

The Messenger

January 2026 Edition



A Monthly Newsletter from St. John Lutheran Church and School

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Gather. Grow. Go. To the Glory of God!

Devotional Corner



Devotion Corner: Unchanging Hope for an Ever-Changing World

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” Hebrews 13:8

As one year ends and another begins, columnists and commentators look back at the previous year. What changed? What stayed the same? Whose passing did we mourn? Whose new arrival did we celebrate?

At the same time, we make predictions about the coming year. What will the new year hold? What will change? What will stay the same?

As fun and exciting as it may be to reminisce about the past and dream about the future, it can also be a little sad and scary. Things will likely never be what they used to be. Loved ones who have passed away don't come back. Jobs that are lost seldom reappear quickly. Even when broken dreams and broken relationships are repaired, they rarely return to their former glory. Many times our experiences in an ever-changing world are difficult.

Yet we sometimes look at our lives and see a need for change. Many of us make New Year's resolutions: “I'm going to exercise more and eat less.” “I'm going to save more and spend less.” “I'm going to love more and hate less.” But too often, our good intentions disappear, and only poor excuses remain.

No matter what (or who) changes from one year to the next, there is one who never changes—Jesus

Christ, the Son of God. He always exists, from before time, throughout the course of time, and at the end of time for eternity. Jesus loved you before you were born. He loves you today, and he will always love you.

That's what Christmas is all about. Jesus loved you so much that he wanted you to experience his unchanging love forever. So he came into the world to live up to God's perfect demands in your place. He took the punishment for your imperfection and gave you the reward for his perfection. That reward is an eternity far away from this world's sorrows and disappointments—the unchanging peace and joy of a place called heaven.

Jesus—the same yesterday, today, and forever—promises to be with us, love us, care for us, and give perfect peace with God to all who trust in him. Only Jesus offers unchanging hope to an ever-changing world.



Worship With Us Sundays at 9:00 am

Christian Parenting Today

Christian Parenting Today: What is the Role of a Christian Parent? A Forward in Christ article by Stephen Kuehl

Most people would undoubtedly agree that the birth of a child is on the shortlist of life's most joyful events. Few events bring as much joy to families, relatives, and whole communities than the arrival of a newborn "bundle of joy." As the child grows up and celebrates a yearly birthday, it's not uncommon for parents to reminisce joyfully about the stories surrounding that child's birth.

Besides bringing joy, in most cases becoming a parent also awakens a depth of love within parents that was largely dormant beforehand. When a child is born, we parents naturally begin to love our newborn with a zeal and a tenderness that is unique to the parent-child relationship. This love grows out of the deep and visceral bond between parents and children. We can't help but love them deeply because, well, they literally came from us!

This strong bond between parents and their children is further strengthened by the fact that we choose our children's first names . . . and middle names . . . and bestow on them our last name (or names). On top of that, we do the hard and seemingly never-ending work of providing for them and taking care of them. For all these reasons we naturally and understandably think of our children as "ours," and the people around us strongly reinforce that idea by speaking of them in a similar manner.

Parenting God's children is nothing more and nothing less than an undeserved blessing and privilege. While our children certainly are "ours," we must always keep in mind that they belong first and foremost to the heavenly Father. Though they came from us, ultimately, they came from him: "Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him" (Psalm 127:3). While we had a role to play in bringing them forth into the world, the Lord had a bigger role. David writes in Psalm 139, "For you [LORD] created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (vv. 13,14).

This understanding that our children are first and foremost God's is critical in our daily task of parenting

because it reminds us that we parents are called to raise our children not according to our standards but according to the heavenly Father's standards. All parents are essentially foster parents (or guardians) who have the high and holy calling of parenting the heavenly Father's children on his behalf and raising them to know him and his ways most of all.



This calling begins with bringing our children to the font for Holy Baptism soon after they are born, for it is through Holy Baptism that God washes away their sins and adopts them into his family. Our calling then shifts to nurturing the faith that God gave through Baptism by "bring[ing] them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

We are called to teach them right from wrong—according to God's standards, not the world's standards—and not just in our words but through our actions and example too.

We are called to discipline them in line with God's Word and to point them continually to our Savior Jesus Christ, whose death atones for all of our wrongs.

We are called to be examples of faith for our children to emulate, even though our example will be marked with imperfection. We get to be God's "boots on the ground" for helping our children see that their central identity is this: children of God. We can even tell them that we as their parents view them first and foremost as God's children instead of our children.

The article continues on page 7.

Upcoming Events

End of Second Quarter- Friday, January 9th

The end of second quarter is quickly approaching for our grade school students. Now is a great time to check in with your student and/or their teacher to make sure that all work has been completed and turned in. The quarter officially ends on Friday, January 9th. Report cards will come out soon after for students in grades K-8. There are no scheduled parent/teacher conferences at this point in the school year, but you are welcome to request an appointment with your child's teacher at any time.



Blood Drive- January 27th

About one hour is all it takes to provide the lifesaving gift of blood to patients in our local hospitals. There is no substitute for blood, so when a local patient is facing cancer treatment, surgical procedures or the uncertainty of a traumatic injury, it's volunteer donors who help ensure that the blood needed is on hand. Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood – that's 35,000 blood donations needed every single day! With your whole blood or platelet donation, your generous gesture could make all the difference for a local patient in need. Schedule your donation today with St. John's Blood Drive on Tuesday, January 27th, and be a part of someone's story. Donate today; you'll save lives tomorrow!



Musicfest at FVL- February 1st

Come enjoy Musicfest, an annual celebration at Fox Valley Lutheran School! This year's event will be on Sunday, February 1st from 1:00 until 4:30 pm. It will feature a variety of performances by the FVL Concert and Symphonic Bands, Jazz Ensemble, FVL Schools Cadet Band, Wind Ensemble, and Concert Winds (Middle School), A Cappella Choir, Men's & Women's Choir, Choraliers, individuals, and small groups. Between performances, you can enjoy homemade treats and fellowship. Admission is free for all, but freewill donations will be accepted to help support FVL's music programs. More information can be found at fvlhs.org/academics/coursesandplanning/fine-arts/musicfest.



Mark Your Calendars!

January 1- Happy New Year!

Offices Closed

January 1-2- No School

January 4- JAM resumes

January 5- Classes Resume

January 6- Martha's Circle

January 7- Breakfast and Bible Study

3rd-5th Grade Field Trip

January 9- End of 2nd Quarter for School

January 13- Fellowship Meal

Retirement Planning Seminar at FVL

January 14- FVL at St. John Chapel

January 20- Outreach Team Meeting

January 21- Breakfast and Bible Study

January 25- 1st and 2nd Grade Sing in Church

January 27- Blood Drive

PTO Meeting

January 28- Pastor Play Date

February 1- Music Fest at FVL

February 2- School Choice Window Opens

News Highlights

Calls Returned

Both the pastor and teacher calls that were issued last month were returned (declined), so St. John will soon be gathering again to vote on who to call to be a new, full-time pastor and who will replace Tim Raddatz as an upper-grade teacher when he moves to a full-time administrative role. Keep an eye out for information about a call meeting, and in the meantime, keep St. John in your prayers as we seek to fill these two important roles.



Vande Heys Express Their Thanks

In November, we gathered supplies and Veteran's Day cards for Ross Vande Hey. His family writes: Thank you to everyone who donated supplies for Ross Vande Hey and the troops who are stationed with him in Kuwait. We shipped them out [in time for them to] arrive by Christmas. They will appreciate the snacks and handwritten notes from the kids. Thank you and God bless.



Fang's Reading Club

School parents, be on the lookout for materials to come out in mid-January for Fang's Reading Club. St. John will once again be 'running the bases' by reading books. Students who meet their classroom's home run goals will be given free tickets, which can be used towards St. John's family night on May 15th, or can be used at your convenience for a summer game.



Library Volunteers Wanted

Volunteers are being sought to help straighten shelves, keep books in order, check books in, and reshelve borrowed books. These can be done at your convenience before, during, or after school, and time spent can count towards your family's required volunteer time. Please speak with Mrs. Wicks if this is something you can help with and she can show you how to get started.

January Birthdays

Happy birthday to our church members celebrating in January!

Jan 2 Ryan Theunis
Jan 3 Luke Micke
Jan 3 Deb Schaeuble
Jan 4 Ron Zahn
Jan 4 Jack Zirbel
Jan 6 Kendra Pohlman
Jan 7 Weston Herlache
Jan 7 Faye Patoka
Jan 8 Ronald Laabs
Jan 9 Michaela Bowers
Jan 9 Sara Verheyen
Jan 11 Brett Toseland
Jan 12 James Calaway
Jan 12 Chad Schmidt
Jan 12 Amber Schroeder



Jan 12 Michelle Steiner
Jan 16 Austin Bowers
Jan 16 Emerson Demerath
Jan 17 Henry Ollila
Jan 21 Noah Pennenberg
Jan 22 Brent Ritter
Jan 23 August Otto
Jan 24 Kristen Kraus
Jan 28 Rodney Kussow
Jan 28 Kane Schmidt
Jan 28 Levi Schmidt
Jan 28 Lainey Slater
Jan 29 Karen Geiger
Jan 29 Lawsen Leick
Jan 30 Daniel Schmidt



Happy Birthday to our students with January birthdays!

Laura F.- Jan 10th
Austin B.- Jan 16th
Emerson D.- Jan 16th
Levi J.- Jan 16th
Lilith S.- Jan 17th
Nash B.- Jan 28th
Joseph L.- Jan 31st
Braxton R.- Jan 31st

The Role of Christian Parents

(Christian Parenting Article Continued from Page 3)

This understanding that our children are first and foremost God's is also critical in the event that one of our children is called out of this life unexpectedly early in life. In such situations, it is not uncommon for there to be anger and rage against God for allowing such a thing to happen. Speaking as one who has endured the death of a five-year-old daughter, I am familiar with the grief and pain of losing a child. The pain is sharp, and the grief is weighty. Emotionally, it feels as though a part of you has died—and in a sense that is exactly what has happened, for our children are flesh of our flesh. It is not wrong to grieve, for enduring the death of a child is not something God ever had in mind for us when he created us; it is rather the result of living in a sinful world.

We get to be God's "boots on the ground" for helping our children see that their central identity is this: children of God.

Where we must be careful, though, is when Satan seeks to sow seeds of anger, resentment, and bitterness toward God for calling a child of ours out of this life and allowing such a hardship into our lives. Unfortunately, Satan finds fertile ground in our sinful nature for these seeds to take root and grow up into weeds in our soul. The "weed killer" for these weeds in our soul is the

biblical perspective that though our children are ours, they belong first and foremost to the heavenly Father. Our privilege is to parent them on his behalf for as many days as he has ordained for them in this life—whether that is a long time or a short time from our perspective.

If the heavenly Father has in mind to call one of his children out of this life to her true home in heaven, he is not doing anything wrong. In fact, he is granting her a monumental blessing—even though it involves a monumental hardship for us. With humble and faith-filled hearts, we say, "Thy will be done," in this circumstance too.

Parenting God's children is nothing more and nothing less than an undeserved blessing and privilege. So as Christian parents, let's be grateful for every day we are given. Let's also trust that God will weave our humble efforts of parenting his children into his eternal plan for them, us, and others.

*View the article in its original form at
[https://forwardinchrist.net/
christian-parent-role/](https://forwardinchrist.net/christian-parent-role/)*

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