WIND SWEPT

Spirit of Joy

Monthly Newsletter

November 2026

"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." -1 Corinthians 3:11

We are one year from our 25th Anniversary! As we anticipate that milestone there is so much to celebrate that we'll plan to do it all fall of next year. The first acknowledgement to which I'd like to return is that we would not be where we are if not for those who have gone before us. As we imagine new uses for our campus and develop a plan through which to prioritize and understand those dreams, I'm reminded of the foresight from the SD Synod to purchase our property. I think of Pr. Jeff Eisele standing amongst corn stalks and praying for the community that would grow in this place. I remember the Thurman's, Sopko's, Kuzeppa's, and others who first drew up plans, planted trees, and poured their sweat into the property. As we renew our commitment to Debt Reduction, the Annual Budget, and the growth of the Endowment Fund I'm reminded of the generosity practices that embraced Feeding South Dakota and Lutheran Social Services as a first priority and value that would focus our shared gaze on loving our neighbors more than our own comfort. I think of the creative and courageous thinkers who worked to pay off previous mortgages and the givers who made it possible. And, as we set new goals for the next 3-5 years, I'm filled with gratitude for those who set our community values and all that have embraced them since. I think of the cottage meetings, the meals, and late-night prayer vigils that set the pathway that led to today. That foundation was laid in faith as a gift for this moment and a dream for the future. So, what do those look like?

"Now to God who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine." — Ephesians 3:20

Today, Spirit of Joy is a vibrant community that is evolving into the next phase of life. Rooted in the same core values that have defined us for two decades, we embrace creativity and flexibility in expressing them today. Four worshipping communities average nearly 450 people each week during the program year. Little Lambs, Children of Joy, and High School Youth Faith Formation impact more than 120 children across 70+ families. Volunteers give approximately 300 hours each week to lead faith formation, maintain our beautiful campus, run the business of the congregation, and offer Radical Hospitality and Bold Service to our neighbors. We give more than $150,000 dollars to the SD Synod of the ELCA, our 9 Featured Ministry Partners, and other community non-profits. And, we welcome multiple bands, partner organizations, and community members to use our facility every day of the week. With all of that there is still room to grow. We're continually listening and discerning our next point of engagement and how to help you in your discipleship journey. Never satisfied, staff and volunteers are brainstorming and dreaming what might come next as a fulfillment of those original commitments.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free." — Galatians 5:1

It's what comes next that has been the center of my prayers and our shared planning. As we anticipate the celebration of our 25th, I have to wonder what our 30th and 50th might look like. A key priority from our strategic visioning was sustainability. What might it look like if together we worked to be debt free by our 30th Anniversary? How could we partner with our neighbors if we were unburdened? Would we house a partner mission? Would we fund and lead an as-of-yet unknown dream? Would we invest in creation sustainability for our campus with still more trees and alternative energy? Would we have capacity to launch disciple groups and to help people make connections that benefit them not just in their faith journey, but their everyday life? How would the gospel sound coming from a community with eyes on its future and the freedom to embrace God's call? Let's find out together, Spirit of Joy!



Pastor Eric

What's Happening in Worship @ SoJ

The church calendar begins with the 1st Sunday of Advent, 4 Sundays prior to the Christmas festival. The worship space turns blue, the wreath is lit to mark time through the four weeks, we build our nativity scene, trees go up, and we make ourselves ready through Confession and Forgiveness and special devotion for the coming of the Savior. This year, we're going to be reading the Old Testament texts from Isaiah and Mary's song from Luke along with the assigned Gospel lessons for Advent. To go along with them, we are thrilled to be able to display The St. John's Bible in our worship space. Sandy Odland graciously donated the set earlier this year. Andy Schumacher built portable book stands for their display. And, the Visual Arts Team will work to set them out in way that enriches our experience throughout the season of Advent.



The Saint John's Bible: A Living Word in Art

The Saint John's Bible is a remarkable work of faith, artistry, and devotion—the first handwritten and illuminated Bible commissioned by a Benedictine abbey in more than 500 years. Begun in 1998 at Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, this extraordinary project brought together calligrapher Donald Jackson, a team of artists and biblical scholars, and the monastic community to create a Bible that honors the ancient tradition of sacred Scripture beautifully written and illustrated by hand.

Created using traditional calligraphy, gold leaf, and vibrant colors, the Bible's illuminations bring Scripture to life through images that weave together biblical stories, Christian tradition, and contemporary life. Its pages invite us to see familiar passages in new ways, reminding us that God's Word continues to speak across generations, cultures, and experiences.

More than a beautiful book, the Saint John's Bible is an invitation to wonder, reflection, and deeper engagement with Scripture. As we encounter its pages, we are reminded that the Word of God is not simply something to read, but a living Word that shapes our faith, inspires our imagination, and draws us more deeply into God's story.



Visit https://saintjohnsbible.org for more history and the ability to interact with this incredible gift.

We hope by Advent to have dates for a spring overnight to St. John's University in Minnesota for an introduction to the Bible, a tour of the Ancient Manuscripts Library, exploration of the Brutalist St. John's Abbey, and the revelation of the incredible St. John's Pottery. Watch for details!

Faith Formation

Brewed Theology | Monday, November 16 | 7PM @ Jack Rose

Pre-reading material available online: **spiritofjoy.net/signups**

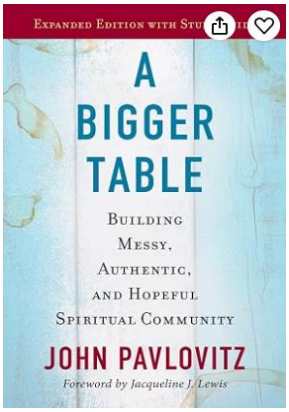
BREWED THEOLOGY

Hyper-partisan politics of division and contempt have supercharged conversation. People have strong, entrenched, polarized positions. This month's reading challenges participants to recognize a Christian call to participate in – rather than be paralyzed by – the issues of the day.

Brewed Theology meets the **3rd Monday** of every month:
Monday, December 21: Creation Care

Books that Matter | Meets the 1st Monday @ 7PM

Monthly sign up is available: **spiritofjoy.net/signups**. Check online to see what book will be ordered next.



Monday, November 2 - "Disciples of White Jesus" by Angela Denker
Discussion: 7PM @ Roundhouse

Monday, December 7 - "A Bigger Table" by John Pavlovitz
Order book online by November 1; Discussion: 7PM @ Roundhouse

"Braving the Truth" by Rachel Held Evans: Jan. 5



SOJ HOCKEY NIGHT

Saturday, 11/13 | Midco Arena
7:07 PM | $15/ticket

Buy your ticket online:
spiritofjoy.net/signups



Already a ticket holder?
Join us during 2nd intermission
at the Gjallerhorn for a Group Photo

AUGUSTANA HOCKEY VS



FUNDRAISER FOR THE NATIONAL YOUTH GATHERING

HOMEMADE LEFSE SALE

Support the youth traveling to Minneapolis next summer for the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering!

Place your orders in the gathering space
November 8 - November 18

They will be available for pick-up
Sunday, December 6 & 13

Stay tuned to sign-up for Lefse Making Day on December 6th!

Commitment Sunday

November 15

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, November 29

9:30AM - Worship

10:40AM - Congregational Meeting

Creation Care Corner



Here we are in November and 2026 is winding down. Did you know that November 7 is National Bison Day?

The American bison is the national mammal of the United States. Millions of bison used to roam North America from Alaska down to Mexico and from Nevada to the Appalachians. They made their way to America from Asia by way of the ancient land bridge that once connected Asia to North America. By the 1800s, however, only a few hundred remained after European settlers extended west, reducing bison's habitat as well as hunting them to the point of near extinction.

In honor of the bison and their conservation story, we thought we would share some facts with you:

- They're the largest land mammal in North America. Males (aka bulls) can weigh up to 2000 lbs and stand up to 6 feet tall. Females (aka cows) can weigh up to 1000 lbs and stand 4-5 feet tall. Calves weigh 30-70 lbs at birth.
- The Department of Interior has been the primary national conservation steward of bison since the late 19th century.
- While many people use buffalo and bison interchangeably, in North America the scientific name is bison. Historians ascribe the name buffalo to the French word for beef ("boeuf").
- In the US, Yellowstone National Park is the only place where bison have lived continuously since prehistoric times.
- Another name for a baby bison is "red dog."
- Native American history and the history of the bison are interwoven as the bison were integral to their culture and provided them with clothing, fuel, tools, shelter, food, and spiritual value. There is a council that works with the National Park Service (NPS) to transfer bison from national park lands to tribal lands.
- The bison's tail depicts its mood. If the tail is hanging down and switching naturally, the bison is usually calm. If the tail is standing straight up, they may be ready to charge. (No matter what the tail is doing, remember that they are unpredictable and can charge at any moment.)
- In 1905, the American Bison Society was formed along with a breeding program at the New York City Zoo. By 1913, they had enough bison to form a free-ranging herd. They donated 14 bison (working with the Interior) to Wind Cave National Park here in South Dakota. More than 100 years later, those bison have helped to rebuild herds across the US as well as Mexico. In fact, Teddy Roosevelt helped to form this society.
- Even though they're big, they can run up to 35 mph. Additionally, they can jump high fences, spin around quickly, and are strong swimmers.
- Their diet is mostly grasses, weeds, and leafy plants. They forage about 9-11 hours a day. Their large shoulder hump comes in handy in the winter as this enables them to swing their heads from side to side to clear snow for foraging patches.
- Ten to 20 years is the typical lifespan of a bison. Cows begin breeding at the age of 2 and have one baby at a time. The prime breeding age for bulls is 6-10.
- Currently, bison live in all 50 states to include Native American lands, wildlife refuges, national parks, and private lands.
- Bison have poor eyesight but excellent senses of smell and hearing. ***(All information taken from NPS)***

Thank you for the bison, for its life that comes from you, and for the love and joy it brings. Please bless this creature and let our loving care for the bison be a reflection of your loving nature. We praise you for all your beauty in creation, and especially for this expression of your love. Blessed are you, Lord our God, in all your creatures! Amen
(adapted from Bob Hostetler's prayer of Blessing for a Beloved Animal from Guideposts)

sojgrows

Give for a brighter future together

For the first time since inception, the following Mission Endowment Fund (MEF) grant requests were recommended by the MEF Committee and approved by the Leadership Team for a total of $9,400 in disbursements. Hopefully, all of these will qualify for an additional $500 Thrivent Action Team match.

- HS Youth Room updates ($1,000) - Youth Room space needs general updating & furniture purchased to provide alternate seating options.
- Engage young families for outreach & to augment faith formation ($1,000) – Organized social gathering nights to develop relationships among young SoJ families & their friends.
- Red Letter Lent ($2,500) - This is a 40-day Bible reading, life-changing discipleship program to build a stronger relationship with God during Lent.
- New bibles ($1,900) - We currently have three different types of Bibles in our Worship Space. We want to go to one NIV Large Print version to encourage more use during worship & the ability to provide consistent page numbers to the readings on the screen for people to follow.
- Nicaragua Motorcycles for Pastors ($1,200) - The SD ELCA Companion Synods are currently raising funds for a fourth motorcycle for pastors to more efficiently travel great distances on rocky roads to share the Word of God.
- Emily's Hope ($1,800) – Explore opportunities with a highly respected local non-profit to educate and increase mental health awareness among our youth and parents, and assist in removing the stigma of substance use disorder.



The purpose of the MEF is to extend our mission work & ministries beyond the annual operational budget. The above disbursements meet important wants that don't make it through the rigid general budget process. In order to do these types of disbursements yearly, please donate now to the 2026 Matching Gift Campaign. We still need $18,000 to meet the $50,000 goal that ultimately raises $100,000!

Mission Endowment Fund Balance

Previous YE Balance $141,606.87

2026 YTD $74,111.93

Total $215,718.80

For more information on Mission Endowment Fund, visit:
spiritofjoy.net/mission-endowment-fund-2

Financials through September 2026

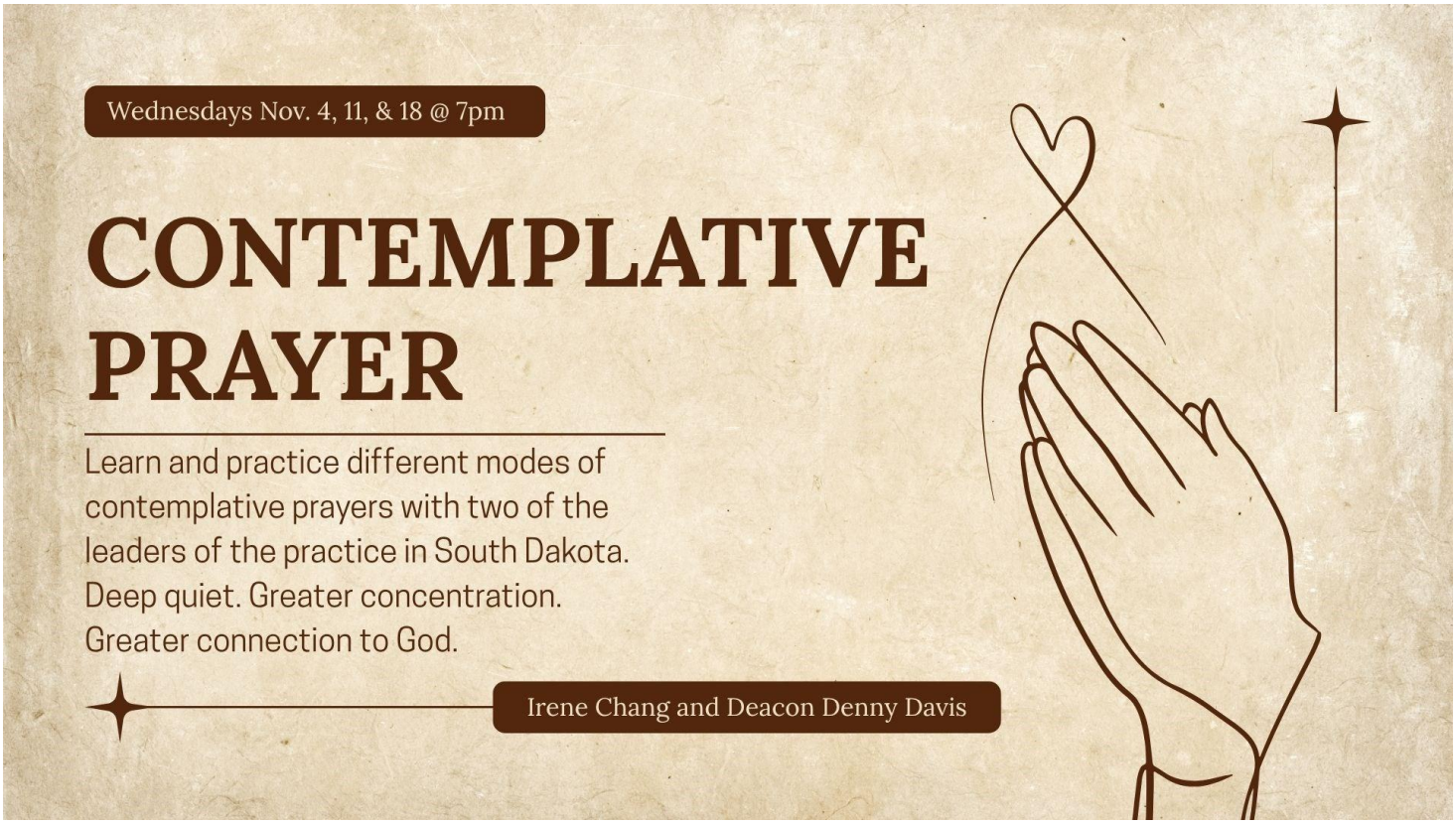
Checking Account

General Fund	$3,440.89
Building Fund	$2,814.91
Donor Restricted	$158,005.66
Reserve Fund	$200.00
Petty Cash	$4,360.10

Savings Accounts

Building	$109,494.00
Donor Restricted	$41,455.73
Total Cash Balance	$319,771.29

	September 2024	**September 2025**	**September 2026**
Attendance	1228	1062	632
General Offering	$ 63,137.42	$ 60,350.94	$ 46,016.20
Building Offering	$ 36,901.13	$3,516.92	$2,814.91
Year-to-date Income for Ministry		$607,599.15	
Year-to-date Expenses for Ministry		$632,604.17	
Net Income/Deficit for Ministry		**($25,005.02)**	



Outreach Opportunities



Spirit of Joy is collecting diapers of all sizes (especially 5 & 6) through the month of November! Bring your donation and pick your side: Tacos or Pizza. Serve boldly SOJ! Sign up online at **spiritofjoy.net/signups** to help with distribution at Peace Lutheran on Sunday, December 6, 2:00-4:15 p.m.