

WIND SWEEP



Monthly Newsletter



December 2023



Eric E. O'Neil

It's that time of year when I clean the house a bunch. Company is coming, sometimes multiple times per week, and for my comfort, I have to just stay ready. And, let's face it, you and I know that cleaning is just one small part of getting ready for company. The part, though, that I am noticing this year is the waiting and watching.

After the house is ready, the coffee is on, the cookies hot and fresh, when there is seemingly nothing more to do, I find something. Waiting and watching.

For many of us, that waiting and watching now happens via the wonders of phone tracking. Little bubbles of family and friends slide around a screen and we can open the door for their arrival without once looking out the window.

There's beauty in that. But, I do like watching and waiting without the electronic assistance.

Headlights turning the corner? My hearts flutter. Checking my watch because surely ten minutes have passed? It's only been three since I last looked. Car doors closing outside? Move to the window in hope and anticipation. Not knowing enlivens my senses and for a few minutes, I live and experience more vividly, more intentionally.

This Advent, there is something more to do. It's that something more, that I want to invite you into this season.

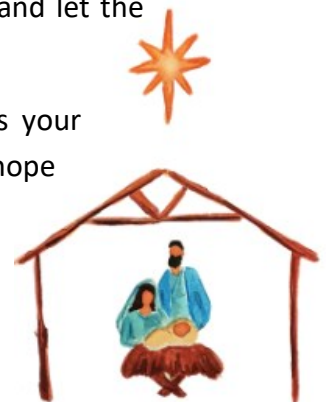
Now, to be clear, I'm not asking you to make yourself more busy (though, there's plenty to do-see pages 2 and 3 for all of the ways that we are marking the season together as Spirit of Joy). Instead, what I'm inviting you to do is to practice presence and joy.

As we wait for Jesus together, I challenge you to tune in to all that is happening around you. Listen closely to the sounds of the season and experience Jesus in them. Let the lights and the beauty take your breath away and give thanks to God for the exhilaration. Sit in the quiet moments and let the warmth wash over you as listen for the still small voice that says, "Be still."

Watch and wait for the Christ child, but do not put your waiting on autopilot. As your anticipation builds, let your senses fire and feel your heart race with wonder. For hope

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you;
he is the Messiah, the Lord."

Luke 2:11





celebrate
CHRISTMAS
@SPIRIT OF JOY

Holden Evening Prayer

Wednesdays 6:30pm

11/29, 12/6, 12/13, 12/20

Advent Festival

Sunday, December 3 - 3:30pm

Children's Christmas Program

Sunday, December 10 - 11:00am

Blue Christmas Worship

Sunday, December 17 - 5:00pm

Christmas Eve Worship

Sunday, December 24

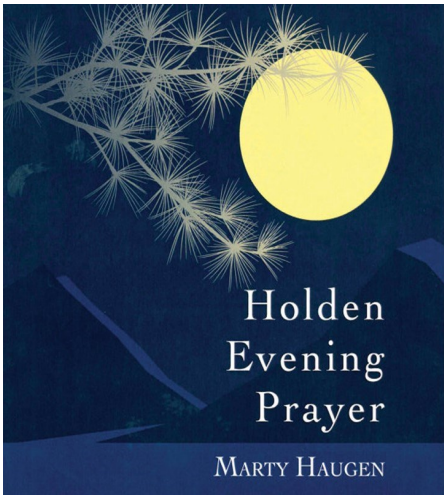
3:00 (Family), 5:00, 7:00pm

No
Morning
Worship

Lessons & Carols

Sunday, December 31 - 9:30am

One Service Only



Holden Evening Prayer

Wednesdays During Lent | 6:30 PM
11/29, 12/6, 12/13, 12/20

This beautiful service of light and dark, song and the Word, is a traditional favorite and we're thrilled to have a wide variety of voices leading us through the season.

A banner for 'Advent Festival' with a blue border. It includes a signpost graphic with 'out of the BLUE', the title 'Advent Festival', the date 'SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3 | 3:30 - 5:00 PM', and a list of activities: 'MUSIC ** PIE ** HOT COCOA ** GROUP ART PROJECT ** THE CHRISTMAS STORY'. It also says 'Free Event for All Ages' and features a row of stylized Christmas trees at the bottom.

out of the
BLUE

Advent Festival

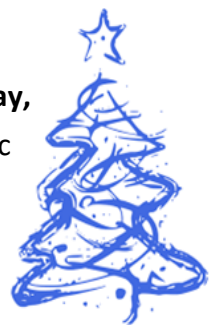
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3 | 3:30 – 5:00 PM

MUSIC ** PIE ** HOT COCOA ** GROUP ART PROJECT ** THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Free Event for All Ages

Blue Christmas-Lost in the Night Worship Service

Spirit of Joy will offer a worship service of *Remembrance, Healing and Hope* on **Sunday, December 17 at 5:00 PM**. This worship service allows us to pause in the middle of a hectic season for “making merry” and acknowledge that for many of us it can be a season of anxiety and sorrow. We gather for Advent songs, readings from Scripture, silence and prayer with others needing support and healing this Advent season.



2024 Stewardship Dreaming

2023 has been a tremendous year in Mission and Ministry as Spirit of Joy. We welcomed three new staff members and Deacon Hannah transitioned roles. We went to camp, worshiped on summer evenings, launched new small groups, and gathered for Town Hall Meetings to tell the story.

We strengthened and expanded our Milestone Ministry, brought back the Confirmation Banquet, and focused deeply on developing relationships. With all the activity and a growing participation and membership, it seems appropriate to look back at our goals, assess how we have done, and begin to look forward to 2024. If you'd like to read more about how we did towards our 2023 goals, look back to the November newsletter in your email or on our website. This month, a look forward to 2024.



Our first goal for 2024 is again to fully fund our mission plan.

In order to accomplish that goal we are projecting that we will need to grow our income by 7.5%. While our total proposal for our budget is actually a reduction from what was proposed for 2023, your Leadership Team believes that it better reflects our reality. We project to end 2023 with our largest ever annual income. We welcomed more than 80 new partners, and we saw upticks in participation in mission and ministry across all of Spirit of Joy. That ministry can't continue without you!

To establish an Endowment Fund.

This work began in 2023. We approved bylaws and policies in February. Then, at our Congregation Meeting we elected our Endowment Committee. Now, we need to give them work to do. The funds that we hope to establish are: 1. The General Fund, 2. The Capital Fund, 3. The Mission Outreach Fund, 4. The Faith Formation Fund. We believe that this is one strategy for securing our future. If you would like to name a fund, a one-time gift of \$25,000 allows you to do that. Speak to Joel Christensen if you are interested in leading the way into our future in this way!

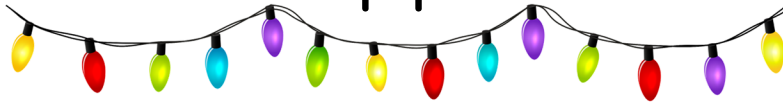
To reduce our mortgage debt by \$300,000.

We accomplished this goal in 2023 without trying. As our Overflowing campaign completes its second year in April, we look forward to continuing to move towards a reduced debt burden and more freedom for mission and ministry in years to come. We're very excited to have new building use policies in place that allow us to practice Radical Hospitality with still more partners and neighbors. In the fall of 2023, our regular weekly building use exceeds 800 people per week. Everything from worship and preschool to investment clubs, Tai Chi, and community bands are blessed to have a beautiful safe facility for their work. Do know, Pr. Eric is beginning to whisper that he might challenge us to be debt free by our 25th Anniversary on All Saints Sunday 2027!

You can help us to achieve these goals by prayerfully considering how you and your family can practice extravagant generosity with the pledge cards mailed to your home and available throughout Spirit of Joy's gathering space. Commitment Worship was Wednesday Nov. 15th and Sunday Nov. 19th, but if you missed those dates and would still like to bless us with your support going into 2024 just drop the card in the mail, or bring it by the office.

THANKYOU!

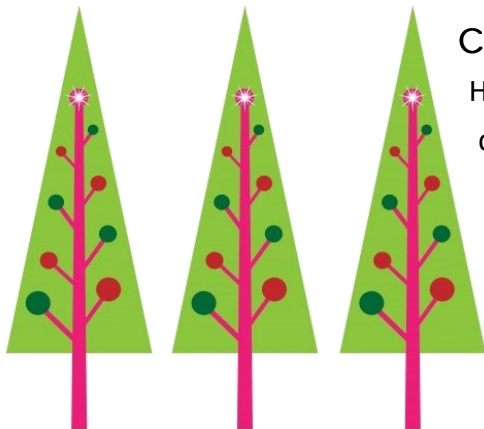
Outreach Opportunities



Necessities for Neighbors Sunday, December 3

Peace Lutheran Church | 1:30-5:00 p.m.

Spirit of Joy partners and friends have collected toilet paper through the month of November. All donations will be delivered to Peace Lutheran to use during the distribution. Sign up on our website at spiritofjoy.net/signups, to join in helping on Sunday, December 3.



Children of Joy Collection

Help us bless our neighbors by donating items that can be distributed through our mission partner Church on the Street. Items include: Granola bars, Mini meat sticks, Hot cocoa packets, Stretch gloves, Men's gloves, Hand warmers, Small fleece blankets. Collection boxes will be located in the education wing and by Spirit of Joy's front entrance. Please drop off all items by Sunday, December 17. Thank you!

Church Office Closed

Monday, December 25 - Wednesday, December 27
& Monday, January 1

Year-End Giving. Any gift that you would like to be reflected in your 2023 giving must be into the Spirit of Joy office by no later than noon on Friday, December 29. Thank you for continued support of the mission and ministry of Spirit of Joy.

Congregational Life



Dear Siblings in Christ,

Thank you for an amazing 2023! God has been good to us ALL the time! It has been a year of exploring and discovering how God is calling each of us to serve boldly. As we approach a new year, it is my prayer that God continues to strengthen and inspire you to do greater things in His name. May the Lord bless you and keep, may His face shine upon you and may He bountifully fill you with His grace. See below a list of faith formation and fellowship opportunities for the month of December! Come to one, come to all, come to what works for you!

Aging Matters

Thank you for participating in our Aging Matters series! The final forum of the Aging Matters series is Worship Planning. This forum is scheduled for Monday, December 4, 10:30am. Come and visit with Pastor Eric as he walks you through planning a funeral service.

Social Justice: Immigration | Tuesday, December 12, 9:30am

Why does immigration matter in our society? How is immigration a social justice issue? And how does immigration as a social justice issue concern Spirit of Joy and the church at large? Join us for a discussion on how the church can make a difference. Sign up online www.spiritofjoy.net/signups.

Monthly Women's Rotational In-Home Fellowship

- Monday, December 11, 5:30pm, dinner/lunch at a restaurant. Contact Deb Stapelman for more information.
- Tuesday, December 12, 9am at church for the Immigration presentation in Shalom. Contact Suzanne DeBoom.

Sunday Forum | 10:00am (during Faith Formation Hour)

Bring your coffee and a cookie! Our focus for Epiphany is Prayer. Check out the SOJ website for our Sunday Forum discussion topics. No prior knowledge is required.

Sharing the Dream Guatemala | Sunday, December 3

Join us in supporting our mission partner, Sharing the Dream Guatemala. They'll bring their annual pop-up shop to Shalom Center for your Christmas shopping needs and Executive Director, Lauren Vaske will introduce us to their ministry during the Sunday Forum in Shalom at 10am.

Save the Date

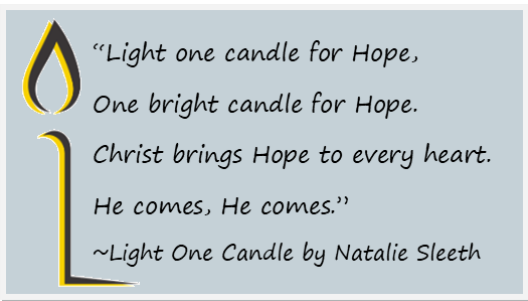
- **Saturday, January 13:** Spirit of Joy Fellowship at the Sioux Falls Stampede (fundraiser for HS Youth)
- **Monday, January 15, 5:00pm:** A Social Gathering For ALL: Sing Along with Char Sorum

Creation Care Corner

*“Hope blooms in a weary world When creatures, once forlorn, find wilderness reborn.
Hope blooms in a weary world; The promised green of Eden comes.” – ELW 726*

In this **Advent** season when we light a candle for hope, we can look for signs of hopefulness from others working to protect God’s creation. Though much collective action remains to be endeavored, there are a myriad of discoveries, inventions, and clever ways our global community is working to care for God’s creation and combat the climate crisis. Let’s take a look at some:

- Across the country, many decommissioned coal plants are being turned into clean energy powerhouses that generate solar and wind energy and serve as a battery storage system
- Rooftop greenhouses (See the original rooftop farm at Lufa Farms, Montreal lufa.com) are types of farms people are placing on rooftops of abandoned buildings or in a downtown setting, bringing ag to the cities, growing food without pesticides, capturing rainwater, composting waste, and selling food to their communities.
- Fishing nets that break down from UV light over time vs sitting perpetually in the ocean entangling ocean life are in the works so eventually we may see an ocean free of ghost nets
- In Japan, they are using food waste to propel trains (search for “the Japanese tourist train that’s fueled by ramen”)
- What is PETase? It’s a fairly recently discovered enzyme, PET hydrolase, that has been found to break down PET (polyethylene terephthalate). It is a plastic-eating fungal enzyme that will work under certain conditions on certain kinds of plastics with more research to be done.
- Ever heard of Mr. Trash Wheel in Baltimore? This is a trash interceptor vessel that is moored in place and keeps trash from entering the ocean, operated by current or solar power. There are other cities with these trash wheels. On that note, there are also large interceptors sponsored by The Ocean Cleanup. Visit theoceancleanup.com to learn more.
- Culdesac Tempe – Read more about this car-free neighborhood
- Ever heard of the AlgaRay robot or the AlgaVator? Seaweed Generation is a group aiming to help keep oceans healthy and keep performing as the large carbon sinks they are intended to be by working with seaweed and technology. Check them out.
- Permeable or porous pavement - Many cities are eschewing traditional pavement in favor of alternative materials that allow rain and snowmelt to seep through the surface to underlying layers of soil and gravel.
- Solar canopies on parking lots are being used in more and more places. They can generate clean energy and provide shade for cars at the same time.
- Electric car sales continue to increase across the United States and elsewhere.



Thank you, God, for innovators and creators. We pray for people working to keep your oceans, forests, plains, lakes, rivers and deserts safe from those who would cause them deliberate harm.

Merry Christmas from the Creation Care Team!

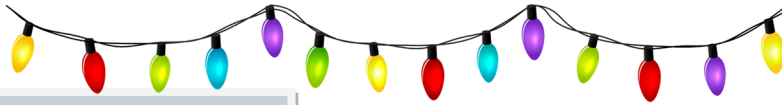
Holiday Recycling Tips:

- You can recycle wrapping paper that doesn’t have foil on it be sure to throw away the tape.
- Take your real Christmas trees to the drop-off points.
- Take Christmas light strands that don’t work to the Hazardous Waste Facility instead of throwing them in the garbage and please do not put them in recycling.

Spirit of Joy Preschool



SPIRIT OF JOY
PRESCHOOL



The preschool year is off to a solid start with twelve weeks already completed as well as fall conferences. There are twenty-three children enrolled attending 2,3,4, or 5 days per week including returning families, partners, and new friends from the community.

As a class, we explore a new concept each week. The love of learning is evident as children ask questions, try new activities, and share ideas. Children have been learning about the changing seasons (exploring the beautiful grounds and gardens), forest animals, harvesting and getting to know new friends. Additionally, a new Bible story is a part of weekly Chapel time. Recently, Deacon Hannah asked the children what they know about God and the list was impressive. The answers included being loved, protected, forgiven, and created by God. We were taught by the preschool children that day.

In December we will spend time preparing for Christmas using our senses and learning the Bible stories leading to Jesus' birth. It is sure to be an exciting time. Advent Blessings to you as you prepare for the coming of Jesus.

Registration for Fall 2024 Begins in January!

Visitors have already begun inquiring about Fall 2024 preschool classes and registration dates. Spirit of Joy Partners and current students can register prior to the community. Mark your calendars and reserve your spot right away!

Registration Opens:

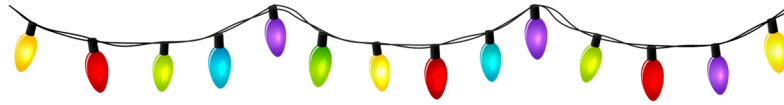
January 2 for Current Preschool Families & Partners

January 8 to Community

Registration forms can be submitted online, in person, or paper copy via mail or drop off. Both a registration form and fee must be submitted to hold a specific spot. Brochures and forms can be found at the Welcome Center by December 24. Contact Amy Cauble, Director, with questions or to tour the preschool anytime. All are welcome!



Odds & Ends



Tai Chi | 1st & 3rd Saturday | 10:30 AM | The Well



Tai chi is a gentle form of exercise, accessible to nearly everyone, that uses slow movements coordinated with breath to encourage relaxation, improve balance, and move the body without pain. Adaptations can be made for those who find standing uncomfortable. Please join us.

SOJ CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

Meets on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. 10am.

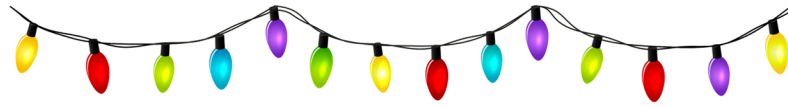
Dec. 19, 10am in the SoJ Library



Spirit of Joy Mobile App

Download the Spirit of Joy mobile app, through [Tithe.ly](https://www.tithe.ly). This is a great way to know what's happening at Spirit of Joy.

Youth News



High School Youth

- There is still room to register for the ELCA Youth Gathering! Call the office if interested.
- Lefse Fun Raiser: Thank you for supporting your H S youth fundraiser. Because of your generous donations, your service, and Lefse purchase, we raised \$1,800!

December Schedule

9th-12th Grade: join us for a night of fellowship and learning.

Wednesday nights from 7-8pm in the youth room! Bring a friend.

- 12/4 - Youth Gathering Meeting for students, parents, and chaperons at 6pm
- 12/6 - Disruption
- 12/13 - Fellowship/Service Project-Candy Packing
- 12/20 & 12/27 - NO Youth Group, Merry Christmas!!



Books that Matter

This month we're reading

“The Color Purple” by Alice Walker

Discussion: Mon, Dec 11 @ 7pm at SoJ

Sign up at spiritofjoy.net/signups

\$10 to Spirit of Joy or available at major retailers.

Spirit of Joy Leadership Team Meeting Minutes



November 16, 2022 @ 6:30 p.m. at Spirit of Joy



I. Unfinished Business

- A. **2024 Budget:** Motion by Chad Wolff and second by Ali Lennon to present the final 2024 budget proposal to the congregation on November 26, 2023. Motion carried by voice vote.

II. New Business

- A. **Annual Meeting Agenda:** Motion by Ali Lennon and second by Chad Wolff to approve the agenda for the Annual Fall Congregational Meeting on November 26, 2023. Motion carried by voice vote.
- B. **Employee Retention Credit:** Motion by Ali Lennon and second by Amy Eisenbeisz to explore buy-out options and accept offer contingent upon findings. Motion carried by voice vote.

III. Meeting Review and Lord's Prayer: The meeting was adjourned following the Lord's Prayer.

*Next Leadership Team Meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, December 21, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.***

Financials through October 2023

Financials through October 2023

Checking Account:

General Fund	(\$57,936.79)
Building Fund	\$38,935.21
Donor Restricted	(\$7,371.79)
Sunday School	\$1,603.95
Reserve Fund	\$4,360.10
Petty Cash	\$200.00

	October 2021	October 2022	October 2023
Attendance	???	916	1809
General Offering	\$ 39,351.62	\$ 45,812.65	\$ 49,085.99
Building Offering	\$ 18,881.51	\$ 28,515.51	\$ 17,867.67

Savings Accounts:

Building	\$118,197.62
Donor Restricted	\$69,516.34
Total Cash Balance	\$167,504.64

Overflowing! Campaign Totals

Pledged: \$678,770
Received as of October 31, 2023: \$458,842.16

Year-to-date Income for Ministry	\$530,684.46
Year-to-date Expenses for Ministry	\$642,625.64
Net Income/Deficit for Ministry	(\$111,941.18)



Non Profit Org

U.S. Postage

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Sioux Falls, SD

Permit No. 7771

Return Service Requested

BABY'S first *Christmas* MILESTONE



SOJ babies prepared to celebrate their first Christmas with Baby Jesus