

January 2024

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**Rev. Tamara J. K. Keen,**  
PASTOR of St. John's-Vilmar

**Church Office:** 319-267-2080  
**Cell Phone:** 316-655-3306  
**Email:** keentjkk@gmail.com

**Monica Edeker,**  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS  
of St. John's-Vilmar

**Cell Phone:** 319-939-7348  
**Email:** vilmarchurch@gmail.com

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

Serving in the Lord's House .... 8  
Treasurer's Report ..... 5  
Annual Reports ..... 6  
Council Capsules ..... 3-4  
Mission & Outreach ..... 11  
Women's Fellowship ..... 7  
Prayer Concerns ..... 8  
Calendar ..... 12

**UPCOMING DEADLINES:**

**Weekly Bulletins:**  
Thursdays at 9 a.m.

**February Herald Announcements:**  
Sunday, Jan. 28 at 5 p.m.

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.  
- 1 JOHN 1:5

## St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church - Vilmar

16073 Keystone Ave.  
Greene, IA 50636-9163



NORTH AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH



**Office:**  
(319) 267-2080

**Website:**  
vilmarchurch.org  
f /StJohnsVilmar

**Email:** vilmarchurch@gmail.com

### *From the Pastor's Desk*

**Dear People of St. Johns - Vilmar,**

These frequently repeated words marked my life for the past couple of years, "It's in a box in storage in Minnesota" or "My life is in a box in storage in Minnesota." Life in a box. Life waiting. Life far away.

Sometimes life is on hold. Dreams are deferred. Hopes are shattered. Visions are yet to be realized. The time and season of our lives are just not ready. We wait.

Sometimes we intentionally put our lives in a box, so afraid of the outside world and unable to trust ourselves or God.

Sometimes the box is a necessity for protection and maintaining what is important to us.

Sometimes boxes fair well and other times, not so much.

Sometimes the outside looks horrible, crushed from the weight around it, and yet, the interior items are amazingly in good condition.

I could approach this metaphor, "life in a box," in so many ways to lift up messages of scripture for life. Given this time of year and that I now have all my belongings in one place with me, I am experiencing this perspective, the surprise of what is in each box that has been placed away for so long.

Pictures of loved ones, Bibles held and read by my parents, music, poetry, and programs written by my mother, artwork by my children, quilts and hardanger and cross-stitch items from family and friends and I am reminded of the marks that these people have made in my life and continue to make in my life, whether in Heaven or on earth. I become overwhelmed with the treasure. Yes, the item means a lot to me. Yet, even more so, is the heart of the giver. It is the heart that is the real treasure.

Traditionally, gifts are given at Christmas. We look forward to the surprise of what is under the wrappings in the box. We may guess what is inside the box. We may or may not be pleased with what is in



**Pastor Keen**

See, **Pastor's Note:** Page 2

# Christmas Caroling

St. John's – Vilmar sent out 20 carolers on Sunday, Dec. 10. What a joy to see so many come out and sing for the Christmas season for our Savior Jesus Christ. Thank you to everyone who joined in, sang, drove us around, and provided the supper afterward. Thank you to the youth group and leaders who provided gifts (pictured at right) for all the Vilmar members we sang to. – Jane Thompson, Senior Choir Director



The Christmas Carolers are pictured above singing at the Allison Care Center. In the back, from left to right: Barb Wagner, Ron Salge, Jeff Seehusen, Pam Roose, Jim Wubbena, Carol Seehusen, Diane Hummel, Diane Salge, Pastor Keen, Margaret DeBower, Merlette Cassmann, Meredith Steere, Linda Steere, Betty Rewerts, Charlene Hubbard, Ken DeBower, Dave Hubbard, Kurt Roose, and Jane Thompson.

## PASTOR'S NOTE FROM PAGE 1

the box. We open our boxes at different times. We give to a few select people.

God's heart is born in human form in Christ Jesus and is laid in a cattle box – a manger. It is not in storage. Our wait is over. He has come into our home. He has come with this purpose — to save us all, not just a few select people from darkness and sin, but everyone. He has come to show us the way. He has come in love and righteousness to a world that needs him. He is our deepest treasure. St. John says, "In him was life, and that life was the light of all people." (John 1:4) "And the word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory,

the glory as of a father's only son; full of grace and truth. (John 1:14) "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

This treasure, that we celebrate and cherish at Christmas, does not remain in a cattle box, he will journey with us throughout all our years, to show us the way of life and truth. He will show us his love on a cross for our sins. He will be the fulfillment of our heart's longings. It's a great box to have opened!

**Shalom,  
Pastor Tamara J.K. Keen**

## ST. JOHN'S – VILMAR COUNCIL CAPSULE

Sunday, Dec. 3, 2023

The St. John's Church Council met on Sunday, Dec. 3 after the morning church service. Diane Hummel called the meeting to order. Dale Janssen reported that two new furnaces are needed for the church. Dale Janssen made a motion to order the two furnaces from Joe's Plumbing and Heating in Allison, at an estimated cost of \$4,400 apiece. Barb Meyer seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned.

### MEMBERS PRESENT

A Don Salge (President)	P Dale Janssen	P Meredith Steere
A Margaret DeBower (Treasurer)	P Diane Hummel	A Julie Eberline
P Rhonda Edeker (Secretary)	P Tyler Seehusen	P Dick Ulrich
P Barb Meyer	A Ron Taylor	P Warren Van Dyke
P Pastor Keen	P Monica Edeker	

---

## ST. JOHN'S – VILMAR COUNCIL CAPSULE

Wednesday, Dec. 13, 2023

The St. John's Church Council met for its regular meeting on Wednesday, Dec. 13. Pastor Keen gave devotions and prayer. Chairman Don Salge called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

### REPORTS

- **Secretary:** Dale Janssen moved, Barb Meyer seconded, to approve the minutes as read. Motion carried unanimously.
- **Treasurer:** Warren Van Dyke moved, Dale Janssen seconded, to approved the treasurer's report as presented. Council discussed that memorial and cemetery money will now be deposited into the church's general fund and then redistributed to the designed accounts, so that the money is recorded for each donor and statements can be sent to them.
- **Chairman:** None.
- **Stewardship & Finance:** None.
- **Mission & Outreach:** Barb Meyer reported January's mission will be Lutheran Military Veterans and Family Ministries.
- **Worship & Fellowship:** None.
- **Deacons:** None.
- **Trustees:** The parsonage kitchen faucets were replaced. The church furnace installment will being on Thursday, Dec. 14. Will Wedeking will be contacted to look at the electrical issues at the parsonage.
- **Parish Ed.:** Julie Eberline thanked Diane Hummel for leading the Christmas program.
- **Director of Communications:** None.

continued on page 4

- **Pastor:** Pastor Keen gave an accounting of her recent pastoral activities. In November she made 41 visits and provided private communion to 26. Her mileage for the month was 1,190 miles, which included: hospital visits in Waverly, Waterloo, Rochester; nursing home visits in Charles City and Allison; actively dying/grief visits in Grinnell; STS Clergy Retreat in Strawberry Point; weekly study in Readlyn and St. Ansgar; and local home visits. She has been attending the Confirmation Class at Diane Hummel's. Diane will continue with the Ten Commandments. Following that, Pastor will take over with classes on worship. It is possible that Pastor's granddaughter will be baptized at Vilmar the last Sunday of December. This first month has been wonderful getting to know several homebound people and a few other members. She looks forward to more contacts as time progresses. This is an extremely busy time in the life and ministry of any congregation, which doesn't really slow down much till after Easter. As a new pastor there is a layer of learning everyone and how things work here. Pastor thanks us all for our patience, and she is still learning names and faces, towns and businesses, church traditions and expectations.

### OLD BUSINESS

- Dale Janssen made a motion and Rhonda Edeker seconded it for Robert Dralle's family to hang Robert's painting in the sanctuary. Motion carried unanimously.

### NEW BUSINESS

- The Christmas stage will be set up on Saturday, Dec. 23 at 9 a.m.
- Council discussed communion, because Pastor wanted to make sure it was OK to have processional communion on Festival Sundays.
- Council discussed the 11-month offering reminder statements.
- The annual meeting has been set for Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024; with a snow date of Jan. 28. There will be a potluck with the meeting to following at approximately 12 p.m.
- Don Salge and the nominating committee is working on the 2024 ballot.

### NEXT MEETING

The next council meeting will be held Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.

### CLOSING

Dale Janssen made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Margaret DeBower seconded it. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

**Respectfully Submitted By:**  
Rhonda Edeker, *Secretary*

### MEMBERS PRESENT

P Don Salge (President)	P Dale Janssen	P Meredith Steere
P Margaret DeBower (Treasurer)	P Diane Hummel	P Julie Eberline
P Rhonda Edeker (Secretary)	P Tyler Seehusen	A Dick Ulrich
P Barb Meyer	P Ron Taylor	P Warren Van Dyke
P Pastor Keen	P Monica Edeker	

# Treasurer's Report

NOVEMBER 2023

**Beginning Operating Balance ..... \$106,171.78**

**INCOME:**

Envelope..... \$8,995.00  
 Vanco ..... \$754.00  
 Loose Offering – Randy Brinkman..... \$156.25  
 October Mission – Samaritan’s Purse ..... \$70.00  
 November Mission – Randy Brinkman .....  
 ..... \$1,590.00  
 Wells of Inspirations ..... \$12,576.00  
 Thanksgiving – NB Hot Lunch Program .....  
 ..... \$270.50  
 Thanksgiving – BCVOW ..... \$270.50  
 Moving Expenses..... \$1,000.00  
 Memorial Fund..... \$1,000.00  
 Parsonage Updates..... \$700.00  
 Mission Investment Interest ..... \$29.21  
 Thrivent Funds ..... \$102.95

**FROM:**

Wells of Inspirations..... \$1,021.40  
 Samaritans Purse..... \$850.00  
 Mission Fund for Randy Brinkman \$1,000.00  
 Thrivent Fund for Randy Brinkman \$1,100.00

**Total Income..... \$31,485.81**

**EXPENSES:**

Pulpit Supply ..... \$200.00  
 Wages / Janitors ..... \$461.74  
 Wages / Director of Communications ... \$769.58  
 Pastor’s Salary ..... \$3,500.00  
 Pastor’s Social Security..... \$357.00  
 Pastor’s Health Insurance..... \$252.13  
 Pastor’s Insurance/Pension ..... \$380.42  
 Electricity ..... \$395.19  
 Telephone ..... \$71.88  
 Worship Supplies ..... \$20.19

**EXPENSES, cont.:**

Janitor Supplies..... \$147.76  
 Office Supplies ..... \$93.14  
 Printer Contract..... \$206.39  
 Postage ..... \$137.42  
 Vanco ..... \$8.19  
 Parsonage Updates..... \$5,834.71  
 Wells of Inspirations ..... \$1,021.40  
 Samaritan’s Purse..... \$850.00  
 Memorial Fund..... \$1,000.00  
 TO: Randy Brinkman Fund ..... \$3,846.25  
 TO: NB Hot Lunch Program ..... \$270.50  
 TO: BC Visions of Well Being ..... \$270.50  
 TO: Thrivent..... \$102.95  
 TO: Samaritan’s Purse ..... \$70.00  
 TO: Wells of Inspiration ..... \$12,576.00

**Total Expenses..... \$32,843.34**

**Operating Balance..... \$104,814.25**

**SPECIFIED ACCOUNTS:**

Thrivent Funds..... \$2,027.49  
 Scholarships..... \$1,634.64  
 Youth Camp Fund ..... \$215.00  
 Mission..... \$525.61  
 NB Hot Lunch Program ..... \$270.50  
 Visions of Well Being..... \$270.50  
 Operation Christmas Child ..... \$444.95  
 Easter/IA Youth NALC Mission Trip... \$258.00  
 Randy Brinkman Fund..... \$3,846.25  
 Wells of Inspiration..... \$12,459.93

**Specified Accounts Balance ..... \$21,952.87**

**GENERAL FUND BALANCE..... \$126,767.12**

**Respectfully Submitted By:**  
 Margaret DeBower, *Treasurer*

# Annual Reports Needed & Annual Meeting Set

All annual reports are due Wednesday, Jan. 17, 2024, at noon. If at all possible, send them digitally to Monica Edeker through email at vilmarchurch@gmail.com. If you need, they may also be placed in the basket in the office.

**The following reports are needed:**

- Monica Edeker** – 2022-23 Staff List;  
Luther League Report; 2024 Directory;  
Organization Officers and Committees List
- Pastor Keen & Monica Edeker** – Parochial/  
Statistical Report; Pastor’s Discretionary Fund;  
2023 Summary of Pastoral Acts
- Pastor Keen** – NALC & Iowa Mission District
- Don Salge** – Annual Meeting Agenda; 2024 Ballot;  
Letter from the Chairman; Stewardship
- Barb Wagner** – Women’s Fellowship (Finances)

**The 2024 Annual Meeting has been scheduled for SUNDAY, JAN. 21 at approximately 12 p.m., following a potluck after the morning worship service.**  
*(The snow date will be Jan. 28, if needed)*

- Margaret DeBower** – Treasurer’s Report;  
Proposed Budget; Women’s Fellowship (Written)
- Rhonda Edeker** – 2023 Annual Meeting  
Minutes; Annual Meeting Attendance Sheet
- Warren Van Dyke** – Brotherhood
- Barb Meyer** – Mission and Outreach
- Julie Eberline** – Parish Education
- Kevin Edeker** – Cemetery
- Diane Salge** – Memorial Fund
- Diane Hummel** – Worship/Fellowship

DATE	GENERAL	MONTHLY MISSION	OTHER FUNDS
11/21/23 (Tithely)	\$5.00	\$0.00	\$25.00 – Wells of Inspiration
11/26/23 (Offering)	\$1,245.00	\$152.00	\$102.95 – Thrivent
11/28/23 (Tithely)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,101.00 – Wells of Inspiration
12/3/23 (Offering)	\$3,475.00	\$43.00	\$382.00 – Simply Giving \$200.00 – From Iowa State Bank for a local mission of our choosing
12/5/23 (Tithely)	\$700.00	\$0.00	\$25.00 – Luther League \$225.00 – Wells of Inspiration
12/10/23 (Offering)	\$5,135.00	\$212.00	\$250.00 – Wells of Inspiration
12/12/23 (Tithely)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
12/17/23 (Offering)	\$1,425.00	\$30.00	\$372.00 – Simply Giving \$50.00 – From Greenbelt Bank and Trust for a local mission of our choosing
12/19/23 (Tithely)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$636.51 – Wells of Inspiration

# VILMAR WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP NOTES: JANUARY 2024

## WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Women's Bible study will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 2 at 9 a.m., in the church fellowship hall. Margaret DeBower will lead the study and JoAnn Taylor will serve.

## ALTAR COMMITTEE

The altar committee for January is Jeff and Carol Seehusen. We appreciate your willingness to serve in this way.

## SUNSHINE COMMITTEE

Sunshine Committee for January will be Diane Salge and Diane Hummel.

## BIRTHDAYS

**Jan. 23:** Jean Morris, 625 Church St., Bristow, IA 50611

**Jan. 24:** Ron Taylor, 2153 300th St., Greene, IA 50636

**Jan. 29:** Lucy Steere, 900 Seventh St. Allison, IA 50602

**Jan. 29:** Darwin Dralle, 900 Seventh St. Allison, IA 50602

**Jan. 31:** Kay Brinkman, 13673 Camp Comfort Rd., Greene, IA 50636

*If you or someone you know is 75 or older, let Margaret DeBower know.*

## BINGO

Vilmar is in charge of BINGO at the Allison nursing home on Thursday, Jan. 4 at 1:30 p.m. We need volunteers to help, if you are interested in participating, contact Betty Rewerts.

## SEWING DAYS

Sewing days will be Monday and Tuesday, Jan. 15 and 16 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. There will be a potluck lunch at noon. All are welcome to join in the great fellowship and work on this wonderful mission project. Any questions, please contact Margaret DeBower or Betty Debner. We always welcome donations of fabric, sheets and blankets.

## ITEMS AVAILABLE

Check the table in the basement for items for sale – there are many new things! These items make great gifts! All money raised will be used by the group for their mission donations.

## KITCHEN/FOOD DONATIONS

We welcome donations of items for use in the kitchen or for serving food. We just ask that a note be left stating that it is for general use. Sometimes things are left and we don't know if it is for a special occasion or something that anyone in the kitchen can use. Thank you.

## 2024 Directory

Last Call! I will be printing on the 2024 Directories soon. If you haven't checked your family listings, please do so, and let me know if you have any changes/corrections/updates/etc. Thanks, Monica Edeker 319-939-7348, vilmarchurch@gmail.com, or send a note to the church or leave it in the office.

## Thank You

THANK-YOU!!! I am well aware of the time and muscle needed to have made the move to Vilmar. I am truly grateful for all of it. Special thanks to Don and Dale for the final trip to Minnesota. Thanks for all the willing helpers in moving boxes and furniture. – Pastor Keen

# Serving in the Lord's House

## SCRIPTURE READERS

- Sunday, Jan. 07: Reader Needed
- Sunday, Jan. 14: Reader Needed
- Sunday, Jan. 21: Reader Needed
- Sunday, Jan. 28: Reader Needed

## FELLOWSHIP HOSTS

- Sunday, Jan. 07: Bill and Betty Debner
- Sunday, Jan. 14: Host Needed
- Sunday, Jan. 21: Host Needed
- Sunday, Jan. 28: Host Needed

If you would be willing to serve coffee and fellowship after worship or read the scripture lessons during worship service, there is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the narthex or talk to Diane Hummel or Carol Seehusen.

## Music Schedule

Anyone and everyone is invited to join the choir. They will practice at 9:15 a.m., on Sunday mornings, and will sing during the worship services. For more information, contact Senior Choir Director Jane Thompson at 319-415-8456.

We are always looking for special music volunteers for the Sunday morning services too. If at any time you, or someone you know, would like to provide special music (instrumental, vocal, or both!) let Jane know and she will get you on the schedule!

## Portals of Prayer

The January–March Portals of Prayer booklets are available in the narthex for anyone to take.

## Pastoral Care

If you need pastoral assistance or would like private communion, please contact Pastor Tamara Keen at 316-655-3306 (cell), 319-267-2080 (office), or email keentjkk@gmail.com.

# Attendance Report

Worship Service	Attendance	Communed
Sunday, Nov. 26:	45	n/a
Sunday, Dec. 3:	65	51
Sunday, Dec. 10:	65	n/a
Sunday, Dec. 17:	65	52

## Remember in Our Prayers

### PRAYER CONCERNS:

Mari Ann Wearda, Harold and Marlys Kruse, Bruce and Deb Johnson, Dean and Barb Westendorf, Jurene Dralle, Evalyn Nettleton, Ali Matteson, Robert Vieker, Carol Finke, Cheryl and Kayla Sankey, Jaxon Hartkopp, Pastor James Puotyual, Larry Voigts, Sandra Greenlee, Randy Brinkman, Pastor David Craig, Barb Kelly, Pastor Rich Eddy, Paul Hughes, Wendell Debner, Helen Debner, Jerrylyn Brinkman, Todd DeGroot, Calla Clarey, Bonnie Hiatt, Pastor Robert Salge, Mark Green, Darwin Dralle, Jamie Osterbuhr, Mary Schipper, Jean Morris, Susan Seehusen, Pastor Mark Walker, Sheryl Johnson, and Lori May

### SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN:

Lloyd Davis and Rashell Haxhijaj

### FAITHFUL DEPARTED:

**Remember the family of Michelle Leigh Miller:** Michelle, 48, of Grinnell, formerly of Allison, passed away Sunday, Nov. 26, 2023, at home surrounded by her family. Visitation was held Thursday, Nov. 30 at Woodley Funeral Home in Allison. A Celebration of Life service was held Friday, Dec. 1 at St. John's – Vilmar with Rev. Tamara Keen officiating. Burial will take place at a later date in Waterloo. Michelle was Jennifer Seehusen's sister. Woodley Funeral Home in Allison assisted the family with arrangements.



# Conflict Between Israel and Hamasa

---

## Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

In the wake of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, which is also emerging in other parts of the region, our hearts are heavy with sorrow and concern for the people and the nations involved. An abrupt offensive led by Hamas, has resulted in an escalation of violence that has caused abhorrent suffering for countless individuals, families, and communities.

The North American Lutheran Church unequivocally condemns the violent actions of any terrorist group, as well as all forms of antisemitism found throughout the world. In contrast, we advocate for peace, justice, and the sanctity of all human life. We believe in the power of prayer and the potential of human hearts to move towards reconciliation and peace under the divine guidance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We stand with all those in the region who yearn for peace. We pray for the safety and wellbeing of all its inhabitants, remembering that we have brothers and sisters in Christ living in Israel, as well as in other Arab nations including Palestine, who find themselves in dire circumstances amidst the turmoil.

We are mindful of the complex history and deep-rooted tensions that permeate the region. Yet, we ardently pray for an end to the hostilities and for a sustainable resolution that honors the dignity, security, and rights of all individuals. We call upon the leaders involved to act with wisdom, compassion, and a genuine desire for lasting peace.

We invite our pastors, congregations, and partners in ministry to unite in fervent prayer for peace in Israel, Gaza, and the surrounding region, for the illumination and guidance of the leaders involved, and for humanitarian aid to reach those in desperate need. Let us all be praying for a future where enmity is replaced with understanding, oppression with justice, and despair with hope,

under the sovereign grace of our loving and Triune God.

I encourage our congregations to be places where our doors are open for comfort and prayer for all of God's people, and where the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, revealed to us in His life, death, and resurrection from the dead for our sin are abundantly present and found.

The following prayer is offered for your use:

Gracious God, in a world overshadowed by sin and strife, we come before You with heavy hearts, seeking Your divine mercy and peace for the people living in Israel, the Gaza Strip, and the surrounding regions. We pray for the leaders of the nations, that their hearts may be stirred towards justice, reconciliation, and the well-being of all people.

We pray for those whose lives have been lost, for those torn from their homes and families, as well as for those who are being held hostage in this brutal conflict.

We pray for comfort, protection, and healing for wounded spirits and bodies, knowing that all true healing is found in You alone. Lord, may Your boundless love lead us through these dark times towards a horizon of hope, understanding, and enduring peace.

Help us to never lose sight of the promises we have in Jesus and to never lose hope in the One who, through His cross and resurrection from the dead, has secured our lives eternally. In the holy and precious name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” – John 16:33 NIV

**In Christ's service,  
The Rev. Dr. Daniel W. Selbo, Bishop,  
North American Lutheran Church**

# A Christmas Message

---

**Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:**

**G**reetings in the name of our God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thank you for your good and faithful ministry and for your partnership in the work of the Gospel. It is my deepest and most sincere desire and prayer that this Christmas season is one in which the love shown to us so clearly in the birth of God’s only Son, Jesus Christ, will be at the center of the proclamation we offer and the witness we give to the world.

With every passing year, rather than the story of our Lord’s birth becoming more familiar, I find myself being struck more intensely by its significance. The divine became human. The eternal became temporal. Our broken relationship with God was repaired. It was restored in the person and work of Jesus, put back together and made right when Jesus became one of us and walked the path of the cross.

I am not convinced that we can fully understand all of what that means. I am convinced that we can be assured of what has been done for us in Jesus. That’s the good news. That’s what Christmas is all about. And that’s why we need to speak with clarity and conviction of the love revealed to us in Jesus Christ, so that the world for which He gave His life might come to believe.

One of the most basic and fundamental needs we have in this life is to be loved. From the moment we are born until the day when we leave this world, to love and to be loved is central to how we were created. It’s basic to what our life on this earth is all about. It keeps us going. It tells us that we matter. It says to us that we belong and that our life on this earth really counts.

When God came into this world in the person of Jesus, it was God’s way of declaring that we are loved and will always be loved by Him. It’s the very reason Jesus was born as a baby. It’s the motivation in the heart of God behind the entire Christmas event.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.” Christmas is God’s declaration that we do matter, that our lives on this earth really do count,

and that no matter what else might happen in this life, there is always and forever a reason to live.

One of my seminary professors was Dr. Gerhard Forde. He was a good teacher. He kept the focus of his lectures on Jesus. No matter what direction the theological conversation went, he continually brought it back to Christ.

One of the books he wrote was a study about how the story of Jesus is the story of God coming down to earth to give us what we need. He did it not by sending someone else on His behalf, but by becoming what we need in Himself.

I would imagine that if you were to think back on all the Christmas gifts you have received over the years, the ones that would stand out the most would be the ones with the most personal touch. Christmas is the story of God’s love for us. It’s the story of God’s individual and personal love for you and for me. And it’s not love wrapped in a package. It’s love found in a person. It’s not a gift placed under a tree, waiting to be opened when the time is right. It’s love placed in a manger, working to make right a relationship that had gone wrong.

“You will call His name Jesus,” the angel said, “for He will save His people from their sins.” And so, it was. And so, He did. And so, we celebrate that good news again this year.

Where does God meet man? He meets us in our sin. He comes to us where we are. He forgives us and He loves us, and He promises to never leave.

As I consider the turmoil in which our world is currently found, the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, the tension among nations that seems to be increasing with each passing day, as well as the division that exists within our own nations, to say nothing of the brokenness found in many homes and communities throughout North America and beyond, I cannot help but believe that the answer to this world’s turmoil was offered to us in the coming of Jesus.

See, **Bishop’s Note:** Page 11

## Mission and Outreach

---

During the month of January, Vilmar's Mission and Outreach Team will be supporting **Lutheran Military Veterans & Family Ministries, Inc.** LMVFM helps veterans let go of their past, engage in the present, and have hope for the future. They serve any veteran who comes to us in need, by providing free counseling, general assessments, assistance with obtaining care and finding resources necessary to the veteran, their family members, as well as military contractors. They also provide training programs for civilian care providers, therapists, counselors, clergy, and just about anyone that wants to be better equipped to work with veterans and their families. For more information, visit <https://lmvfm.org/>

### BISHOP'S NOTE FROM PAGE 10

---

Our task, as His followers, is to point the world toward Him. Beginning in our families and our churches, from there into the relationships we have with our neighbors and co-workers and in our schools, and from there into the surrounding communities and beyond. There is no better remedy to the troubles we face in this life than to face those troubles with the remedy given to us two thousand years ago in the person and work of Christ.

Will we ever fully comprehend what that saving event was all about? Probably not, at least not this side of the grave. But that doesn't matter, because it does not depend upon how much we understand but solely upon what He has done.

God's love, down to earth. That's what you have been given. Where God meets man. In our sin. At Christmas. In Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your faithful witness. Thank you for the partnership we share in Christ. Thank you for the love you share and the witness you offer, pointing people to the love of God revealed to us in Jesus.

**In Christ's service,**  
**The Rev. Dr. Daniel W. Selbo, Bishop,**  
**North American Lutheran Church**

## Donations

---

**Envelopes:** The 2024 envelopes have been handed out. If you didn't get your's yet, you may pick them up from the table in the narthex. If anyone would like a box, please let council secretary Rhonda Edeker know.

**Simply Giving:** If you would like to enroll in Vilmar's monthly electronic giving, contact council secretary Rhonda Edeker for the paperwork.

**Tithely:** If you would like to give an offering online, go to [www.vilmarchurch.org](http://www.vilmarchurch.org) and click on "Donate" in the navigation menu, fill out the form, and submit your donation to the church. If you have questions, please talk to Monica Edeker or Jen Seehusen.

**Mail:** If you are not able to worship in-person with us, you may still continue to send your offering to the church: St. John's-Vilmar, 16073 Keystone Ave., Greene, IA 50636.

*We appreciate everyone's continued financial support of Vilmar's ministry.*

## Notice

---

In the event of a weather-related cancellation, announcements will be posted on Vilmar's Facebook Page, KWWL, and KLMJ 104.9. If you are unsure, don't hesitate to call.

## Cookbooks Available

---

Cookbooks are available. They are \$15 for the 1979 edition (white cover) and \$10 for the 2004 edition (green cover). Contact Margaret DeBower, Barb Wagner, or Monica Edeker if interested.

## Corrections, Information

---

If you have corrections or announcements for Vilmar's directory, the bulletins, Heralds, or website please contact Monica Edeker at 319-939-7348 or [vilmarchurch@gmail.com](mailto:vilmarchurch@gmail.com). Thanks!

## JANUARY 2024: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church—Vilmar

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
		9 a.m.: Vilmar Women's Bible Study	6-7:30 p.m.: Confirmation at Diane Hummel's	9 a.m.: Weekly Bulletin Deadline 1:30 p.m.: BINGO at Allison Rehabilitation Center		7 a.m.: Bible Study at Jurene Dralle's home
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
8:45-9:45 a.m.: Sunday School 9:15 a.m.: Choir Practice 10 a.m.: Worship with Communion 11 a.m.: Coffee and Fellowship			6-7:30 p.m.: Confirmation at Diane Hummel's 7:30 p.m.: Council Meeting	9 a.m.: Weekly Bulletin Deadline		7 a.m.: Bible Study at Jurene Dralle's home
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
8:45-9:45 a.m.: Sunday School 9:15 a.m.: Choir Practice 10 a.m.: Worship 11 a.m.: Coffee and Fellowship	9 a.m. to 2 p.m.: Sewing Day with potluck at noon	9 a.m. to 2 p.m.: Sewing Day with potluck at noon	12 p.m.: Annual Reports Due 6-7:30 p.m.: Confirmation at Diane Hummel's	9 a.m.: Weekly Bulletin Deadline		7 a.m.: Bible Study at Jurene Dralle's home
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
8:45-9:45 a.m.: Sunday School 9:15 a.m.: Choir Practice 10 a.m.: Worship with Communion 11 a.m.: Congregational Potluck 12 p.m.: Annual Meeting			6-7:30 p.m.: Confirmation at Diane Hummel's	9 a.m.: Weekly Bulletin Deadline		7 a.m.: Bible Study at Jurene Dralle's home
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Feb. 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Herald Announcements Due 8:45-9:45 a.m.: Sunday School 9:15 a.m.: Choir Practice 10 a.m.: Worship 11 a.m.: Coffee and Fellowship			6-7:30 p.m.: Confirmation at Diane Hummel's	9 a.m.: Weekly Bulletin Deadline		7 a.m.: Bible Study at Jurene Dralle's home

Deacons: Tyler Seehusen and Meredith Steere