St. John Lutheran Church
July 2026 Newsletter

As a community of believers in Jesus Christ, inspired by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, the mission of St. John Lutheran Church is to:
WORSHIP, WITNESS, LEARN, SERVE and SUPPORT.

Teri Talk July 2026

St John Lutheran church is half as old as our nation, ok slightly more than half at 126 years. This July 4th we celebrate the *2026 semiquincentennial of the signing of the Declaration of Independence*. Pretty exciting. I remember the bicentennial in 1976, and I am sure many of you remember that year and celebration as well, while others were not born yet. Of course, none of us were around for America's 100th birthday celebrated on July 4, 1876.

This "grand experiment" envisioned by the founding fathers was ridiculed and not expected to last long. Yet, here we are, 250 years later. That doesn't mean we have not seen turmoil, unrest, or threats to our way of life, but our nation still stands. We are very blessed to live where and like we do and we should never take that for granted. Hundreds of thousands have sacrificed their lives to ensure the freedoms, choices, and rights we have in our daily lives.

Samuel Cohn in his 2021 book, *All Societies Die: How to Keep Hope Alive* writes:

> *All societies die. We like to pretend they don't. We also like to pretend that we as individuals aren't going to die either. But no human being lives forever. Neither do societies, empires, or civilizations…..By historical comparative standards, American civilization is middle aged. The experience of other empires would suggest that the West* [America] *should expect a life of no more than 500 to 800 years—with a chance of an earlier extinction. The 800 figure is very optimistic.*[1]

Rather than treating societal decline as an exceptional event, Cohn argues that the rise and fall of civilizations is a normal historical process.[2] Over the last 250 years, hundreds of sovereign nations and empires have risen and fallen, with historians categorizing roughly 250 to 350 distinct political entities (nations, empires, occupied territories) that have dissolved, merged, or gained independence since 1776. There are approximately eighteen major world empires and ancient powers that lasted less than 250 years.

I have been reflecting this week on what countries I learned about in World History in high school that no longer exist. Since my high school days at least 33 different countries have undergone a name change, gone through significant changes in how they are governed, experienced terrible civil wars, or won their independence from another occupying nation.

What Cohn writes reflects a worry we have. Over the last few years, we have repeatedly heard the message that our way of life is threatened, that our democracy will crumble. The ideal founding principle and motto of the United States is *e pluribus unum*, "out of many; one." That we can be a nation of people who have many differing opinions and agendas, yet we could come together as *one* despite those differences. But it wasn't 85 years later, and this young country was at war with itself, families divided and torn apart, when in 1861 the Civil War began. In some ways we are still healing from this division.

This may all sound pretty doomy and gloomy, but Cohn remains optimistic about the possibilities for extending the life of societies through informed political and social choices. Now the word "politics" here is not about affiliation, or party or where anyone is on the political spectrum. It goes back further than that; to the Greek origins of the word: *polis* (πόλις) 'the body of citizens' and *politikos* (πολιτικός) 'relating to citizens, or the affairs of the cities.' He discusses the importance of institutional legitimacy meaning the people support the governmental offices and people serving in those offices, again, regardless of affiliation. Understanding the importance of social trust, environmental sustainability, inclusive development, social resilience, reform, and collective responsibility. These are lessons that extend beyond academic debate and speak directly to questions of governance and social cohesion. While societal decline may be a recurring feature of history, the future remains open to human action[2] or inaction.

Jesus taught that human kingdoms are temporary, marked by continuous cycles of conflict, and will ultimately be replaced by God's eternal kingdom. Rather than offering a political guide to political history, he spoke about the rise and fall of nations in the context of global instability and spiritual readiness. Jesus stated that human history would feature continuous geopolitical and natural turmoil, emphasizing that these events are not the end itself, but simply the "beginning of birth pains."

> "*You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains*." (Matthew 24:6-8 NIV)

Despite the chaotic rise and fall of worldly powers, Jesus maintained that God remains ultimately sovereign over human history, the one who was, who is, and who will continue to be in control. Jesus contrasted all temporary, earthly nations with God's heavenly kingdom, which will never be destroyed or overthrown. He taught his followers to pray for this specific, permanent kingdom to come: "*Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*" (Matthew 6:10 NIV). When facing the 'ruler of the world' Jesus was offered 'the world' in exchange for turning his back on God's plan and will.

> "***8*** *Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.* ***9*** *"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."* ***10*** *Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only'"* (Matthew 4:8-10 NIV).

Jesus said, 'no thanks, it belongs to God, so it's mine already. Now skedaddle.'

As human beings we live in this world, and specifically in Kansas USA. We have our own beliefs, opinions, and ideals of what it means to be a citizen of the United States and what is best for the country. Yet, at the same time we are God's kingdom people who are called to live as citizens of heaven, prioritizing God's will and eternal values over worldly systems. To live lives that are defined by active obedience to God's purpose, seeking first to make God the primary focus of our daily lives. Living as Jesus taught us and following his example of authentically loving God and showing others what God's love looks like by selflessly serving the needs of others. Not just hear the gospel - be the gospel! Bringing God's will to the earth by acting as a mirror of heaven: proclaiming good news, helping the poor, and bringing freedom to the oppressed. As believers and followers of Jesus Christ seeking the Kingdom of God is how we live and interact with the world. We are asked to be different in a world that demands we conform. When the world calls for war, we call for peace.

> *Christ, our peace, you break down the walls that divide us; Christ, our peace, come, make us one body in you.*[3]

When the world encourages hate and rejection, we are asked to extend the same grace and forgiveness to others that we have received from God. We are asked to choose forgiveness and show mercy, reject the holding of grudges and bitterness, and to embody the attributes or gifts of the Holy Spirits rather than pursuing and embracing temporary worldly pleasures.

As nations have crumbled and collapsed, Christianity has thrived and flourished, long after the powers of the world have failed. Be the change you want to see in the world.

Blessings,
Pastor Teri

References: [1]Samuel Cohn, excerpt from "All Societies Die: How to Keep Hope Alive;" Professor of Sociology at Texas A & M University; Cornell University Press, April 15, 2021; https://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/all-societies-die/ https://www.samuelcohn.net/societal-death for more information.
[2]Daily Observer, Saturday, 6 June, 2026, book review, https://observerbd.com/news/578387
[3]Marty Haugen, "Christ our Peace," 2007 GIA Publications, Inc., giamusic.com.

The church office will be closed on Friday, July 3, 2026, in observance of the Independence Day Holiday.

Pastor Teri's Calendar

2026 — CALENDAR YEAR

JULY — CALENDAR MONTH

SUNDAY — FIRST DAY OF WEEK

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 Worship 8:15 & 10:30 am, no comm	29 Pay Roll, Pastor's Day Off- day of rest & renewal	30 Pay Day, Appointment 11:00 AM, Sewing Group 1:30-4:00 PM, Council meets with Bishop Simon 6:00 PM	01 WKS Regional Text Study Hays 9-12 PM	02 Bible Study 1:30 PM	03 Church Office Closed for July 4th Holiday, Pastor's Sermon Writing Day	04 4th of July & US Semiquincentennial Celebration Worship Service 6:00 PM
05 Worship 8:15 & 10:30 am, Communion	06 Pastor's Day Off- day of rest & renewal	07 Sewing Group 2:30-4:00 PM,	08 Pastoral Care/ Home Visitation Day.	09 Bible Study 1:30 PM, Speaker Series 7:00 PM	10 Pastor's Sermon Writing Day. Gwenna Green's Funeral PVP 2:00 PM. Demi Pope private baptism 5:30 PM.	11 Worship Service 6:00 PM Communion
12 Worship Service 8:15 AM & 10:30 AM, No Communion	13 Pastor's Day Off- day of rest & renewal	14 Payroll, Sewing Group 1:30-4:00 PM, Exec Committee 5:30 PM	15 Pay Day, Online Workshop 12 - 1 PM	16 Bible Study 1:30	17 Pastor's Sermon Writing Day.	18 Worship Service 6:00 PM no comm - John Dumler PMA, RCACF Dinner 6:00 PM
19 8:15 & 10:30 worship, Communion, Care Home Worship 2-4 PM	20 Pastor's Day Off- day of rest & renewal	21 Sewing Group 1:30-4:00 PM, Council 6:30 PM	22 Pastoral Care/ Home Visitation Day.	23 Bible Study 1:30 PM	24 Pastor's Sermon Writing Day.	25 Worship Service 6 PM Communion
26 Worship Service 8:15 & 10:30 AM, no comm	27 Pastor's Day Off- day of rest & renewal	28 Sewing Group 1:30-4:00 PM, Record Clergy Comments	29 Dr. Appt 12:00 PM	30 Payroll, Back to School Giveaway	31 Pay Day, Back to School Giveaway, Pastor's Sermon Writing Day.	01 Worship 6PM no comm

Summer Worship Experiment Continues

We will continue to engage in our Summer Worship Experiment using the hymnals. Your feedback is very helpful and welcomed as our experiment continues. We will continue to offer full bulletins for those who need them.

Prayer Shawl Group: Mondays at 10:00 AM
Sewing Group: Tuesdays 1:30 – 4:00 PM
Bible Study with Pastor: Thursdays 1:30 PM in Parish Hall

Executive Committee: Tuesday, July 14 , 2026, at 5:30 PM

Church Council: Tuesday, July 21, 2026, 6:30 PM

In July the 10:30 Worship Services on & Sundays will be broadcast on KRSL (990 AM and 98.1 FM).
Sunday Services are streamed live at www.stjohnrussell.com
This outreach is made possible as a ministry of St. John Lutheran Church.

To be **included** in the **August Newsletter**, information must be submitted no later than **July 21, 2026**.

July 2026 Worship Assistants

6:00 Sat	Greeter/Usher	Reader	Musician
July 4th	Darold and Corine Gideon	Elaine Voos	TBA
July 11th	Allen and Betty Funk	Jeremy Ulrich	TBA
July 18th	Kelvie Reeves and Jaden Nuss	Kelvie Reeves	TBA
July 25th	Galen and Rudene Niedenthal	Galen Niedenthal	TBA
August 1st	Brad and Cheryl Prester	Elaine Voos	TBA

8:15 Sun	Greeter/Usher	Lector	Musician
July 5th	Dick and Georganna McCrary	Georganna McCrary	TBA
July 12th	Katrin Kolder	Katrin Kolder	TBA
July 19th	Dick and Georganna McCrary	Georganna McCrary	TBA
July 26th	Katrin Kolder	Katrin Kolder	TBA
August 2nd	Carol Fritz	Carol Fritz	TBA

10:30 Sun	Greeter/Usher	Lector
July 5th	Carol Fritz (N) ; Judy Holmes(S)	Judy Holmes
July 12th	Glenna Hackerott (N); Janella Eck (S)	Gina Langhofer
July 19th	Mark and Alice Fae Johnson(N); Deloris Janne (S)	Cindy Ross
July 26th	Ron and Ginger Tittel(N); Irene Coffeen(S)	Deb Kruetzer
August 2nd	Steve Masden (N); Janella Eck (S)	Susan Krug

	Acolytes	Musician
July 5th	**None**	TBA
July 12th	Sasha Robbens and Layken Eck **(10:30am)**	TBA
July 19th	Maybelle and Emily Olson **(10:30am)**	TBA
July 26th	Wesley Johnson and Bryson Feil **(10:30am)**	TBA
August 2nd	Rogan and Collins Dumler **(10:30am)**	TBA

Bulletin Delivery

July 3rd: Denise Guth
July 10th: Carol Fritz
July 17th:John Boxberger
July 24th:Darold and Corrine Gideon
July 31st: Dick and Georganna McCrary

Altar Guild:

Chair: Crecia Reeves
Saturday: Katrina Woelk
Susan Lorenc, Deb Karst and Carol Fritz

If you cannot assist with worship or acolyte the week you are listed, please try to find someone to take your place that weekend.

OUR CHURCH RECORDS

Worship Attendance

Date	Sat	Early	Late	Total
May 30th and 31st	15	20	58	93
June 6th and 7th	24	21	33	78
June 13th and 14th	24	21	31	76
June 20th and 21st	19	17	23	59
June 27th and 28th	To be reported in August Newsletter			

Offering

May 30th and 31st …….$2877.00
June 6th and 7th ……$2919.75
June 13th and 14th ……....$4229.00
June 20th and 21st ……$2037.00
June 27th and 28th ……$ will report in August Newsletter

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Our Prayer Shawl Ministry needs your help. Please be sure to complete the short document of who is giving and receiving a prayer shawl when you take one from the display. The color or description of the shawl is written on the attached card, please be sure to include this.

BACK TO SCHOOL GIVEAWAY

It is that time of year that we begin gearing up for our Back-to-School Giveaway. This year we will be doing the giveaway on Thursday and Friday July 30 and 31, 2026.

We are now accepting donations.

Donated Clothing should be school ready (no stains or tears). Gently worn shoes, jackets, and athletic wear are also appreciated. Donations in all sizes for all grades are needed. A box for gently used clothing and shoes is in the basement hallway under the coat rack. New socks and undergarments, school supplies, and monetary donations may be brought to the church office.

Donations of new, full-size personal hygiene items are also needed. Products with neutral scents are preferred. Items may include, but are not limited to: toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss, bar/shower soap, shampoo, conditioner, body lotion, deodorant, combs, brushes, lip balm, nail clippers, foot powder, feminine products, and hand sanitizer.

The Back-to-School Giveaway is for students (preschool through high school) who reside in the Russell County Area. Each student chooses gently used (and new) clothing and receives a new package of socks and undergarments. A limited number of school supplies are available for students in junior and senior high.

Thank you for your generosity and support of the congregation and community, these ministries allow St. John to help many students as they prepare for the new school year. If you would like to **volunteer** for the Back-to-School Giveaway, **help is needed** to sort as donations arrive, set up before the giveaway, assist during the giveaway, and sort items remaining after the giveaway. For more information, please contact the church office.

On Thursday, July 30, the Giveaway will begin at 10:00am and end at 5:00pm
On Friday, July 31, the Giveaway will be from 12:00pm to 3:00pm

We need help setting up tables and arranging items before the giveaway begins, help to assist on the days of the ministry, and cleaning up on Friday. If you can help, please contact Carol Fritz.

A Willingness to Serve

***If you have any interest in the following please contact St. John Lutheran Church Council President Lee Keffer at* (785-483-7793). Your willingness is greatly appreciated!**

-Anyone willing or wanting to finish out a one-year term on St. John Lutheran Church Council

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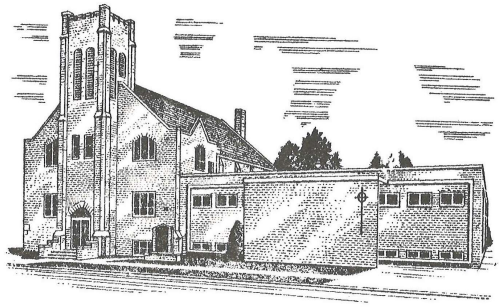
Thank You!

Co-directors of Alter Guild Carol Fritz and Deb Karst want to give a huge thank you to Annette Sterlin, Mark Mai, Melinda Olson, Maybelle Olson, Crecia Reeves, Gina Langhofer, Lois DeWald, Kurt DeWald, Georganna McCrary, Ginger Tittel, Ron Tittel, Lavern Dietz, and Steve Young for helping with the Sacristy. Your help is greatly appreciated!

Gwenna Green's Memorial and Celebration of Life Service will take place at *Pohlman~Varner~Peeler Mortuary* in Russell Kansas on July 10, 2026, at 2:00PM, officiated by the Rev. Brenda Roger. Visitation will be from 1:00 to 2:00 PM.

St. John Lutheran Church
425 N. Main Street
Russell, KS 67665



July 2026 Newsletter

St. John Lutheran Church
Pastor Teri Sutherlin
785-483-5358
stjohn@ruraltel.net
stjohnrussell.com

Worship Services
6:00 pm Saturday
8:15 and 10:30 am Sunday

****NEW Office Hours****
Monday through Friday
****1:30 pm to 5:00 pm****

St. John Lutheran Church
Clergy and Staff
Pastor Teri Sutherlin (pastor@ruraltel.net)
Kelvie Reeves, Administrative Assistant
Shayla Peck, Bookkeeper
John Kreutzer, Custodian

Church Council
President: Lee Keffer
Vice President:Gaylon Walter
Secretary: Mark Johnson
Treasurer:Amber Ruggels

Members:
Afton Brown, Hadlee Brown,
D.J. Klema, Melinda Olson,
Paul Phillips, Heather Pohlman, and
Pastor Teri Sutherlin

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America