

Please have all reports for the ANNUAL REPORT submitted to Crystal Johnson by Wednesday, January 18th. You can email them to elkcreekchurch@gmail.com

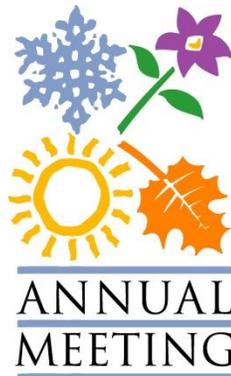
Thank you!

CHRIST IN OUR HOME

The January-March books are now available in the church Narthex. Large print is also available there.

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting will be Sunday, January 29 after church. A potluck meal will be served with the meeting to follow.



Council Meeting is Tuesday, January 3 at 7 p.m.

Sunday School News

Sunday school will resume January 8th at 9:45.

Lutefisk & Meatball Supper!

Saturday, February 18, 2023

**Prep Day: Friday, February 17*

\$20 for meal with Lutefisk. \$15 for meatball meal without Lutefisk.

Takeout's will be available upon request

Ruby's Pantry

2nd Tuesday of the month

4:00-5:30 pm

Osseo Fire Dept (behind Stockmans)

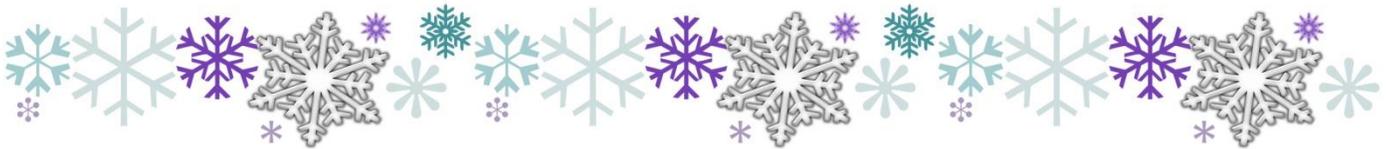
\$25 cash donation

You will receive an abundance of grocery items.

No income or residency requirements.

If you missed the *Nativity Experience* or the *Christmas Program* our church's young people presented in December, I hope you will mark them as a December priority in the future.

There may have been tears, frustration, and some last-minute jitters to go with these events, but the productions themselves remind us of the reason we even celebrate the Christmas season: Christ's arrival on earth as an infant and the joyous occasion it is was. But we also won't soon forget the sinister actions of King Herod in his evil plot to find the Christ child. All of this to say, we need to thank not only our young people for serving as the actors, but all of those behind-the-scenes adults that served in various roles. We see each of you and thank you!



A History of Holy Baptism

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied—altogether there were about twelve of them. (Acts 19:1-7)

There has long been a debate among Christian denominations and their theologians about what is the authentic way to baptize people into the body of Christ. Some say that John's baptism of repentance using just water is not authentic baptism because the Holy Spirit was not received. John the Baptist would agree with them. John told the people that he baptizes with water for repentance—a turning away from sin moving toward the grace of God, Jesus Christ. Therefore, anyone baptized with just water is not Christian, including all Christian denominations who still baptize with water, as Lutherans do.

Others would say that baptism is only authentic when you receive the Holy Spirit, like Paul asks the Ephesians in the reading from Acts 19 above. John the Baptist would again agree with them. In all three Gospels of Mathew, Mark, and Luke, John the Baptist points to Jesus as the one who will baptize with the **“Holy Spirit and fire.”** (See Mt. 3, Mark 1, Lk. 3) John the Baptist understood that his baptizing with water for repentance, points people to believe in Jesus who was to come after him. Therefore, some Christian denominations believe that only baptism with the Holy Spirit is authentic.

However, in the Gospel of John, chapter 3, the secret dialogue between Nicodemus and Jesus during the night, brings together John the Baptist's baptism with water for repentance and baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire. Jesus tells Nicodemus he must be **“born of water and Spirit.”** Jesus puts these two ways of baptizing together, to be the one authentic baptism.

We can see this being played out with the story of Jesus and the 12 apostles who followed him during his life on earth. Many of them were baptized with John's water baptism for repentance. Jesus also washed their feet with water at the Last Supper (John 13); and then later, just as Jesus promised them, the Holy Spirit came upon them with tongues of fire (Acts 2); and the church was born. So, when Paul comes to Ephesus and finds out that the believers there were only baptized into John's baptism for repentance, he baptizes them in the name of Jesus and they receive the Holy Spirit, thereby joining the baptism with water for repentance, together with the baptism of the Spirit.

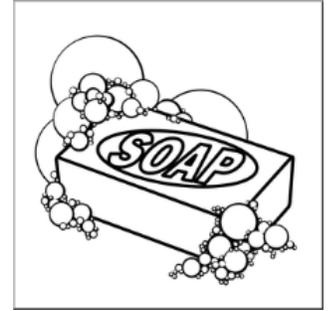
The very first baptism of water and the Spirit is Jesus himself. When he went to John baptizing at the Jordan river, Jesus entered the water of John's baptism. Coming out of the water, Jesus saw the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Holy Spirit descending upon him like a dove with the voice of God thundering, **“This is my Beloved Son; with whom I am well pleased.”** (Mt. 3:) Since then, we are baptized in the same way, **“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”** Authentic baptism is a baptism of water, the Word (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit.

This is the history of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism that makes and binds us to the body of Christ, the church on earth. At the beginning of every new year we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus (Jan. 8, 2023) to ground us in God's grace and love for all the world. Throughout 2023, remember you are the baptized children of God, called to live and do God's will. It's the only New Year's Resolution you need. Thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Ahles

HAVE YOU BEEN LOOKING FOR A WAY TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR MISSION PROJECTS?

We are collecting **bars of soap**! How easy is that? Next time you stop at the store, grab as many bars as you would like and bring them to church for the Mission Kits our Ladies assemble! Our little church has done marvelous things and we ARE making a HUGE impact throughout our communities and world-wide missions. Thank you for contributing to these projects.



**Our projects will be listed in the Annual Meeting report! Check it out!*



WELCA Meeting 12-11-22

Meeting opened with Creed and Theme Verse at 9:45 am on Dec 11, 2022. Secretary's report was read and approved as read. Treasurer's report November income: \$277.00, Expenses \$5825.53 (annual donations). Ending Balance \$7109.11. Savings balance no change \$1456.73. Report was accepted and placed on file.

Old Business:

Becky reported that the Osseo Ministerial Account has \$5000.00 in it. At this time we will not make any donation. Discussion on money given for shipping of Comfort Quilts, will increase to \$100.00 motion by Becky, 2 nd by Lynn, approved. Anticipating \$2000.00 for one quarter of the electric given annually to the church. Jan reported that 52 pairs of pajama's were given to Pajama Grandma. Gifts for Ukraine Family will be taken tomorrow. A Thrivent Grant from Keith may be used toward additional needs of the family and possibly bike and trike request.

New Business:

Election of Officers. The following officers will retain their positions: Co-Presidents: Jan Berg and Stephanie Rumstick, Secretary: Barb Fischer, Treasurer: Becky Rongstad. Church Council Representative: Jan Berg, Altar Committee: Sheryl Ellwood(1), Brittany Franson(2), Debra Ebert (1), and Linda Odness (2). Auditors: Brandi Berg and Barb Howard, Nominating Committee: Debra Ebert and Tammy Dannenberg. Motion by Linda to accept, 2 nd by Tammy, passed. Ladies are working on the new book for 2023. Will be moving to 1 large group. Any updates to phone numbers let Stephanie, Jan, or Barb know.

Lutefisk Dinner: Will be held February 18, 2023. Will plan to charge \$20 for meal with Lutefisk. \$15 for meatball meal without Lutefisk. Takeout's will be available upon request. Plan to have 4 settings (90 each). Sign up sheets for donations and workers will be available in the Narthex in January. Will advertise in Ad Delite, WHTL, TCC Cable. Stephanie will call about meatball mix and Lefse, Becky to check with Family Farms on Lutefisk.

Thank You's were read and will be posted on bulletin board. Discussion on some help needed for Marty

**52 PAIRS
OF
JAMMIES
WERE
DONATED
TO
PAJAMA
GRANDMA
THIS YEAR!**

Goss's health needs.

Meeting closed with Offering and Lord's Prayer at 10:43 am.

Barb Fischer, Sec.



Lines from LaVerne... I love Christmas and what it stands for. Love, God is love and we need to remember love each other as Jesus did. Repent and trust. Renew our faith. Jesus did not come to be entertaining. He did not come just to make us feel good. He came to tell us about the kingdom of God which is satisfying and even life-giving. Jesus came to make us over again, into someone whose thinking would be entirely new. Ordinary thinkers cannot gasp what Jesus is preaching about here. That's the point. It seems backward and upside down to us. So our lives must be turned upside down if we are to be saved. In our world the rich are blessed and the poor are pitied. Jesus asks us, "What's most important to you and me?" Is your heart fixed on the possessions of this world or on God? If the most important thing in your life is our glorious God and the gracious gifts he gives us – the forgiveness of our sins because of our Jesus, the life and salvation he brought – then we have a grip on life, that endures to all eternity. Isn't this the most wonderful gift anyone could have? God works in ways upside down and backwards. In heaven everything will be right side up again. We have to wait. But we can wait with confidence and full of hope, trusting in the Word preached in the name of Jesus. Jesus: who made it possible for our salvation. We have our faith and trust, so we believe and rejoice. Help us to take one day at a time, dear Lord. We give thanks to you, Lord Jesus for all the wonderful things you have done for us and for all the insults and pain you borne for us. May we always let you guide us on our journey to our heavenly home. So why do we celebrate the birth of Jesus? He came to save us, to guide us and to show his love with his healing power. May we know you more clearly and love you more dearly and follow you more nearly forever. You might ask, "where is God?" Have you talked to Him recently? He asks, "Where have you been?" What would you do if Jesus came to spend some time with you?

P.S. I wish you all a great new year!

Your Lay Minister,

LaVerne



Elk Creek Lutheran Church Council Meeting -- December 6, 2022

The meeting was called to order by President Ryan Johnson at 7:00 PM. Members present were: Pastor Valerian Ahles, Jan Berg, Brian Christopherson, Ryan Johnson, Rhonda Koval, Lindsey Nelson, Lori Nelson, Becky Rongstad, and Stephanie Rumstick. Crystal Johnson was also present.

Devotions and Prayer -- Pastor began by reading Psalm 139 : 1-18. He reminded us that God is everywhere and whether we are awake or asleep, we can not hide from him. We may even feel "boxed in" by God. But he is also with us even in our safest hours and in our deepest despair. He closed with a prayer.

Secretary's Report -- It was noted that the Secretary's Report for November of 2022 had been sent to each of the Council members electronically, corrections made, and it had been approved prior to it being printed in the December Newsletter. Lori reminded members to Please Reply to the email regarding the Minutes of each meeting.

Financial Report -- was presented by Becky Rongstad with information provided by Haukeness Financial Service. She noted that there was no bill from TCC due to credit on the account. Lindsey indicated that Matt Weaver will be presenting information at the January Council Meeting about the possibility of combining the Internet for the parsonage and church rather than those being separate accounts. Becky said she had been asked by several individuals about the possibility of moving some of the money from the Checking Account into a CD so it could earn interest. She noted that CCF Bank does not allow churches to get a CD with 3% rate of interest. The Council discussed contacting Jessica Berg to check on options from Thrivent. Becky will contact Jessica before the January meeting. Rhonda made a motion to accept the Financial Report as presented; Brian seconded; the motion passed.

Elk Creek Lutheran Church Account

- General Checking Account - \$37,884.46
- General [2050 Fund] Savings Account \$38,896.66
- Building Fund Checking - \$4,916.48
- Memorial Fund - \$5,095.41

Joint Parish Financial Accounts

Assets	Elk Creek Immanuel Total		
Beginning Balance -	\$4,799.47	\$7,199.72	\$11,999.19
Deposits & Interest -	\$3,463.95	\$5,194.42	\$8,658.37
Payments -	\$3,174.47	\$4,761.66	\$7,936.13
Liabilities & Equity -	\$5,087.95	\$7,632.48	\$12,720.43
Ending Balance -	\$5,087.95	\$7,632.48	\$12,720.43

Pastor's Report --

Pastor conducted 4 worship services, plus the Community Thanksgiving Service. He attended 3 Coffee Fellowships while selecting Hymns. He provided Holy Communion to 13 parishioners during visits to shut-ins and at area nursing homes. He met with the Confirmation class 3 times; they are studying Luther's Small Catechism. Pastor attended the Joint Parish Council Meeting and 2 Dairyland Conference Pastor's Text Studies on Zoom. He baptized Beau Peterson on Nov. 13 and led the service at the Dove Nursing Home on Nov. 6. He met with Matt Weaver as a mentor for his mostly online Lay School Ministry classes. He was on vacation from Nov. 25-28. Pastor Ahles' Office Hours at Elk Creek are generally from 8:30 - 12:30 on Wednesday mornings. Pastor Ahles can be reached at [cell] 533-0939 or [parsonage] 694-2427.

WELCA Report -- Jan and Stephanie indicated that the Women's Group Officers are making preparations for the Appreciation Dinner on December 14 which will be followed by the Sing-A-Long. The Group organized the church's support for a local family from Ukraine. The group purchased coats, boots, mittens, and socks. Additional items were placed on the Giving Tree so that all church members could help in supporting the family. Jan will be delivering the wrapped presents to the Osseo Elementary School for distribution to the family. They noted that the Group voted to again hold a sit-down Lutefisk Dinner on February 18. The Women's Group will meet on December 11.

Youth Group -- The Youth Group is busy preparing for the Living Nativity Experience on December 16.

Sunday School -- Members of the Sunday School are busy preparing for the Sunday School Christmas Program on December 18.

Choir, Memorial Committee, & Office Staff -- No reports

Joint Parish Council Report -- Ryan indicated that during the Joint Parish Council meeting on Nov. 15, the group compromised on a 4% raise in compensation for the pastor. He added that Elk Creek had asked for \$100 more for parsonage rent and Strum proposed a \$25 increase. He noted that there was a difference of opinion as to whether this should be considered as "rent" or fees for "maintenance." It was agreed that the additional amount would be \$25 and that a separate account would be set up detailing expenses at the parsonage. The information from this account will be available to both churches.

Old Business --

- **Shelves in the Social Room** – No update as yet.
- **Custodian** – Ryan said that Anson had been looking into finding someone new to take over this job. So far, there are no takers.
- **Snow Plowing** – Ryan said he did the first plow because Nathan Rongstad was broken and he didn't really want to take on this task. Ryan has not yet spoken to Bruce Thompson about plowing.
- **Wall Oven** – Lindsey indicated that thanks to a donation in memory of Michael Nelson and from the Memorial Committee, a new Wall Oven has been purchased and will be installed in the next few weeks.
- **Thanksgiving Eve Service** – Following discussion, Lindey suggested donating money to the VA Home in Strum. It was decided that half of the money will be used to purchase gift cards from Robbees for the individual veterans and the rest be given directly to the VA Home.

New Business --

- **Use of the Church Building** – Crystal talked about the possibility of using the church basement to offer classes to the community as a mission project. The classes could involve computing, cell phone usage, making lefse, or any other talent that someone has and would be willing to share. The ARDC might also be a source for teachers. Classes would be free – except for the cost of materials. They would begin in January or February and would involve one or more sessions as necessary. Crystal will organize these. She will advertise and put information about them on the church's FaceBook page. Lindsey made a motion to approve the program; Lori seconded; and the motion passed.
- **AED Updating** – It was noted that the battery for the AED in the church expired in 2021 and we also need new pads for it. That AED is from a discontinued brand. The area First Responders group has offered to help pay the cost of a refurbished device or to pay for half of the cost of a new AED device. It would also then be available to any First Responder to grab and use it if it was necessary. Lindey made a motion to ask the First Responders to furnish a refurbished AED device; Jan seconded; the motion passed. Lindsey will contact the First Responders group.
- **Monthly Bills** – Lori made a motion to pay Jan Berg for the Baptism Towel which she had purchased for the church in 2021 and 20222; Rhonda seconded; and the motion passed.
- **Donation** – Following discussion, Rhonda made a motion to make a \$500 to Marty Goss to help with his medical expenses; Brian seconded; and the motion passed/

Next Meeting -- The next Council meeting will be on January 3 at 7 PM.

Adjournment -- Brian made a motion to adjourn; Rhonda seconded; motion passed. The meeting was closed at 8:25 PM with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted by Lori Nelson, Recording Secretary



\$122 has been directed to Elk Creek Lutheran Church from our members. **Thank you** for your contributions.