollars to benefit families wanting to send their children to Lutheran elementary & secondary schools in Iowa. The benefits you receive are two-fold: 1) You get to see more children experiencing the love of God every day, and 2) You will receive a 75% tax credit on your Iowa state income taxes and a charitable deduction on your Federal return. Families need your help. Please help us fund our students at 100% of need. Currently ILSTO is at 15% of its goal. We need your help. For further information, please contact Dewey Torkelson at 712-260-2991. You may also check the website www.iowalutheransto.com.

Part-Time Teacher Aide Needed

Central Lutheran School is looking to hire a part-time teacher aide to help mainly in the 4th grade classroom. Someone who loves children, doesn't mind sharing their faith, and looks to help a classroom teacher in the areas of reading and math. If you are interested or know of someone, have them contact Principal Frank Parris at principal@centrallutheranschool.org or call at 319-223-5271.

Bible Studies at St. John

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

†Thursday Mornings at 9:30 a.m. - 1 Timothy

Please join us for these interesting and informative studies.

Let's get to know Jesus better this year!



Thank You to the Decorators

On Monday morning, the decorators were busy getting the church all beautiful for Christmas. This is not an easy task, but when they had finished, it is well worth all the time that they'd put into it. Our thanks to Relda Pickering, Rita Pickering, Wendy Junge, Cathy Buch, Pam England, Darla Kromminga, and Donna Busch. A job well done, ladies!



Central Lutheran School, Newhall, IA December 2025- Monthly Newsletter



+Central Lutheran School provides 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. +

Advent Greetings from Central Lutheran School!

The entire CLS Staff would like to wish everyone a blessed Advent season as well as a very Merry Christmas! Please continue to keep CLS Board members, staff, families, and students in your prayers. God's blessings to you! Thank you for your support!

Thrivent Choice Dollars - Thank you to donors for making this program a success for Central Lutheran School. Will you help make 2025 and into 2026 an even better year in Thrivent Choice giving?

Go to <https://www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice/> or call 800-THRIVENT (800-847-4836) and state "Thrivent Choice" to designate your choice dollars for Central Lutheran School today. Thank you for making Thrivent Choice a valuable stream of revenue for Central Lutheran!

Christmas "GIFT" to CLS - This time of the year you are probably getting many requests asking for you to give a gift or donation to this organization or that organization. I know I've received requests from Concordia, Seward, Fort Wayne Seminary, and Lutheran Hour Ministries. You can give a gift to Central Lutheran School and you know for sure that it will go towards telling children about Jesus Christ as their Savior. Your gift helps in educating them about the world they live in, strengthening their faith, and how to SHINE HIS LIGHT! Thank you in advance for considering Central Lutheran School for a gift!

Philippians 1:3-6

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

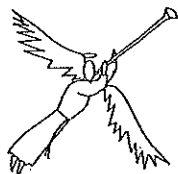
Central Lutheran School, Newhall, IA

Chrismons

In 1957, the daughter of a Lutheran pastor, Frances Spencer, and a missionary began making ornaments for their home church, Ascension Lutheran Church, in Danville, Va. They wanted to replicate religious monograms and symbols which she called Chrismons. From those early beginnings, Spencer's tradition has spread. She even wrote five books on Chrismons, including patterns for making them, which can be quite elaborate. We, here at St. John, have beautiful handmade Chrismons adorning our tree. We were told that they were made by the ladies of the Home Mission Society, led by Anna Margaret Obermueller, many years ago. They are traditionally colored white with gold trim. White is the liturgical color for Christmas and symbolizes that Jesus was pure and perfect. Gold symbolizes His Majesty and Glory. The name Chrismon is a combination of Christ and monogram (meaning symbol). Some of the Chrismons found on the tree here at St. John include:



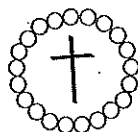
The cross symbolizes that Jesus Christ died for everyone on a cross.



The angel heralded the birth of our Savior.



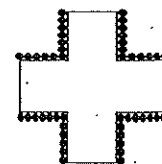
The Star of David, sometimes called the Star of Creation, is a symbol that Jesus was a Jew and a descendant of King David.



Eternity- The cross is inside a circle composed of circles. Circles represent eternity. We are reminded that to have God's gift of eternal life means trusting Jesus who died for us on the cross.



The crown is the symbol that Jesus is King. It shows that we believe Jesus is ruler over heaven and earth.



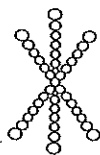
Greek Cross has arms of equal length. The particular cross has circles on the arms, representing eternity.



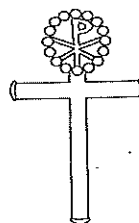
The fish is one of the oldest Christian symbols. The Greek word for "fish" is pronounced ichthus (iXΘus). Those letters in Greek are the first letters of Jesus Christ God's Son (and Savior).



The Chi-Rho looks like a "P" with an "X" on top of it. These two letters (Chi and Rho) are the first two letters of the Greek word 'Christos' which means Christ.



Iota, Chi are the first letters in the Greek words for Jesus Christ



The Latin Cross with the Chi, Rho the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ. We are reminded that Christ died on the cross for us.



The Orb and Cross - The orb (symbol of the earth) has a cross over it. We are reminded that the world needs Christ.



Triquetra and Circle - The triquetra is the symbol of the trinity; the circle is the symbol of eternity.



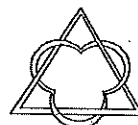
Iota, Eta, Sigma in a Circle are the first three letters in the Greek word for Jesus. These letters in the circle (the symbol for eternity) remind us that Jesus gives us eternal life.



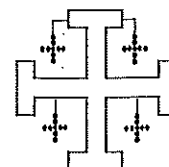
Iota, Chi and Lilies represent the first letters in the Greek words for Jesus Christ. The lilies are the symbol of the resurrection. We are reminded that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.



Three circles interposed symbolize the unity of the Trinity, yet the separate Persons thereof.



The Triangle and Trinitarian Symbol - Both are symbols of the Trinity.



Jerusalem Cross - The Crusader's Cross. This Cross was worn by crusaders going to Jerusalem.



The Latin Cross with Alpha and Omega - the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet. We are reminded that Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, who died on the cross for us.



Ushers and Greeters

December 3 (6:30 p.m.):	Greeters: Greg and Carlene Silhanek. Ushers: Eric and Ann Franzenburg, Byran and Tracie Kimm.
7 (9:00 a.m.):	Greeters: Rita Pickering, Pam England. Ushers: Denny and Susie Albers, Brad Sievers, Robert Albertsen, Colby Lennie.
10 (6:30 p.m.):	Greeters: Dan and Donna Busch. Ushers: Wayne Ritscher, Rick Pickering, Todd and Cheryl Hennings.
14 (9:00 a.m.):	Greeters: Keith and Wendy Junge. Ushers: Kent Silhanek, Jim and Cathy Buch, Ben and Missy Lennie.
17 (6:30 p.m.):	Greeters: Dean and Kathy Scheel. Ushers: Barbara Hennings, Doug and Colin Buch.
21 (9:00 a.m.):	Greeters: Greg and Carlene Silhanek. Ushers: Eric and Ann Franzenburg, Byran and Tracie Kimm.
24 (4:00 p.m.):	Greeters: Rita Pickering, 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.
28 (9:00 a.m.):	Greeters: Keith and Wendy Junge. Ushers: Kent Silhanek, Jim and Cathy Buch, Ben and Missy Lennie.

Acolytes

December 7 (9:00 a.m.):	Kenna
14 (9:00 a.m.):	Lauren
21 (9:00 a.m.):	Ciara
28 (9:00 a.m.):	Nash



Videographers

December 7 (9:00 a.m.):	Dan Busch
14 (9:00 a.m.):	Dean Scheel
21 (9:00 a.m.):	Rich Oehlerich
24 or 25:	Dave Gahring
28 (9:00 a.m.):	Jim Buch

Altar Guild for December

Rhonda Seeck
Jacque Jones

Hospitality Committee for December

(December 14)

Bake: Carlene Silhanek

Bake and Serve: Adrieonna Reddick, Cathy Buch

Deacons

December 3 (6:30 p.m.):	Jordan Silhanek
7 (9:00 a.m.):	Richard Oehlerich
10 (6:30 p.m.):	Jordan Silhanek
14 (9:00 a.m.):	Kent Silhanek
17 (6:30 p.m.):	Jordan Silhanek
21 (9:00 a.m.):	Kent Silhanek
24 (4:00 p.m.):	Jordan Silhanek
25 (9:00 a.m.):	Kent Silhanek
28 (9:00 a.m.):	Richard Oehlerich

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.



December, 2025

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 2:00 p.m. - Communion @ KNCC	3 1:30 - 2:30 - Midweek Confirmation Class 5:15 p.m. - Choir Practice 5:30 - 6:15 - Advent Soup Supper 6:30 - Advent Midweek	4 9:30 a.m. - Adult Bible Study	5	6
9:00 a.m. - Divine Service 10:15 a.m. - Sunday School 10:15 a.m. - Adult Bible Class 11:00 a.m. - CC Mtg.	8	9	10 1:30 - 2:30 - Midweek Confirmation Class 5:15 p.m. - Choir Practice 5:30 - 6:15 - Advent Soup Supper 6:30 - Advent Midweek Worship	11 9:30 a.m. - Adult Bible Study	12	13 9:00 - Noon - Swaddling Clothes
9:00 a.m. - Divine Service 10:15 a.m. - Sunday School 10:15 a.m. - Adult Bible Class 6:00 p.m. - Children's Service at First Lutheran	14 4:30 - 5:30 - Swaddling Clothes	15	16 No Midweek Class 4:00 p.m. - Congregational Caroling 5:15 p.m. - Choir Practice 5:30 - 6:15 - Advent Soup Supper 6:30 - Advent Midweek Worship	17 9:30 a.m. - Adult Bible Study	18	19
9:00 a.m. - Divine Service 10:15 a.m. - Sunday School 10:15 a.m. - Adult Bible Class	20	21	22	23	24 4:00 p.m. - Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Service	25 9:00 a.m. - Christmas Day Divine Service
26	27 Basement Reserved	28	29	30	31 No Worship Service	

Birthdays

December 2 - Jim Buch, Joanne Radeke
3 - Camden Bartling
7 - Ethan Albers, Connie Pickering
10 - Adam Vargason
11 - Shirley Jurgens
13 - Bill Hennings
15 - Tonya Hamilton, Rick Selk
16 - Dan Busch, Dick Loy, Amy Pace
17 - Pat Franzenburg, Deb Kromminga, Cindy Reinberg
18 - Dorene Pickart, Greg Silhanek,
19 - Logan Flack, Colton Jones, Callyndora Jurgemeyer
20 - Ethan Jurgemeyer
22 - Cali Junge



December birthdays (continued)

December 23 - Michael Allers, Aubrey Stechcon
25 - Megan Metz
26 - Miranda Dunek, Tim Feuerbach
27 - Brent Harder, Brooklyn Lyne, Rod Silhanek
28 - Ann Reinhardt
30 - Adrieonna Reddick, Jake Stechcon
31 - Jim Grace

Wedding Anniversaries

December 3 - Andrew and Rebecca Enderle
7 - Jeremy and Sara Wenger
20 - John and Jan Meyer