

## *A Message from Pastor Ben*

The movie “Despicable Me” is about a bumbling villain named Gru. His glory days seem to be behind him and he is being displaced by Vector, who is younger and smarter than he is. Desperate to protect his status, Gru decides to break into Vector’s heavily defended compound and steal his shrink ray, with which he will restore his “honor” by stealing the moon. Alas for Gru, he is comically unsuccessful in accomplishing the first part of this task. That is, until he sees the three orphan girls, whom he had just sent away empty-handed, gain entrance to Vector’s fortress by means of the cookies that he had just eschewed. As he stares at them accomplishing what he has been unable to do, his face still singed from the compound’s defenses, he slowly says one word, “Lightbulb.”

Gru has just experienced an epiphany. In a flash, what had been a total mystery to him is revealed. He will get access to the compound not by force, but by cute orphan girls delivering cookies!

An epiphany is a sudden understanding, the revelation of what had been hidden. It emphasizes the idea that important knowledge comes from outside of ourselves and depends on something beyond our control. This knowledge wasn’t available... until it was.

I think that Despicable Me is a modern parable. That might sound a bit irreligious? Is it right to compare how God works to a cartoon about a thieving villain? Absolutely! Consider how Jesus taught: with stories. There’s the parable of the dishonest manager, for example. And then there’s the one about a son who demands his inheritance from his dad (very rude!) And there’s the one about waking the neighbor up in the middle of the night to ask for a loaf of bread. Jesus loved telling

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stories like that. I think he’d like Despicable Me too. Here’s why.

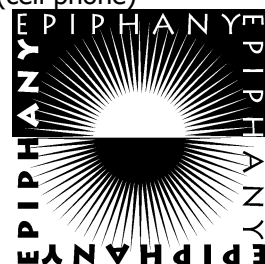
In the movie, something happens after Gru’s initial epiphany. Gru becomes a foster father to the girls. Of course he does this for entirely wrong motives, to use them to break into Vector’s compound. But even as he pursues his criminal intent, a love begins to quietly grow where no one would have expected it. Gru tells himself that he is just using the girls to get what he wants; he wants to stay bad! But something is happening to him that he doesn’t understand. And then he receives a second epiphany. It is the girls themselves who are important to him, not stealing the moon, not gaining the esteem of the other villains. This isn’t like a moral at the end of a fable, which is aimed at teaching right behavior. Rather it’s a surprise, an unexpected delight. It is grace breaking into Gru’s life when he didn’t even know that he needed it. Pairing a set of orphans and a down-on-his-luck villain so that they all discover what love is. That is how God works. He surprises us.

We are entering the church season of Epiphany in which we celebrate God’s biggest surprise: becoming a human being, emptying himself, in order to die for his creation in order to save it. It’s not what one expects from the almighty creator of everything. But what a delight!

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**Rev. Ben Worley**

Emanuel St. John, Lytton, IA  
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**Emanuel-St John Lutheran Church  
Council Meeting Minutes  
December 8, 2021**

President Brian Lantz called the meeting to order. Present were Cindy Souder, Randy Souder, Rhonda Johnson, Jean Matter, Nicole Meyer, LaVerne Arndt, Dennis Booth, Colleen Arndt, Pastor Ben, Dennis Hinrichs and Pauline Lange. Pastor Ben gave devotions. Motion by Dennis Booth, second by Colleen Arndt to approve the agenda. Motion passed. Motion by Nicole Meyer, second by Colleen Arndt to approve the November minutes with one correction. Motion passed. Rhonda gave the Treasurers Report with a balance of \$16,062.69. Motion by LaVerne Arndt, second by Nicole Meyer to approve Treasurers Report. Motion passed.

**Old Business:** Motion by Rhonda Johnson, second by Nicole Meyer to divide the Thanksgiving offering of \$160.00. With one half going to each of the Calhoun County Outreach and Sac County Outreach. Motion passed.

**President Report:** Brian informed the council that the remote for the cross is still not working after replacing the batteries. He reminded committee members that if their term is ending to find a replacement. Brian will talk to Tim Huddleson about removing snow from parking area. Snow removal on sidewalks was discussed. A sign up sheet for volunteers for a 2-week period will be put in lobby for people to sign up.

**Pastor Report:** Pastor Ben had no report.

**Worship and Music Committee:** Jean Matter informed the council that greeters for church services will start again. Communion serving was discussed. The use of individual wrapped wine and wafers will continue for those that do not feel comfortable with going back to normal communion services.

**Parish Education Committee:** Nicole Meyer reported there will be no Sunday School December 26 and January 2, 2022.

**Outreach Committee:** Colleen Arndt reported that the Giving Tree in entryway, that has hats, gloves, mittens etc. will be divided between East Sac Community School and South Central Calhoun Community School. A soup dinner will be held after the Annual Church Meeting on January 30, 2022.

**Property Management:** LaVerne Arndt and Dennis Hinrichs present. MGM will be looking at the hot water heater in main lobby that is not working. The water heater in the church parsonage has a small leak. Council discussed the job performance of the janitorial duties not being completed in timely manner. Brian Lantz will talk to custodians.

**Stewardship and Finances:** Randy Souder present. Committee is still working on budget; at present time it looks like an increase of about \$2,500.00. Memorial to North Cemetery upkeep was discussed.

**WELCA:** No report.

**New Business:** The church Annual Meeting will be after services on January 30<sup>th</sup>. January 2<sup>nd</sup> after church services will be removing of decorations. Motion by LaVerne Arndt, second by Colleen Arndt, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned with Lord's Prayer.



*Thank  
You*

This year we received poinsettias from:

**Dar and Denise Lake** in memory of Laverne and Marge Dettmann, Marc and Laurie Dettmann, Miriah Murphy and Corey

**Jeff and Jo Ellerbrock and Jon, Angie, Baylee and Peyton** in memory of Jaylin Ellerbrock, Duane Segebarth and LaVern and Beulah Segebarth.

**Edna and Dyle Rockafellow** in memory of Ed and Nelma Rix, Jr., Valerie Rockafellow, and David Purdie

and from **LaVerne and Colleen Arndt and Jim and Jan Frederick.**

Thank you for their beauty that graced our chancel this Advent/Christmas season.



*Wise Men and Women Still Seek Him*

## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1) **Shirley Sage**, Emma Warme
- 4) Nancy Aden, Samuel Ramsey
- 6) **W. LeRoy Johnson**
- 7) **John H. Everts**
- 9) Angela Anderson, Jan Frederick,  
Braden Scharn, Dierdre Schultz
- 10) Marilyn Dettmann, Owen Scharn,  
Katelynn Macrunnel, PeterLam Wei
- 11) Justin Smith
- 12) **Esther Dettmann**, Gregga Schuetz
- 13) **Stephen Kral**, Tyler Scharn,  
Theresa Schultz
- 14) Micah Lantz, Steven Schultz,  
Abigail Worley
- 15) Donna Bounds, Kylin Kruckenberg,  
Kaylynn Larson
- 16) Kathy Kuehl, Tina Rix
- 17) Keaton Hammen, Hank Segebarth
- 18) Maddux Diersen, Tyler Riley, Grace Schrage,  
Brad Williams
- 19) Bradlee Aden, Candace Booth
- 20) Colleen Arndt, Rodney Grodahl,  
Mark Harms, Shelby Pudenz
- 22) Tiffany Evans, Jay Vreeland
- 23) Darrell Ross
- 24) Patricia Johnson, Michelle Talbott
- 25) Larry Pierce
- 26) Samuel Musselman
- 27) Myla Albright, Trinity Diersen
- 29) Jess Hout, Brenna Lantz, **Dale Scharn**
- 30) Jessica Meyer, Cory Walker



- Jan 10, 1976 David & Diana Diersen  
 Jan 12, 2005 Nathan & Michele Hauptert  
 Jan 16, 1971 **Dennis & Patricia Johnson**  
 Jan 27, 2014 Rob & Melanie Fry

*Happy Anniversary!*



**Sunday School perfect attendance** for the month of November 2021:

**Nursery & Pre-Kindergarten**—Earl Bartels, Teddy Albright, Canon Albright, Jack Bartels

**Kindergarten & Grade 1**—Myla Albright, Adelaide Worley, Elin Albright, & Lily Bartels

**Grades 2 & 3**—Johnny Worley, Chase Hejtmanek & Sawyer Riley

**Grade 4 & 5**—Lille Greene

**Grade 6**—Cooper Nattress & Benjamin Worley

**Confirmation Class** (Grades 7 & 8) - Kelsey Hejtmanek, Sadie Wheelock & Charlie Nattress

Class winners for best attendance were Nursery & Pre-Kindergarten taught by Jo Grodahl, Kari Musselman and Sally Musselman and Kindergarten & 1<sup>st</sup> Grade taught by Kari Lantz.



**IT'S A BOY!**

Allen and Jenna Jensen became the parents of a baby boy, Wes Kenneth, Friday, December 53  
 Tim and Darsi Huddleson are his local grandparents.

**Congratulations!**



Annual Committee Reports are due as soon as possible—**absolute deadline is January 6, 2022.** The Annual Meeting of the congregation will be held Sunday, January 30, 2022 following the 10 a.m. worship service (approximately 11:00 a.m.).

# ANNUAL MEETING

January 30, 2022



Thank You!

Dear Emanuel-St John,

Kurt and I want to thank—you for your ongoing support of HOPE (Home of Protection Emmanuel). We are very grateful for your kind donation—following your mission Sunday. We are currently needing to improve the security for the girls as there have been some breaches of the walls surrounding the home in which the girls live. Your kind donation will be used for security lighting and improvements to the walls. Because of the trauma these girls have experienced, it is so important that they feel physically safe as we teach them about their eternal security in Jesus Christ. We are so grateful for your partnership.

Kurt and Teresa.



## Amplifying the Voices of Iowa Children and Families

Individuals struggling without access to critical healthcare and family support services. Human service

providers overworked and underpaid. Former refugees and immigrants striving to build new lives in the U.S.

These are all issues faced by Iowans. Help us ensure their voices are heard at the Iowa State Capitol. Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) will be advocating for our community members who are so often overlooked in our society. You can join us in this important work. Visit [LSIowa.org/advocacy](http://LSIowa.org/advocacy) and sign up for our Advocacy Alerts. Learn more about the legislative process, the issues impacting your neighbors, and your role as a citizen in helping to amplify their voices. Save the date for March 10, 2022, and join us for Lutheran Day on the Hill, a day of advocacy and education at the Iowa State Capitol. If you would like more information, please contact Deb Whitford, LSI's Director of Philanthropy and Church Relations, at [Deborah.Whitford@LSIowa.org](mailto:Deborah.Whitford@LSIowa.org) or 563-676-2065.

*Our Mission: Lutheran Services in Iowa responds to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service. LSI is an affiliated social ministry partner of the Iowa congregations of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and a member of LSA (Lutheran Services in America). We proudly serve people of all ages, abilities, religions, sexes, gender identities, national origins, ethnicities, races, and sexual orientations. Learn more at [LSIowa.org](http://LSIowa.org) and [facebook.com/LSI.iowa](https://facebook.com/LSI.iowa).*

## Entrepreneurship, Food, and Welcoming

In 2006, Ali and her family traveled from Kenya and resettled in the U.S. They found themselves in an unfamiliar place: Iowa. But today, they still call Iowa home, thanks to the community they built and the support they received while resettling in the U.S. LSI Refugee and Immigrant Services helped the family become comfortable and confident living in their new community.

"They taught us to shop, register for school – all the basic needs. Even winter shopping for the Iowa weather," Ali says. "They taught us how to get by. It was nice to help us get settled in."

After some time in Iowa, Ali and her husband, Salah, decided they wanted to open a restaurant as successful as the one they had in Kenya. They soon realized how challenging this would be – the biggest obstacle being the financial burden of opening a restaurant in the Des Moines area. After 15 years of never giving up on their goals, they were able to open Gursha Ethiopian Grill.

Opening during a pandemic, when other restaurants in the industry struggled to remain open, has come with its share of obstacles. But thanks to community support, the restaurant is a popular destination in the area.

Ali dreams of one day franchising to other locations. With their continuously growing clientele and delicious food, this goal is not far away.

### **Worship Leaders for January 2022**

#### **January 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Worship Attendant: Candace Booth  
Greeters: Cory Waller Family  
Acolyte: Kellen Meyer  
Reader: Jamie Waller  
Readings: Jeremiah 31:7-14 & Ephesians 1:3-14  
Children's Sermon: Barb Riley  
Gospel: John 1:[1-9] 10-18

#### **January 9<sup>th</sup>**

Worship Attendants: Dennis & Peggy Dettmann  
Greeters: Ryan Wheelock Family  
Acolyte: Devin Riley  
Reader: Ryan Wheelock  
Readings: Isaiah 43:1-7 & Acts 8:14-17  
Children's Sermon: Sara Pibal  
Gospel: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

#### **January 16<sup>th</sup>**

Worship Attendant: Gloria Johnson  
Greeters: Greg and Tammy Williams  
Acolyte: Owen Scharn  
Reader: Sara Jo Talbott  
Readings: Isaiah 62:1-5 & 1 Corinthians 12:1-11  
Children's Sermon: Doug Bartels  
Gospel: John 2:1-11

#### **January 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Worship Attendants: Ben & Susan Albright  
Greeters:  
Acolyte: Sadie Wheelock  
Reader: Ben Albright  
Readings: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10 & 1 Corinthians  
12:12-31a  
Children's Sermon: Shelly Hauptert  
Gospel: Luke 4:14-21

#### **January 30<sup>th</sup>**

Worship Attendants: Scott Greene  
Greeters: Darcy Picard and Denise Adams  
Acolyte: Derek Greene  
Reader: Alan Meyer Cheryl Haden  
Readings: Jeremiah 1:4-10 & 1 Corinthians 13:1-13  
Children's Sermon: Kari Lantz  
Gospel: Luke 4:21-30

