

St. Petri Evangelical Lutheran Church
804 Grand Avenue
Story City, Iowa 50248-1417

You can also view the newsletter online at www.stpetri.org

The St. Petri Messenger

A publication of St. Petri Evangelical Lutheran Church

JANUARY 2026

St. Petri Worship Schedule

9:00 a.m. Sunday School
10:00 a.m. Sunday Worship Service
11:00 a.m. Coffee/Fellowship

St. Petri Church Office Hours

Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
except, Wednesday afternoon
Church Office Phone: (515) 733-4623
Email address: stpetrilutheran@stpetri.org

Pastor - Rev. Tim Malek
Missionaries - Patrick & Jacqueline Bencke, Japan
Parish/Financial Secretary - Veronica Wright
Custodian - Deb Lancaster



AS WE BID FAREWELL TO THIS YEAR
AND WELCOME THE NEW YEAR,
LET'S JOIN OUR HEARTS IN PRAYER
FOR OUR BELOVED CHILDREN AND
THEIR FAMILIES. MAY THE COMING YEAR
BRING ABUNDANT BLESSINGS, HEALTH
AND JOY TO EACH ONE OF THEM.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

ST. PETRI LUTHERAN CHURCH, STORY CITY, IA

JANUARY 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Every Sunday AM (unless noted) 9a Sunday School 10a Worship Service 11a Coffee//Fellowship				1 HAPPY NEW YEAR!! OFFICE CLOSED	2 Pastor's Day Off	3
4 11:15a Property Comm 11:15a Budget Forum	5 ANNUAL REPORTS DUE! 10:30a Staff mtg.	6 9a-3p Bethany Quilters 12p Pastor Text Study	7 5:30p Compass 6:30p Youth Meal 7p Axis	8	9 Pastor's Day Off	10
11 Communion 11:15a Council Mtg. 6:30p Confirmation at St. Petri	12 10:30a Staff mtg.	13 9a Bethany Quilters 12p Pastor Text Study	14 5:30p Compass 6:30p Youth Meal 7p Axis	15 9:30a R-S Mini. 2pm WELCA Bible Study	16 Pastor's Day Off	17 8a Weekend Women's Bible Study at parsonage
17 ANNUAL MEETING AND POTLUCK	19 10:30a Staff Mtg	20 Feb. Newsletter articles due 9a-3p Bethany Quilters 12p Pastor Text Study	21 5:30p Compass 6:30p Youth Meal 7p Axis	22	23 Pastor Day Off	24
25 Communion 6:30p Confirmation at Bergen	26 ---- LWR Quilt making 9a-noon Mon-Wed ---- 10:30a Staff Mtg	27 9a Bethany Quilters 12p Pastor Study	28 5:30p Compass 6:30p Youth Meal 7p Axis	29	30 Pastor Day Off	31

St. Petri Messenger



JANUARY 2026

Faith Seeking Understanding



Pastor Tim Malek

The month of January is named for the ancient Roman god Janus. Janus had two faces, one looking forward and the other looking behind. Janus was thought to be a good representative for the first month of the New Year, as we find ourselves looking forward to what the future may hold, as well as remembering the past year with all its joys and sorrows. Unlike the ancient pagans, who tried to win favor and fortune with countless gods to no avail, we have a relationship with the living Word and a promise that all our ultimate needs will be taken care of.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. . . . And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be

given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." – Luke 12:22-32 (NRSV)

May you have a blessed 2026 little flock. God is with us.

In the peace of Christ,
Pastor Tim.

Adult New Testament Class

We will get back on track in February when we meet Sunday February 15th at 11:15 AM and discuss Philippians.

Thank you
to all the
people
who were
involved in
making the
Children's Christmas Program such a great
success and a faithful witness. We are truly
blessed. *Pastor Tim*



St. Petri's BUDGET FORUM will be Sunday, January 4th at 11:15am in the fellowship hall. Come hear what the council is deciding.

St. Petri's ANNUAL MEETING will be Sunday, January 18 following the 10:00am worship service. There will be a **POTLUCK** following the annual meeting.



In December 2025

OUR PRAYER LIST

Families of Curt Arends and Faye Arends
(Son and Sister-in-law of Martha Arends),
Darlene Patterson, Kevin Keech,
Judy Schnurstein, Larry Reisetter

PRAYERS OF ONGOING CONCERN

Linda Fevold, Paul Wierson

PRAYERS FOR THOSE NOT NEAR TO US
Pat & Jacqueline Bencke-Japan ELCA
Missionaries; Soldiers; Peace Workers;
Humanitarian Aid Workers; For those in
Ukraine and Russia



Our Japan Missionaries
Patrick & Jacqueline Bencke

PLEASE HAVE YOUR ANNUAL REPORTS
TURNED IN TO THE CHURCH OFFICE BY
MONDAY, JANUARY 5TH. THANK YOU!



THANK YOU to all who sponsored
poinsettias that adorned our altar
during the 2025 Christmas Season

Given By:

Virginia Egemo All My Great Grandchildren
Deborah Lancaster Our Armed Forces
Randy & Kelsey Olson Our Grandparents

Given By:

Eloise Ericson
Carol Foss Ray Foss, Husband
Marlene Helling Jim, Scott, & Gloria Helling
Ernest Houck Family and
Wilbur May Family

Seth & Willow Hill Steve Nibe
Angie Rieck-Hinz & Darlys & Roger Rieck
John Hinz ElLoy & Margery Hinz
Ordean & Liz Johnson Lorna Hoversten
Deborah Lancaster Evelyn Wille and
Byron Wille
Randy & Kelsey Olson Lorna Hoversten
and Gene Olson

Leland, Erin, James and Isabell Schwartz
Julianne & and Diane Schwartz
Olivia Schwartz
Gloria Severson Husband, Milt Severson
Sons, Jerry and Bob

WEATHER CANCELLATIONS

Check the church's answering machine.

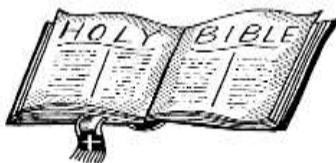
If Roland-Story schools are dismissed early due to bad weather, then church events will also be canceled.



INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY



February newsletter articles
are due Tuesday,
January 20th.



Weekend Women's Bible Study!

Our next meeting is **Saturday, January 17**, at **8am** at the parsonage (915 8th St.). We meet on the third Saturday of each month (except Nov and Dec). Call or text Debra at 320-905-9510 if you have any questions.

OUR MISSION:

We are Disciples of Jesus Christ,
called to grow in Christ
and to invite all to follow him.

If you would like to view
St. Petri's newsletters online, go to:
www.stpetri@stpetri.org



WELCA REPORT

Jan. 15 2pm WELCA Bible Study
Jan. 26-28 9am-noon Quiltmaking

Come join the quilters the last Monday thru Wednesday of each month from 9am-noon for fun, food, & fellowship. There is a variety of tasks – cutting, tying, pinning, and stitching! Everyone welcome!

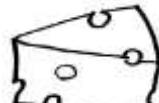


Hi, it's Church Mouse!

As of this writing, we are looking forward to our Christmas Eve service. But the Children's Christmas Program was so enjoyable. The program was given a great start with a piano solo by Lewis DeRidder. And my head jerked up when I heard the first reading, the Confession and Forgiveness, because it was read by the tiniest little reader I'd ever seen, Alysann Patterson. Setting a great example for us all was tiny Tessa Tafolla, who enthusiastically proclaimed "Halleluliah!" into the children's sermon microphone many times.

Thank you to the coordinating adults who pulled this together, Abby Patterson, Kara DeRidder, and Kelsey Olson, and the numerous teenage helpers as well!!

**My heart is full,
Church Mouse**



**St. Petri Lutheran Church
Council Meeting
Approved Minutes
November 9, 2025 – 11:15 a.m.**

Present: Angie Rieck-Hinz, Travis DeRidder, Rick Stover, Angie Stover, Ann Healy, Pat Murken, Kelsey Olson, Abby Patterson, Pastor Tim Malek

Meeting called to order at 11:13 a.m. Pastor Tim offered Devotions.

Angie S. presented the October Minutes for approval. Kelsey made a motion to accept the minutes as written; Abby seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

Rick presented the Treasurer's Report. There were two green sheets, one of which Rick explained was a correction of the September sheet. He plans to double check the collected t-shirt monies for accuracy. He noted that while the budget for October was down \$3,100, it is still in the positive \$8,122 for the year. Angie Rieck-Hinz approved checks written in October. Kelsey made a motion to accept the corrected September information as presented as well as to accept the October information presented; Pat seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

Pastor Tim began his report by reaffirming how much he loves this congregation. He spoke on the Boundaries Training for Region 5 for Gender Justice that he was a part of in October and that he appreciates how members of St. Petri conduct themselves. Pastor again expressed his belief that a committee needs to be formed as well as upgrades need to be made to streamline the church's livestream efforts. Ann made a motion that Pastor Tim send a Christmas appeal letter (similar to last year's); Abby seconded. No discussion. Motion carried. There was some discussion regarding the phone system needing to be upgraded and that the extraneous equipment in the boiler room may need attention as a result. Angie R-H added that she believes that Veronica's computer and the computer in the Volunteer office need to be upgraded.

Ann reported that the final Community Meal for 2025 will be held at the library Saturday the 15th.

There will be a potato bar potluck after church on Commitment Sunday the 23rd.

Abby reported that hymns have been selected for November and December and that a request has been made to tune the organ. Cards to be sent to homebound members will be signed by members during Fellowship time the first Sunday (7) in December and planning is well underway for the Children's Program that is to be held the following Sunday (14).

Pat reported that the kitchen sink at the Parsonage will be repaired soon and that a spigot at the Parsonage has been fixed. He announced that the Property and Trustees committee plans to purchase an automated floor cleaner (i.e. Roomba) for \$1,100. The system will be installed in the sanctuary with initial plans to begin using the device to vacuum the sanctuary. The device may be used for other purposes around the church as St. Petri learns to use it further.

Kelsey reported on a food drive that the Sunday School youth are doing in November. That, along with other activities in November are designed to highlight to the youth the importance of giving. There will be no Sunday School on 11/30, 12/28 or 1/4, and a Christmas party is planned for 12/21. She also noted that cookie decorating kits will be available for the Fellowship treat on 12/14.

Old Business: None

New Business: Deb Lancaster has been hired as Custodian at \$15.00 an hour for 12 hours per week on a one-month trial basis. She will begin November 10 and Pastor Tim and Pat will supervise. Pat made a motion to confirm this arrangement; Ann seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

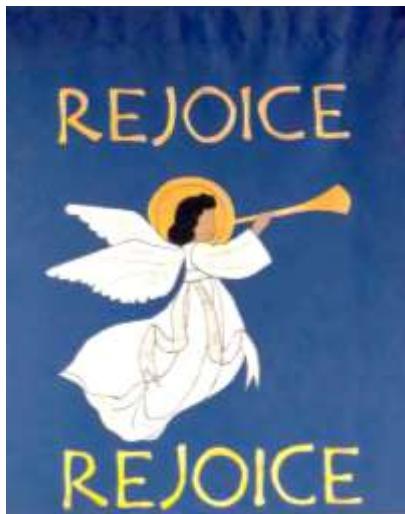
The remainder of the meeting was spent working on updating St. Petri's policy documents. Angie R-H reminded committee heads to get their 2026 budgets to Pat.

Meeting adjourned at 12:32 p.m. and closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Angie Stover

<u>November 2025</u>
income/expense -2,905.58
2025 YTD \$5,216.66

CHRISTMAS 2025



RIVERSIDE LUTHERAN BIBLE CAMP

Register at riversidelbc.org
or call 515-733-5271

DADDY-DAUGHTER DINE & DANCE

Saturday, January 31st 3:30-5:30pm
at the Riverside Dining Hall.

This event has become a favorite to celebrate the father/daughter relationship, & be reminded of our Heavenly Father's love for all of us! Our team will prepare a beautiful atmosphere where family members can share a meal and "trip the light fantastic." We welcome daughters of all ages, as well as uncles, grandpas, or other close friends who may represent a special influence in a daughter's life.

Cost = \$35 for adults, \$5 for children

****Registration tip** = Register the adult - when you login to your family profile, begin with the adult and you will add your child attendees from that registration.

RIVERSIDE SUMMER CAMP 2026

Theme: To Know His Name

Psalm 135:13

Payment Plans: We are sensitive to the reality that many families experienced a year of unknowns. If setting up a payment plan is helpful to your budget, go ahead & begin the registration process online. When it's time for you to submit payment, please call our office & we'll work with you to set up a plan for you.

Camperships: We want to make sure that any child who wants to come to camp gets to camp. If your family's circumstances make paying for all of camp a hardship, please contact our office to find out how we can help. Thanks to the generous support of Riverside partners, we can assist you in covering camp costs if that's what it takes to get your child to camp.

The Bencke Family in Japan



December 2025 (2): 111番



The Christmas Nail is to be hung on a sturdy branch near the trunk that will hold such a spike without being noticed by admirers of the tree. The Christmas tree foreshadows the Christ-tree



Wait for the Lord, His day is near

“It’s just for four years.” In 2005, Emilie was still three years old, and I was explaining to my parents that Patrick and I would be accepting positions as missionaries in Japan and moving for a period of time. In the four years we would be gone, Emilie would go from three years old to seven. Hannah wasn’t even a two-celled organism yet. My mom was hiding her sadness at the impending separation, but I saw her tears through the stoic Minnesotan Polish set jaw.

Our first Christmas was in a different house than the one we live in now. It was older and colder. Single pane glass, no insulation, and thin walls. Only 19 years ago, finding some sort of Christmas tree was a formidable task. There was no Costco then. There was only one mall. Maybe a small shelf of horribly icky ornaments could be found in some stores. Amazon Japan didn’t exist. But we did manage to find one, and at the time it was taller than Emilie. It’s a different story now.

Nineteen years have passed. My mom has passed, too. The tree is smaller now. And I was too busy this year to get the ornaments out, save for four sparkly spheres and “the nail.” My mom brought the nail ornament for me in 2011, the Christmas she came, and died a few days after arriving. I hang the nail and I remember opening that gift after we held a memorial service for her. The nail is a reminder that while it is a joyful thing to rejoice in Christ’s birth, we must remember that Christ, along with all humans, was going to experience death.

Christmas holds a lot of wonderful memories for me, but many sad ones, too. It is a complicated time of year, emotionally. To create a loose analogy, I think of how Christmas trees become heavier as years go along and we add those special ornaments or decorations that make me remember a person or event. Beautiful, and nostalgic, and maybe sad, too. I look at those

branches and while I don't get rid of those precious ornaments, there is always a certain simplicity when I put the ornaments away and it's just the tree and lights. Just me and the Light. Quiet worship, remembering love. Remembering how I was deeply loved by my mom and how I deeply love her now. Thinking about how I love God, and how deeply I am loved. So loved that He sent Jesus. Not just for me, but for every single human on this earth, both ancient and to come.

Today, in chapel, we held our "Blue Christmas" worship service. Sometimes it is called "The Longest Night" in North American churches. I will attach a video of our service here, although it is quite dark and all in Japanese. But you may get a sense of what we, as worship leaders, were attempting to create for students to experience. It was a Taize style service, so we started with John 1:5, which states, "**The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**" Chaplain Wada then explained what this service means, which is that Christmas has a complicated peripheral story that is not all about sparkling lights, dates with significant others, or Kentucky Fried Chicken. The marketing messages are powerful, and for those who are lonely, feeling loss, suffering from hardship, experiencing their first Christmas without a beloved person, are hungry, or who are waiting for any number of mercies, Christmas and New Year can be especially difficult. It is for me, too.

We sang the beautiful Taize hymn "Wait for the Lord, his day is near. Wait for the Lord, be strong, take heart." Quite appropriate for Advent, as well. After this, students were asked to write the prayers of their heart on a small piece of paper and deposit it in a box on the way out of chapel. Those written prayers will be a part of the offering at our Christmas worship next week. We were recognizing that sometimes all we have that we can offer the Lord is our suffering.

May the closing of this Advent season usher in joy that uplifts and sustains you into 2025. Thank you for another year of steadfast partnership and commitment to proclaiming the Good News to God's kingdom both in your church and outside her walls. We look forward to hearing from you and wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! If you don't understand Japanese but would like to watch, listen, and perhaps simply pray along with us, follow this link.



<https://youtu.be/P5AXne1-dBk>

LEFT: This is our Christmas tree. When I first purchased it for our first Christmas in Kumamoto, it was taller than Emilie and Hannah (pictured) was not even born yet!