

FROM THE PASTOR

THE GIFT HE BRINGS!

We've already passed the "gift giving" season, or have we? That's my problem with the way that the world celebrates Christmas. They miss out on the real party. They miss the Twelve Days of Christmas which are just beginning on Christmas Day. They miss out on the party of Epiphany on January 6 which celebrates the Wise Men acknowledging just who this baby is (see Matthew 2:1-12). And they miss out on the afterglow that follows throughout January and the whole Epiphany season. Just think about it. God sent this gift for the world, and this gift is for me and for you! Wow!

It seems like we are being conditioned, even as Christians, to miss the whole thing. We too are drawn into the modern, cultural Christmas celebrations -- you know, "Happy Holidays" type stuff. That view focuses on the weeks leading up to Christmas and then shuts everything down on December 26th. The lights come down, the presents get shelved, and even the tree is thrown out mere days after Christmas.

Jerry Seinfeld once did a comedy routine about that attitude. He observed that we treat Christmas trees like "mob-hits." Trees are cut down and stripped of their decorations; their needles are shed like blood; then they are thrown to the curb like yesterday's garbage. It's easy to see why people miss the enduring joy of the season. They think that the really important things are Black Friday, Cyber Monday, gifts, eggnog, and the NBA on Christmas day. If that's all it is, I'd be depressed by the end of January too!

Well, let's turn things around. Let's learn from the ancient church. They didn't even start celebrating Christmas until Christmas Day. Then they actually observed twelve days of Christmas. Why? Those twelve days were to be reflections, continued celebrations of who the baby in the manger truly is, the eternal Son of God. He came as God's gift to the world. He came as God's Savior of the world. He came to bring a kingdom into our world that would last forever.

John, the forerunner of Jesus, said it simply last week, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). In today's verse the Lamb of God Himself tells you what's at stake. "Repent!" That means to turn away from yourself and your sins, and turn to God. Why? "The kingdom of heaven has come near," because I am here for you!

Here are a couple thoughts about this kingdom:

- You can't create it and you can't make it happen; you can only receive it as a gift from the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
- It's the only kingdom that lasts. It's the only thing in this life that will endure.

So whatever you and I think is important in life, nothing is more important than receiving this kingdom from Jesus on grace terms alone, through faith in Him. As you venture into the Bible with me this year, let's try to unpack more completely the gift He brings to us. His gift provides an enduring joy, a peace that passes all human understanding, an abundant life, and a relationship with God that never ends!

Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty

POINTS TO PONDER

Baptism, Repentance, Catechesis, Sanctification are not a point in time but a life process.

Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family, the Church, in managing all of life and life's resources for God's purposes.

God makes a promise, faith believes it, hope anticipates it, and patience waits quietly for it.

We may or may not be required to die for Christ, but we must certainly *live* for Him.

Beautiful music is the art of the prophets that can calm the agitations of the soul; it is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us.

Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Sola Scriptura, Sola Christus.

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2026 ANNUAL VOTERS MEETING RECAP

The Annual Voters Meeting was held on Sunday, January 25, attended by 24 adults.

Results of Church Council elections

President David Burno

Board of Deacons Will Uffenbeck

Financial Secretary Martin Newhouse

Board of Fellowship Danielle Christensen

Other Council members continuing their terms are:

Vice President Matthew Christensen

Treasurer Jeff Hahn

Secretary William Uffenbeck

Deacons David Burno, Bryce Kitzman

Board of Finance Mike Seach, Curt Krebs,
Stephanie Nelson

Board of Fellowship Tana Uffenbeck and
Dick Ault

Board of Maintenance David Hahn and
Bill Kase

We thank all these for their service over previous years and the willingness of those elected last Sunday. Other agenda items included approval of reports, approval of the 2026 budget, selection of 2026 Mission recipients, discussion of work completed on the Bell Tower and work still to be completed, and the possibility of holding another Concert of Thanksgiving and Praise, with this year's donations being to benefit a community project.

ASH WEDNESDAY AND LENT WORSHIP MIDWEEK SERVICES

Wednesdays at 6:30 pm

Ash Wednesday (Feb. 18)

Lenten Midweek I (Feb 25)

Lenten Midweek II (March 4)

Lenten Midweek III (March 11)

Lenten Midweek IV (March 18)

Lenten Midweek V (March 25)

ASH WEDNESDAY SUPPER

Come join us on February 18 from 5:00 to 6:00 pm for a soup and sandwich supper. You may arrive anytime during that period. We will stop serving at 6:00 pm to allow time for cleanup before the worship service begins. This event is being hosted by the Women's Society. Guests are welcome.

ANNUAL CHILI COOK-OFF

Sunday, February 15

11:30 am



It's time to put your chili to the test! Find your favorite recipes! The Annual Chili Cook-off will be on Sunday, February 15. ALL are invited whether you are entering the contest or enjoying the flavors! Join us for good food, fellowship, and to vote on your favorite chili! More details to follow in bulletin announcements.

SATURDAY MORNING MEN'S GROUP

Men's Group meets on the first and third Saturday at 9:00 am of each month. Their next meetings will be February 7 and February 21, with Bible Study. If you have questions, please contact Dan Ludeman (608-931-8304).

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR 2026 SCOOPIE NIGHT FUNDRAISERS

Sponsored by CELC Men's Group

We will be holding 3 fund raising events through Scoopie Share Nights. These are scheduled for the following dates and locations:

Tuesdays, April 21 4:00 – 8:00 pm

And May 19 4:00 – 8:00 pm

At Janesville Culvers

645 Midland Rd., Janesville

and

Monday, June 15 4:00 – 8:00 pm

at Beloit Culvers

2676 Cranston Rd, Beloit

Please mark your calendars and take your family and friends out to Culvers for supper.

The three nights' earnings will be equally divided between:

- purchases to assemble Hygiene Kits for Orphan Grain Train
- Housing4OurVets
- CELC Bell Tower Fund.

"They will know we are Christians by our Love."

"When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' (Matt. 4:17), He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." (Luther's 95 Theses, 1)

"WHERE DO OUR OFFERINGS" GO?

Explanation of 2026 Offerings and Special Worship Offerings

Weekly Envelopes

"Current Expense" offerings are applied to CELC operating expenses.

"World Missions" offerings: The first \$4,000 of 2026 World Missions offerings are designated to LCMS South Wisconsin District. After that goal is reached, further 2026 World Mission offerings will be divided equally between the missions listed below. If you want your mission offering to go specifically to just one of these, please write that on your envelope.

- Missionary Rev. Dr. Jastram (Japan)
- Deaf missions
- St. Louis LCMS Seminary Food Bank
- Fort Wayne LCMS Seminary Co-op

Offerings for non-Sunday worships will be applied to current expenses. These include Ash Wednesday, Lenten mid-week, Thanksgiving, Advent mid-week, Christmas Eve & Christmas Day, and New Year's offerings.

Special Offerings

Mission Dimes are given to Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT). These are all dimes that are put into the offering plate throughout the year.

Lutherans for Life Sunday is the 3rd Sunday in January. The loose plate offering is traditionally given to this charity.

Sunday School Offerings: The money that the children give is divided equally between the church and a special project that the Sunday School chooses.

MERCY PENNIES

Thank you to all who have donated toward Pennies for Mercy Meals in recent months. This project is sponsored by Christ Ev. Lutheran Men's Group. Every 3 cents ships a meal. Remember to save your pennies when you get change back. Pennies are collected at the back of the sanctuary the first Sunday of each month. Our next collections will be February 1 and March 1.

ORPHAN GRAIN TRAIN



THURSDAY
February 12, 2026

The next collection date will be **Thursday, February 12** from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm in the church parking lot. This is 1 day earlier than usual, due to other scheduling needs. If you would like to volunteer at St. Paul's on February 14, please contact Dan Ludeman at 608-931-8304 for details.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS



Our students continue to learn more about Jesus Christ and His love and grace.

Birthdays

Maddie Pennock.....Feb. 13
Katherine (Katie) Uffenbeck..... Feb. 18

Baptism Anniversary

Katherine (Katie) Uffenbeck.....Feb 26

May the Holy Spirit ever keep our students in His baptismal grace and faith unto life everlasting.

WOMEN'S SOCIETY

FEBRUARY 10

11:00 am Kitchen Cleaning

1:00 pm Business Meeting

All women are invited to attend as we meet at 11:00 to get our kitchen organized and cleaned.

Those attending may want to bring their own "sack lunch" to eat before our regularly scheduled 1:00 pm business meeting.

WOMEN'S SOCIETY **MISSION COLLECTIONS**

Thank you to all who have turned in used ink cartridges, receipts from the purchase of "Box Tops" products, and Loaves for Learning UPCs from Country Hearth breads. From your contributions, cases of paper for the church office have been received and Lutheran schools have received cash funds.

Please continue to place your contributions in the container located in the north entryway cloak area. Any questions may be directed to Elaine Rather (608-676-4984). Thank you!

HANDBELL PRACTICE

Handbell practice for beginners, young ringers or basic review will begin on Sunday, Feb. 22, at about 11:30 a.m. Prior music experience is not necessary; everything you need to know will be taught. Practices will be about 20 min. in length. First-time ringers or anyone with questions are asked to contact Elaine Rather (608-676-4984). Please join us!

*The Word of the Lord Endures Forever -
VDMA - motto of Lutheran Reformers*

Action Team Cards

Attention Thrivent Members

You have until March 31, 2026 to direct any remaining 2025 Thrivent Choice Dollars to the charity of your choice.

Please complete your direction in any of these ways:

On-line: www.thrivent.com/choice

OR

Phone: 1-800-847-4836

OR

By calling your Thrivent Financial representative

OR

By calling David Burno (608-728-4675)

Let's not leave these charitable dollars behind. There are still events in early 2026 for which you may use your cards. Each card is worth \$250 toward event costs. Dave will be happy to help you choose an event to sponsor and also to help you complete the application process.

WE NEED YOUR CANS!

Do you have aluminum beverage cans to recycle? We are collecting aluminum (beverage only) cans to raise money for the Bell Tower fund. **These should be rinsed out and dry.** The collection bin is located in the kitchen next to the utility sink.

ENJOY A CONCERT

Everyone is invited to a concert of organ, euphonium and harpsichord music on Sunday, March 1, at 3:00 p.m. at the First Congregational Church, 801 Bushnell St., in Beloit. Performing will be William Uffenbeck on euphonium and Elaine Rather on organ alongside Dr. Max Yount and Beth Yount on organ and harpsichord. The concert is part of the Musica Maxima concert series, sponsored by First Congregational throughout the year.

MORE POINTS TO PONDER

(presented by Pastor Rather)

Anything that savors of dejection spiritually is always wrong. Oswald Chambers

As long as we live in this world we are "simul justus et peccator". That's a Latin expression which means we are both justified and sinners. It means, even though Jesus' people remain sinful, because of the forgiveness won by Jesus through His life, suffering, death and resurrection, they are forgiven and justified, that is, they are declared innocent before the Lord.

"I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen." Luther

It's the greatest blessing of God when love continues to flower in marriage. Luther

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen - not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else. C.S. Lewis

"Life narrows down and crisis comes and suddenly only one thing matters and there in the narrow place stands Jesus."

*My soul thirsts for God, the living God.
Psalm 42:1 - 2*

		<i>CHRIST LUTHERAN</i>				2026
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 9:00 Worship 10:30 Bible Class & Sunday School	2	3	4	5	6	7 9:00 Men's Group & Bible Study
8 9:00 Worship 10:30 Bible Class & Sunday School	9	10 11:00 Kitchen Cleaning 1:00 Women's Society 7:00 Church Council	11	12 4:00-5:00 Orphan Grain Train Drop-off <u>1 Day Earlier than usual</u>	13	14
15 9:00 Worship 10:30 Bible Class & Sunday School 11:30 Chili Cook-off Lunch	16 8:30 Food Pantry Packing	17 9:00 Food Pantry Distribution	18 Ash Wednesday 5:00-6:00 Lenten Supper 6:30 Worship	19	20	21 9:00 Men's Group & Bible Study
22 9:00 Worship 10:30 Bible Class & Sunday School 11:30 Handbell Practice	23	24 (9:00 Snow Date for Pantry if needed)	25	26	27	28