

ST. JOHN
LUTHERAN CHURCH
-LCMS-
290 7TH STREET
IDAHO FALLS, ID 83401
WWW.STJOHNMINISTRIES.NET

OFFICE HOURS:
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LICENSED LAY DEACON
PAUL PETERSEN

ST. JOHN OFFICERS
MIKE SHIRTS
CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

TODD MARY
HEAD ELDER

SUNDAY
IN-PERSON WORSHIP
9:30AM

9:30AM LIVE-STREAM:
HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/
STJOHNIDAHO FALLS

OR:
HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/
CHANNEL/UCQFTBBUM5U7-
LFB7BMSLQAQ
(CLICK ON "LIVE" TAB)

COMMUNION EVERY
1ST & 3RD SUNDAY

10:30AM - FELLOWSHIP

10:45AM
· SUNDAY SCHOOL
· CONFIRMATION
· YOUTH STUDY
· ADULT BIBLE CLASS

WEDNESDAY
BIBLE STUDY - 10:00AM

The Gospel Gazette

Comfort During a Blue Christmas

Shared is a portion of an article from Rev. Seth Moorman of 1517.org. In the website's Resources tab, you will find these rich options: Articles, Podcasts, Videos, Academy Courses, Bible in A Year, Music and more. To read Seth's full article, go to <https://www.1517.org/articles/comfort-during-a-blue-christmas>.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives" (Isa. 61:1)

When Jesus begins his public ministry, he speaks these words himself. He reads them in the synagogue and then says, **"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"** (Luke 4:21).

When he speaks in Matthew, his voice resonates with anyone who feels crushed by this season.

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

He does not say, "Come to me when you have pulled yourself together." He does not say, "Come to me when you feel festive enough." Instead, he says, "Come to me" to those who struggle and are burdened. To those who are tired of holding back tears. To those who feel like they have to smile their way through church while their hearts are breaking. To those who have learned how to carry grief quietly so no one else feels uncomfortable.

That invitation isn't a new law. It's a promise. Rest isn't something you have to earn. Rest is something he gives.



If this Christmas feels blue for you, the comfort God speaks of in Isaiah is also for you. The One who was anointed to bind up the brokenhearted has not forgotten you. The Child who lay in the manger has not moved away because you have grown up or been scarred by living in this sinful world. The One who says, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden," is speaking to you.

He comes for you—specifically you—the one whose heart aches when you see a stocking that no longer has an owner. He comes for you—the one standing in the narthex trying not to cry. He comes for you—the one feeling guilty for not being more joyful. He comes for you with forgiveness, mercy, and his own pierced hands, speaking with his steady voice.

Others around you may go through the season without that particular ache. Sometimes, life is like that. If that is where you are, consider it a blessing. It's also an opportunity to notice the people whose smiles don't quite reach their eyes, to remember that behind the carols and candles, there are real wounds. You don't have to fix them. You can't. But you can show kindness. You can be patient. You can be the kind of person who leaves space for someone else's blue, and you can simply share that space, with no words needed.

In the end, sorrow isn't the only voice during this season. It's real and often very loud, but it doesn't have the last word. Above it, and even through it, another voice speaks.

"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God."

That word isn't just for Israel; it's also for you. For the grieving, the weary, those sitting in darkness, wishing they didn't have to. For the Child of Bethlehem has grown, carried your sin and sorrow to the cross, walked out of his own grave, and now draws near again to comfort his people. He has you.

He will not let you go. *Pastor Stephen*



Coffee & Conversation after Worship is a great time to meet new friends and strengthen bonds in our St. John family!

In order to offer this time of fellowship, we need individuals to serve as a host each week. Please sign-up if you haven't hosted recently. You can host a Sunday by yourself, or share the fun & ask a friend to help! The sign-up sheet is located on the counter where coffee is served.

Treats are optional, and can be homemade or purchased. Thank you!

The Social Ministries Team is in need of more women **and men** who want to serve the Lord, our members, and friends. Yes, men do look good in aprons and they are good cooks too! We need more volunteers to ease the load. Our services include Sunday coffee & fellowship; congregational potlucks; Easter and Christmas buffets; and lunches for Celebrations of Life/funerals/memorials. "It Takes A Village" for this Team effort. Please pray on it and if the Holy Spirit guides you to join the Team, please contact Carole D. She is listed in the directory, or call the office to get her contact information. *A special thanks goes to Lynn W. who honorably led this team for many years and who will continue hosting Advent by Candlelight for the ladies .* Thanks to everyone.



We are changing the congregational potluck schedule. Please mark your 2026 calendars to include these tentative potluck dates.

March 22nd May 31st
September 27th October 25th

Thanks to all of you Foodies!



- 3rd Alan Mueller
- 4th Ellen Morse
- 10th George Denton
- 11th Mary Tuohimaa
- 12th Laurel Flynn
- 15th Josh Perez
Hannah Warren
- 17th Gene Winter
- 19th Kevin DePew
- 24th Paul Chaffee
- 25th Deborah Mueller
- 26th Katie Vetter
- 27th Eliza Pralle

Thank you to all who contribute to "1st Sunday Food Offering". Many in our area struggle to feed their families.

Always high-need items:

Cereal, canned pasta, peanut butter, chili, canned stew, canned tuna or chicken, canned vegetables and ***monetary donations!

Generic brands are welcome.

***Since donations have been lower and the number of patrons needing help have greatly increased, the Food Basket is spending considerably more than in years past.

All donations are very appreciated!

***For every \$1 given, the IFCFB can provide \$4.80 worth of food!!



PLEASE MAIL financial contributions to:
IFCFB, P.O. Box 2236, Idaho Falls, ID 83403



Happy
Anniversary

9th Al & Jackie Riddle (41)

Financial Summary as of December 2025



Thank you for your faithful donations. Meeting our budget allows us to share the Gospel Good News of Jesus!! Prefer to automate your giving? Simply go to the St. John web site: <https://www.stjohnministries.net> and click on the “Online Giving” button in the banner on the home page. You can also download the Vanco Mobile app for free from the App Store or Google Play. You can choose to give a one-time gift or set up a recurring gift as often as you like. If you have any questions, please call the office.

We are
so grateful
to you...

On behalf of Jacob, Cheryl, and myself, we would like to share our thankfulness to each of you for sharing such a generous holiday gift with us! We feel valued all year as you join us in bringing care to the community of faith here at St. John. You partner with us shoulder to shoulder, and we give God thanks for the wonderful friendships we share with all of you as well. We ask God’s grace and blessing on each of you throughout 2026!

-Pastor Stephen & Your St. John Staff





Join us Friday, February 13th, at 6:30pm for an adult evening of fellowship at City Bagels (369 Shoup Ave.)

Invite friends and bring an appetizer / dessert to share. Beverages will be provided. Hope to see you there!



Bunco!!

Bunco will be held Tuesday, February 17th at 6:30pm.

Bring \$5 and a snack to share for "half-time"!



Young Adult Fellowship Young adults (single, married, all are welcome!) are invited to join us each month for "No-Host Brunch".

Child care is available!!

No Host Brunch will NOT be held in February. Plan on joining us in March!

Morgan's Memos



JOIN US FOR

"WHAT CAN YOU FONDUE?" NIGHT

On Tuesday, February 10th, from 6pm-8pm, join us for a night of fun, love, food, and fondue! We will be having a soup supper, making valentines, and finding cool combinations of foods to dip in chocolate fondue!

ALL ages are welcome!

Please bring something for all to dip in the fondue! (i.e. crackers, strawberries, oreos, rice krispies, marshmallows, pretzels, potato chips, etc.)

This is a FREE event and is sponsored by the Friends & Family Night Team.

Any questions, please ask Morgan Pralle - mepralle.dce@gmail.com



SAVE THE DATE

ST. JOHN'S ANNUAL CAMP-OUT
WILL BE HELD JULY 9-12!

PLAN TO JOIN US FOR AS MANY DAYS AS YOUR SCHEDULE WILL ALLOW.



Benevolent Fund

Request for Contributions

In 2025 the people of St. John were able to help parishioners with several financial needs due to hardships through the St. John Benevolent Fund. There are needs now and there will likely be additional opportunities to bring care to others in 2026.

If you are able to contribute to this fund above and beyond your regular giving, it will be used to bless other individuals and families. Checks can be written to The St. John Lutheran Church (Please designate "Benevolent Fund" in the Memo).

The Benevolent Fund requires possible recipients to request financial assistance by filling out a formal request available through the office. There is a small team that reviews the requests to ensure the funds will be a benefit to recipients and will be stewarded well.

Thank you for considering this request,

The St. John Board of Directors

"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

~Jesus' words recorded in John 13:35

December 2025 ~ Pastor's Report

Praise Report: Baptism —two baptisms in November Astrid M. & George D. Jaycee F. to be baptized in January. Melissa & Scott B. are meeting with Pastor for A Life in Christ, and Melissa desires to be baptized. Many new faces are joining in worship on Sundays. Attendance was over 100 (4 of 5) November services!!!

- * Pastor is planning to have a New Member / Refresher Class on Zoom. We will meet 6-7 times using the book, *Getting to Know Jesus: Using the Six Core Teachings of the Bible to Grow in a Deeper Relationship with Jesus*
 - This is written by LCMS pastor, Paul Schult
 - Those who miss a session can watch the recorded Meeting
 - Each participant will have access to an individual meeting with Pastor Stephen for additional conversation.
 - The book includes questions and discussion for each session.

Also considering a class to meet two Saturdays 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. With reading before both sessions.

- * Graveside Service was held for Christine J. She was raised at St. John was the niece of Pat McNamara. Close family members in attendance.
- * Sunday Study— Our Study on Ephesians is going well with good attendance. Session 2b will be held on 12/21.
- * The Yellowstone Circuit LCMS churches was held at St. John on Thu., Nov. 20
- * Men & Coffee has been well attended in the last few months.
- * Wednesday 10AM Bible Study has had increased attendance for two months.
- * Pastor's Jury Duty is making In-home Visits harder to schedule. NOW Over.
- * Dec. 3, 10, 17 Advent Family-Friendly Dinner and Worship Wednesdays. First service went well in the Youth Room. WENT WELL.

UPCOMING DATES & EVENTS:

Dec. 28 Paul Preaches / Weems's in Denver

June 22-26, 2026 VBS

YOUTH NEWS



Who / what is “The Next Chapter”? Our group (6th–12th grade) is based off Acts, chapter 29. Wait, there are only 28 chapters in Acts?! The book of Acts tasks us with understanding how we can be directed by the Holy Spirit and the role of Jesus’ lessons in our lives. God’s mission did not end after Jesus’ ascension into heaven. Like Peter & Paul, we too are challenged to be a part of The Next Chapter of His Church.

This doesn’t end with chapter 28, it truly is just the beginning!

Youth entering grades 6th - 12th, are invited to join The Next Chapter (TNC) –The St. John, Hope, & Crown of Life Youth are diving into a life-changing Year 5 as The Next Chapter!!! Join us this year as we raise the banner of our NEW Theme – “Tell the Story!” Paul tells us how we are “letters from Christ...written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God on tablets of human hearts!” (2 Corinthians 3:3) We can’t wait to harness the power of OUR stories by bringing hearts together to grow further in our faith in Jesus! We are continuing our School Year Schedule in the New Year! We will be meeting on **THURSDAY evenings from 5:30-7:30!** – We will meet in February on the **5th, 12th, & 19th.**

We are excited to continue our TNC Youth “AT YOUR PLACE” events! Let us know if you’re interested in hosting or sponsoring a meal for a TNC Youth Night! BIG THANKS to the families who have hosted thus far!

YOUTH SUNDAY BIBLE CLASS! – Love Stories

Every year when February rolls around, what comes to mind? Likely LUV<3, Hearts, and Romance! It doesn’t just cross our minds, it is truly commercially thrown in our faces! There is great fun and cheer that comes with singing valentines and sappy gifts of all chocolate varieties, but is that true love? Come and see the difference in our newest 4-week series that explores what true love looks like from 4 power couples of the Bible! You will be amazed to see how when our relationships reflect God’s love for us, true love helps us fulfill all the purposes He has for our lives!



SENIOR HIGH SNOWFEST @ Camp Perkins!!

What on earth could there be to do at Camp Perkins in the middle of winter?! You should ask our Junior High Youth! Where many were concerned with the lack of snow in I.F., Camp Perkins still delivered! How does tubing, broomball on the frozen lake, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, bonding with friends, and an amazing time with Jesus sound?! This what to expect of Camp Perkins – Winter style! We’ll be shuttled over the snow two miles into camp in a fully equipped van with tracks and skis. Spend our time worshiping, studying God’s Word, sitting by a warm fire, and playing in the snow! We will be bringing youth, 9th–12th grade, for this weekend getaway on February 27th-March 1st! Cost for the weekend is \$160. As always, cost is not a reason you cannot attend! **Registration is now open until February 6th.** If interested, and for more details, contact Jacob Pralle: Jcpralle.DCE@gmail.com



A New Member / Refresher Class

We will have two 4-hour Sessions using the book,
Getting to Know Jesus: Using the Six Core Teachings of the Bible to Grow in a Deeper Relationship with Jesus
Written by LCMS pastor, Paul Schult

Session One to meet Saturday, February 21 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Prep for the Session by Reading Chapter 1-4

Session Two to meet Saturday, March 21 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Prep for the Session by Reading Chapter 5-9

There is pre-reading for each session. Please RSVP to Pastor Stephen, PastorStephen83401@gmail.com or sign up on the RSVP Clipboard at the information table in the entrance to the Worship Center. That way we can get the book into your hands as soon as possible.

Those not quite ready for Membership are more than welcome to attend.

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Board of Elders' Meeting Minutes

(in order to allow time for minutes to be reviewed for accuracy, the minutes are published with a one-month delay.)

December 9th, 2025

1. Opening Devotion was led by Jeff
 2. Attendees: Dan, Scott, Jeff, Bob, Todd, Paul, Jacob, Pastor
 3. Minutes for November 11, 2025 meeting were reviewed and approved
 4. Pastor's Report reviewed, See Attached. Additional discussion on LCMS' decision to eliminate the Licensed Deacon program. Paul Petersen is already a Called Deacon at St. John and we will continue with him serving at St. John in that role but will remove the "Licensed" designation and keep his Deacon title. The LCMS change may impact Paul's word and sacrament duties at other congregations.
 5. DCE Report- Reviewed, See Attached
- Worship Services and Spiritual Life:
1. Reviewed care unit assignments and will wait for the new church directory to be completed for individual assignment updates. This should be available at our January meeting. Discussed member visitations that Pastor has done and members that need contacting.
 2. Reviewed our recent visitors and potential members who have expressed interest. Pastor is planning a New Member/ Refresher Class that hopefully will start in January.
 3. Reviewed Bible Classes and upcoming Advent Services. Elders are available to help where needed.

New business:

1. Review list of Elder Duties for Sunday service. Tabled this item after some discussion. Requested update on AV duties from Dan K.
2. Pastor and Todd were notified by one of our congregational members by email that another member is in need of financial help. It was suggested that details concerning the member in need not be discussed publicly. Pastor and Todd working on help options.

Old business: Men's Quarterly Gatherings- Potential Contacts

Next Meeting- January 13th, Closing prayer lead by Pastor.

Board of Directors Minutes

(in order to allow time for minutes to be reviewed for accuracy, the minutes are published with a one-month delay.)

December 21, 2025

In Attendance: Jacob P., Mike S., Todd M., Mark P., Sandy T., Jason S. and Lynn W.

Meeting called to order by Mike at 12:05 pm. Opening prayer by Todd

Motion to approve both October and November minutes by Mark, second to motion by Sandy. Motion carried, minutes approved as read.

Committee Reports: Pastor's Report: see page 5

DCE Report: see below

Properties Report: A) Mark reported that two hot water tanks have been serviced and are working again. Installation of the carpet in the basement will begin on January 12. There are no additional projects planned at this time. B) No snow removal has been needed yet, and our contract is in place. They will plow the parking lot when there is 1-inch of snow. The heat tape is still functioning and in good working order. 3) Jason offered to look into a new security system. It was recommended that he work with Bruce M.

Treasurer's Report: (Unavailable)

Social Ministries: a) Advent by Candlelight was held on Dec. 4th and was well attended. The committee expressed their thanks for the support of the men who served that evening. b) The Christmas luncheon after the Sunday School Program Dec. 14th was also very well attended. We counted approximately 90 people attended. c) Carol D. will step in as chairman of Social Ministries beginning January 1.

Old Business: Mike mentioned that with the new bylaws Google Doc does not allow him access into all of the documents. Jacob will look into the digital access and do a refresher. It was questioned if the office has a back-up and recommended that the office keep a paper copy of all documents on file.

New Business: a) The Board has received a Benevolent request. This will kick start how the fund works, and will need to be decided before next meeting. The board is still searching for a leader for the Benevolent Fund. b) Feb.18th is the deadline for the recommendations of synod board members. It was questioned if the Board of Directors or Board of Elders are responsible for making these nominations. It was decided to table this until next meeting. Jacob offered to help Todd with these recommendations.

Next Meeting: January 18, 2026 Closing: Motion made by Mike to adjourn the meeting. Second by Todd. Motion Carried. Closing prayer by Jacob. Meeting Adjourned.

December 2025 ~ DCE Report

- Sunday Educational Ministries: a) Children's Sunday School (w/Morgan) b) Bible Adult / SS Parallel Class - picking up some attendees. c) Nursery SS class with new nursery attendant, Brandy P. d) Post-Conformation age youth Bible study - Anxiety & Stress - Carolyn P. and Beth O. Adult Bible Study: Ephesians (Pastor Stephen)
- Youth: a) The Next Chapter (TNC) will be meeting on Dec. 1, 8 and 15. b) TNC Youth will begin meeting weekly on Thursday evenings in January 8, 15, 22 & 29. c) TNC Flash Servant Event @ IF Community Food Basket; next event will be March 29. d) Annual caroling extravaganza took place last week. This was a special time where our Youth had the opportunity to spread some Christmas cheer to our shut-ins.
- Young Adults: No Host Brunch - next No Host: Jan. 14 at North Hi-Way Cafe
- Camp Perkins: Junior High SnowJam coming up Jan. 23-25. Likely to be one of our largest groups yet! Adult leader from St. John for SnowJam - Nick P.