



The Informer

February 2025

St. John's Lutheran Church of East Moline, IL

Volume 65 Issue 7

From Pastor's Pen:

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We love because He first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19)

Dearly Beloved of God,

In just a few weeks many school children may be decorating special little boxes with hearts for the giving and receiving of little notes called valentines. Have you ever wondered how that practice began? Legend has it that it all stemmed from a simple act of love offered by a pious 3rd Century Christian named Valentine. In Gregory Wismar's book, Saints & Angels All Around, he writes "Valentine lived in a time when Christians were being harshly persecuted because of their religion. Arrested for his Christian faith, he received a death sentence from the Roman authorities. While he was waiting in prison for the executioner's ax, Valentine developed a friendship with the young daughter of his jailer. He told the girl about Jesus and his hope of heaven. On the day of his execution, he left her a note cut into a special shape. Written inside was a message of affection and encouragement. He signed the letter 'Your Valentine,' beginning a singular tradition."

That original valentine was not about passing affections or passionate romance. It was about God's love, and the affection that God's people share for one another in Christ. It was about the encouragement that comes in knowing that even death cannot separate us from God's love or the love we have for one another. At this time of the year we have so much more to share with each other than trinkets and flowers. More to offer the world than cards and candies. God has revealed his love to us and has called us to share it, like valentine. ***"This is love,"*** John writes, ***"not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so love us, we also ought to love one another."*** (1 Jn. 4:10-11)

Let us, now, commit ourselves to living our lives in the spirit of St. Valentine. Let us, together, be a loving Christian family walking in the light and the love of Christ. Let us be a family marked by mutual affection and gentle encouragement. All of our hearts have been touched by the love of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit has inscribed His seal upon us to be messages of God's mercy to others. We are God's Valentines to our families and friends, our neighbors and co-workers, our communities and to the whole world.

Thing about what gift you will give this Valentine's Day. I hope that it will be the same one you, yourself, have received from God. I pray that you will freely offer your love to others without expecting anything in return. I trust that John's words will be fulfilled in you: ***"We love because He first loved us."***

Your Valentine,

Pastor Umberger

NO
WORSHIP
SATURDAY
FEB. 15TH!



Deaconess' Desk

Hymn Reflection

As we enter February, the cold winter days are beginning to grow longer and lighter and the seasonal decorations in every store are now overwhelmed with pink and red hearts. Valentine's Day is right around the corner and our culture will take a moment this month to attempt to draw our focus to love, or in many cases, lust. The human love that is portrayed this time of year can be very wholesome and true, but it is a shadow of the ultimate standard of love given by our God and commemorated in the feast of St. Valentine (see Pastor Umbarger's article for details about this story).

In his hymn, *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*, Charles Wesley describes the true love of God. The first stanza focuses on the Incarnation of Christ our Lord and the joy of Heaven coming to earth. Throughout the hymn, we pray for Christ to come and make His dwelling in and among us, transforming our hearts to pull us away from our love of sin, and ultimately to bring us to salvation and the perfection of body and soul that awaits us in eternity.

With our focus on God's perfect love for us, we can better love our neighbors around us and be comforted that even though we fail, we are forgiven and will be made pure and spotless, perfectly restored in Christ.

1. *Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heav'n, to earth come down!
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation
Enter ev'ry trembling heart.*
4. *Finish then Thy new creation
Pure and spotless let us be:
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee,
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heav'n we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!*



Serving the Lord This Month:

Ushers

Feb 1: Greg Burke, Todd Miller, Rick Newlon, and Larry Ripka
Feb 2: Evan Antolik & Family
Feb 8: Greg Burke, Todd Miller, Rick Newlon, and Larry Ripka
Feb 9: Evan Antolik & Family
Feb 15: Greg Burke, Todd Miller, Rick Newlon, and Larry Ripka
Feb 16: Evan Antolik & Family
Feb 22: Greg Burke, Todd Miller, Rick Newlon, and Larry Ripka
Feb 23: Rod Hopkins, George Aukee, and Penny Schreck

Greeters

Feb 1: Joyce Hoffman and Sharon DeWulf
Feb 2: Kathy McDowell
Feb 8: Joyce Hoffman and Sharon DeWulf
Feb 9: Kathy McDowell
Feb 15: Joyce Hoffman and Sharon DeWulf
Feb 16:
Feb 22: Joyce Hoffman and Sharon DeWulf
Feb 23:

Acolytes

Feb 2: Briella Churchill
Feb 9: Joel Duffy
Feb 16: Johnny Kjera
Feb 23: Nathan Duffy



Communion Assistants

Feb 2: Glen McMillin & Jim Homann
Feb 16: Brian Kern & Kevin McAnally



Altar Guild

Dawn & Stevee Antolik

Eternal Candle

Feb 2: Flo Moore, in honor of her 43rd wedding anniversary
Feb 9: OPEN
Feb 16: OPEN
Feb 23: OPEN



Altar Flowers

Feb. 2: Flo Moore, in honor of her 43rd wedding anniversary
Feb 2: In honor of Deaconess Bowers' birthday with love from Grandma Shanks and Aunt Marel
Feb 9: OPEN
Feb 16: Gail Massey
Feb 23: OPEN



Church News

Happy Birthday to our February Born!

February 4: Chad Gosa, Aaron Homann & Carole Krouth
February 5: Samantha Hansen & Steven VanRycke
February 6: Shari Hess & Taylor Murphy
February 7: Diana Caldwell, Cynthia Christopher, & Mark Hariss
February 8: Ralph Grotelueschen, Larry Ripka, & Tyler Rusk
February 9: Loretta Nielsen
February 10: Cora Whipple
February 12: Lucille Perley
February 14: Alyssa McAnally & Alyssa Nitz

February 15: Alena Rossmiller
February 16: Ethan Sountris
February 17: Barbara Veskauf
February 20: Morgan Murphy
February 22: Zachery Chellew, Stephanie Gray, Mallory Hawkins, Brian Nielsen, Isaac Stone, & Carl Weathers
February 23: Dustin Fischer
February 24: Ryan Dosch & Alexander Lange
February 26: Caleb Engebrecht
February 27: Fred Krack & Rex Newman



Weekly Attendance & Offerings

Date	This year	Last Year
12/15/24	church canceled due to ice storm	167
12/22/24	168	120
12/24/24 (Candlelight)	203	189
12/25/24 (Christmas)	55	40
12/29/24 (5th Sunday)	116	114
01/05/25	121	150
01/12/25	134	church canceled due to cold temps
01/19/25	119	134
01/26/25	119	150

Average Weekly Attendance by St. John's members: 25%

Membership Report

Address Update:

Mary Heino
241 Douglas Dr.
Anniston, AL 36207

Death:

Dennis Schaefer (01/17/25)

Church News

ATTENTION SATURDAY NIGHT WORSHIPPERS!!!

There will be NO WORSHIP on Saturday, February 15th. President Mohr will be visiting us to give a very important presentation on the procedure to call a new pastor on Sunday after service. Please if you can, attend worship and the presentation on Sunday the 16th.



2nd Friday Fellowship

Friday, February 14th at 6:30pm

This 2nd Friday Fellowship will be a Valentine Themed Game Night! Some fun Valentines Games will be played as well as time for other group games. If you are able, bring treats that would be a good match for our chocolate fountain (brownies, cherries, marshmallows, cookies, strawberries, etc). We will provide punch and other appetizers. Sign up at the Sign Up Station...but don't worry if you decide at the last minute to come, there will be plenty of fun and food even if you don't sign up!

February Craft

Nail Art on Monday, February 17, from 1:30-3:30pm

Make unique wall art with nails and colorful string. You can make a cross for Easter or a spring flower- the designs are limitless! Check out the design options at the Sign-Up Station or bring your own design to fit a 9x12" board. The cost is \$10 to cover the supplies. Please bring a hammer and needle nose pliers (or let us know you need tools). Optional: ear plugs or noise reducing headphones for the first part of the craft.



Ladies Luncheon

All ladies of St. John's are welcome for a lunch date on Thursday, February 20th at the Deerfield Restaurant in East Moline. We meet at 11:30am for lunch and laughs. Please join us!

Fellowship Dinner- Friday, February 28th at Olive Garden

This evening out is open to everyone! Join us for a great meal and good fellowship. We will meet at the Olive Garden outside of South Park Mall in Moline at 6:00pm. Please sign up by Sunday, February 16th so reservations can be made.



Church News

LWML

Our February LWML meeting will be held on **Thursday, February 20th at 1:00 p.m.**

We will be working on Easter Cards for shut-ins and learning about the Conventions coming up in April and June.

This month we are spotlighting two of the organizations receiving national LWML grants:

2023–2025 Mission Grant No. 9

EQUIPPING YOUNG LEADERS

LCMS Youth Ministry | \$50,000

LWML Mission Grant #9, Equipping Young Leaders will allow LCMS Youth Ministries to develop new curriculums for four regional Youth Lead events, pilot a new Servant Event for youth, and develop a survey for Generation Z. These projects are to help teens and young adults stay connected to the church and grow in their faith in Jesus Christ.

To learn more, visit www.lwml.org/2023-2025-mission-grant-9.

2023–2025 Mission Grant No. 10

SET APART TO SERVE

LCMS Office of Pastoral Education | \$100,000

Set Apart to Serve is an LCMS initiative with the purpose of forming and recruiting full-time church workers. Christ's church continues to need church workers for the building up of the kingdom. Along with your mite offerings to support this LWML mission grant, you can support Set Apart to Serve by praying for God to provide church workers, talking to your children about becoming church workers, and thanking God for the people who work in your congregation.

To learn more, visit www.lwml.org/2023-2025-mission-grant-10.



Notes from the Balcony

Valentine's Day, with heart-shaped decorations, red roses, and chocolates offers something warm to look forward to these cold days when winter has seriously settled into this part of the country. Often thought of solely as a romantic holiday, Valentine's Day, at least in our family, has been a favorite day to remember each other with tokens of affection. As a child, Valentine's Day meant readying a shoe box with a slit in the top with white paper and red heart decorations. Preparing small Valentine's cards and inserting them into tiny envelopes for each classmate was the annual follow-up activity. Upon consultation with my mother, this tradition had remained largely unchanged since she took her little Valentines to school.

These little expressions of good wishes, a tradition initiated by St. Valentine himself, are a good exercise at a time of year when lack of sunshine and too much togetherness might make warm feelings wear thin. In great contrast to these small notes on slips of paper, expressions of love from our God are far deeper, broader, and higher as communicated by Paul in Ephesians 3:17-19,

"So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

These words are mirrored in one of our members' favorite hymns, "O Love, How Deep," LSB 544. Attributed to Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471), this medieval hymn originally was a twenty-three-stanza poem emphasizing the nativity. It was written in the Netherlands emerging from a movement called *Devotio Moderna* ("Modern Devotion") which emphasized Christ-centered personal piety striving to imitate Christ, a spiritual rather than materialistic approach to life, and meditation on Jesus' life and death.

The meager seven stanzas the LSB retained of "O Love, How Deep" sum up the life and death of Jesus. The first two express God's deep love for us when He came to the world as a human. Stanzas three through six convey how "for us" Jesus was baptized, was tempted, prayed, taught, worked signs, suffered, was crucified, rose, ascended, and sent His Spirit. The doxological stanza seven is a fitting response of praise to the Trinitarian God whose love is "so deep, so high, so broad."

The words of this hymn and the poetry of Benjamin Webb's translation of this hymn merit "favorite hymn" status. Even Martin Luther favored this hymn. Here is a small portion of the hymn to give you a taste.

1. O love, how deep, how broad, how high,
Beyond all thought and fantasy
That God, the Son of God, should take
Our mortal form for mortal's sake.

I invite you to turn to Hymn 544 before church sometime during February and meditate on its words of God's expansive love for us.

Happy Valentine's Day!
Love in Christ,
Christine Engebrecht

CIRCUIT NEWS

LCMS Stewardship Ministry – lcms.org/stewardship Newsletter Article – February 2025

“Christ’s Life, and Love, and Light”

Open our eyes Lord to see Your love’s intent,
To know with minds and hearts its depth and height
May thankfulness be days in service spent
Reflection of Christ’s life, and love, and light. (LSB 788)

As stewards enter the month of February, it is fitting that we look at the last stanza of the stewardship hymn, “Forgive Us, Lord, for Shallow Thankfulness” (LSB 788). It is in these words that we see that the heart of stewardship is indeed love. Love has flowed from our Lord to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This love is then to flow from us to others. Being a conduit of love is really the central task of what it means to be a steward. The Lord entrusts us with His love that reconciles us to Himself, so that we might be stewards of the Gospel reconciliation that is freely given through us to those around us.

If we don’t see this love from God to us, then through us, to others, our eyes will be closed not just to the needs of those around us. They will also be closed to the very heart of the Gospel itself. This is why the hymnist prays that the Lord would “Open our eyes, Lord, to see Your love’s intent, To know with minds and hearts its depth and height.”

Only when we are immersed in God’s Holy Word, washed in Holy Baptism’s life-giving water and fed on the holy, precious, body and blood of Jesus in the Holy Supper, will the Spirit be able to open our eyes to see the Lord’s loving intent for us, and those we know and love. Sin blinds us. It makes us think that we are the center of our world, and our pleasure is the key.

In the Word, the Lord shows us the depth and height of His love. The depth of that love is what moved Him from His throne in heaven into our world. There He would don our human flesh, walk the dusty roads of Palestine, and set His face toward Jerusalem. Once there we get to see the height of His love, as He is elevated on a Roman cross to die a death that we deserve. But that would not be the end. He would be lowered into a tomb for three days. On that third day we then see the heights of love ascended to in His resurrection. This resurrection is already ours too!

The depth and height of this love poured out on us by the Holy Spirit then is distributed through us to others. Christ’s servant love is shown in our servant love. The hymn utters the prayer of every Christian steward:

May thankfulness be days in service spent

Reflection of Christ’s life, and love, and light.

This is the task for which stewards were originally created. Bearing the image of creation and redemption, we reflect Christ’s love to those around us. The light of Christ shining through us to others is the true stewardship to which we are called. It takes place in our homes. It is lived out in our workplaces and classrooms. As we bear the life, love and light received in Word and Sacrament, we carry it out in service to our neighbor and for the glory of God!

Forgive us, Lord, when our stewardship of thankfulness is shallow or lacking! Fill us with Your life, love and light! Not just for us, but through us to those we know and love, that they may know Your life, love and light for them!



CIRCUIT NEWS

Was it Mrs. Fox, or Mr. Locher? Pastor Watkins, or my friend Dave? Who was it that urged me to give prayer and consideration to serving as a full-time church worker? It was all of them, and many more. And when I was younger, I gave them ample reasons to think I wouldn't be a pastor. But still, the Lord used many people of the Central Illinois District in the 70s and 80s to nudge and form me into a pastor.

The Lord works through means, and sometimes it's you He uses. Think about the maturing Christian men and women (they don't have to be youth) in your congregation whom you could encourage to serve as a Lutheran teacher, musician, or pastor. Pray first, encourage second.

[Jesus said,] **“Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”** (Mt 9:38). The fields are His, and the work is His. He will hear and answer your prayers according to His will. You *might* be encouraging the wrong person, but He'll work His will. Pray first. Encourage second. That's a good way to begin the year of our Lord 2025.

Mike Burdick, St. John's Effingham

- **Pray For Our Central Illinois District Missions supported by your church's Mission Dollars to the District.** **“Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored.”** Dear Father, we pray Thee, give us Thy Word, that the Gospel may be sincerely preached throughout the world and that it may be received by faith and may work and live in us. So we pray that Thy kingdom may prevail among us through the Word and the power of the Holy Spirit, that the devil's kingdom may be overthrown and he may have no right or power over us, until finally the devil's kingdom shall be utterly destroyed and sin, death, and hell exterminated, and that we may live forever in perfect righteousness and blessedness (from Luther's Large Catechism).
- **DOLLARS FOR MISSIONS** The current project is \$25,000 for masonry repair and repointing at University Lutheran Church in Champaign. The all-brick church and student center has been next to the University of Illinois campus for over 70 years. Some portions of the brick and concrete are in need of immediate, special attention. This project will fund this targeted work to ensure the building remains in good shape and always open for the Word of Christ to be shared and preached to the 60,000 students at the U of I.

Next Small Church Summit in CID: Feb. 22 in Pekin

Trinity Lutheran Church, Pekin, will host the Small Church Summit (SCS) meeting on February 22. The bad weather date is March 1.

Sign-in starts at 9:30 a.m. Opening devotion will commence at 10:00. Adjournment will be at 2:30 that afternoon.

Before lunch, a presentation on Witnessing Helps (that can be found online at <https://www.cidlcms.org/outreach-witness-ministry.html>). Copies of the four Witnessing Helps sheets on 1) beginning an evangelistic conversation, 2) listening discerningly to a nonchurched person, 3) making a simple statement of the Gospel, and 4) defending the resurrection will be provided at the SCS.

Lunch will be provided. In the afternoon, interest sessions will include:

- Further conversation about the Witnessing Helps
- A session with Mr. Trip Rodgers of CID staff on various available resources
- A session with CID President Michael Mohr on record-keeping in smaller churches, especially during pastoral vacancies

SCS is free and available to all congregations of not only CID but also the Southern Illinois District. You need not be from a small church to attend. It works best if you bring along three or four others from your church. Talk in the car on the way to and from.

The deadline to register is Tuesday, February 11.

- REGISTER NOW for the winter Small Church Summit at <https://forms.gle/iwHhyL2kXhnAAsHV8>

CIRCUIT NEWS

There is a story of a glass blower who could make beautiful and intricate vases. One day a man asked him to create a beautiful vase for him. The glass blower agreed. After a few days he showed the completed work of art to the buyer who was delighted with it. He paid the glass blower and started toward home. On the way, he stumbled and dropped the vase. It shattered into hundreds of pieces! The man carefully picked up each piece and brought them to the glass blower. "Can you remake this so that it is exactly like it was before it broke?" he asked. "I'm sorry," said the glass blower, "that is impossible. I can make you another one." "No," responded the man, "I want this same one. It is irreplaceable." The man walked away heartbroken.

We are God's treasured creation. We are irreplaceable vessels which hold a greater treasure - the Gospel of Christ. **"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."** 2Cor.4:7.

We were broken, shattered, seemingly irreparable. Yet God can do what no person can do. He doesn't replace us with something or someone else. He re-creates us! In Christ we are made holy, as if we had never been broken. **"without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."** Eph.5:27 We cannot clearly see this on our outsides. But God sees it on our insides, in our soul. And when we stand before his glorious throne, we shall be his perfect re-creation on the inside and out. **"For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."** 1Cor.15:52

Rev. Jeff Harter



2025 LCMS YOUTH

Looking for information: Ways to Connect:

- CID Lutheran Youth Facebook Group
(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/249327678480252>) – Find the latest district updates and information LCMS Youth Ministry Facebook Group
- End Goals: LCMS Youth Ministry Podcast
<https://www.kfuo.org/category/lcms-youth-ministry-end-goals/> All things youth ministry and some great episodes on the Gathering! Be sure to check out www.lcmsgathering.com under the Resources tab for tons of information, worksheets, budgeting sheets, etc.

Announcing 2025 Central Illinois District Youth Bible Bowl:

TOPIC: The Life of David (1 Samuel 16 – 1 Kings 2:12) DATE: Saturday or Sunday afternoon, March 29-30 or April 5-6 (to be determined as we try to work around as many young people's school and sports schedules as possible). PLACE: a centrally-located venue (usually a church, school, or Camp CILCA, near Springfield) large enough for all the registered teams. AGES: youth involved in their church. The CID Youth Bible Bowl is an opportunity for young people in Junior and Senior High School (grades 6-12) to study a portion of God's word each year and meet with other young people of their circuit and the District. If you would like more information, you may contact Pastor Mark Eddy at Zion Lutheran Church, Taylor Ridge, Illinois (zionlcms@juno.com) or 309-795-1063.

St. John's Lutheran Church
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Walking in the



Light of Christ.

Worship Times

Saturday 5:00pm

Sunday 9:00am

Sunday School/ Bible Study 10:15am



St. John's in Winter Snow

Office Hours

Monday- Wednesday:
8:30am-2:00pm

Closed from 12-1:pm for lunch
Thursday: 8:30am-noon