

LIVING WORDS

LIVING WORD LUTHERAN CHURCH

438.9672 CHURCH

DECEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER



A Blessed and Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

from Living Word Lutheran Church staff: Jan Beck, Pastor Melanie and Lori Dockter

Christmas Schedule of Events

Dec. 3 5:15 PM Advent meal, **6:30 PM** worship
Dec. 7 8:45 AM SS Christmas program practice,
10:00 AM worship/communion
Dec. 10 .. 5:15 PM Advent meal, **6:30 PM** worship
Dec. 13 .. 9:30 AM St. Lucia Breakfast
Dec. 14 .. 8:45 AM SS Christmas program practice,
10:00 AM Christmas program,
4:00 PM Live nativity

Dec. 16 .. 6:00 PM LWLW General Meeting
Dec. 17 .. 5:15 PM Advent meal, **6:30 PM** worship
Dec. 21 .. 8:45 AM Sunday school,
10:00 AM worship
Dec. 24... 5:00 PM Christmas Eve candlelight worship
Dec. 25... Christmas Day
Dec. 28 .. 10:00 AM worship
Dec. 31... New Year's Eve

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Mid-Week Advent Services Planned

For this year's mid-week Advent meditations, we will be using J.D. Greear's **ADVENT** as a basis for our time together. We will use three sessions of a four-session series meeting on December 3, 10, and 17. We will meet for a light supper beginning at 5:15 and then move into the sanctuary at 6:30 for a 30-minute time together including the singing of some of the favorite carols of Christmas.

The focus of the study is on Jesus's identity and the significance of the Christmas story. The series uses names given to Jesus in Isaiah (Isaiah 9:6) to explore his roles as Emmanuel, Wonderful Counselor, Everlasting Father, and



more, emphasizing that the arrival of Jesus was a world-changing event rather than just a sentimental story.

"The series re-frames Advent as a time to focus on the true meaning of Christmas, moving beyond a "quiet manger scene" to understand the story's profound significance. The goal is to show how knowing Jesus's true identity changes everything and how the gospel provides a solution to "darkness" and brokenness in our lives."

Please join us for this informal time of fellowship as we prepare our hearts for Christmas.

December Noisy Change

Noisy Change donations for the month of December will be given to the "Visiting Neighbors" program in Milbank. This program is a volunteer service that provides companionship to older adults to help them remain in their homes. Located at the Grant County Courthouse, the program offers weekly visits for socialization and conversation and strives to improve quality of life for older adults in their own homes.



St. Lucia Breakfast

The women of our church and any others are invited to join us as we once again celebrate the joy of Christmas with our annual St. Lucia Breakfast on Saturday, December 13.

For over 20 years, the Swedish Covenant Church in the little town of Stockholm hosted a Swedish breakfast on the morning of December 13. The dining room in its little basement was beautifully decorated and filled with guests from all around the area who came to pause for an hour to prepare their hearts for Christmas. When the church members became a very small congregation, the yearly event ended.

Saint Lucia was an Italian saint, who gave her life for her faith when Christianity was spreading across the Roman Empire. The observance of her day began in Sweden and the immigrants brought it with them when coming to America. Held on December 13, the longest day of the year, it was a time to begin to prepare their hearts and homes for Christmas with

the eldest daughter serving coffee and Swedish pastries to her family.

In 2008, the women of the American Lutheran Church decided that the Swedish tradition of the Covenant Church should be kept alive. With help from some of the elderly ladies in their congregation, the women learned how to make Swedish fruit soup and tea rings.

This is the 11th year the Women of Living Word have continued the custom of celebrating St. Lucia Day on the Saturday that falls closest to December 13. It is a time to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas. The event begins at 9:30 AM with coffee, Swedish pastries and fellowship. A short program follows with Christmas readings and the singing of Christmas carols. The event will be over by 10:30 AM. Please plan to join us to prepare your heart and bring friends and family with you. There is a sign-up sheet in the fellowship hall to help us plan for the approximate number attending.





November Fun!

The month of November was packed with faith, friends, and a whole lot of fun for our Dynamic Disciples kids!

On the first Wednesday, the children enjoyed a special "Kid's Church" time filled with upbeat songs, meaningful lessons, and plenty of smiles. They tried their hands at *straw-painting leaves* for our beautiful entry display and made cheerful pictures for Karen. With the warm weather blessing us, everyone enjoyed outdoor games and friendship time — because nothing beats sunshine in November!

The second Wednesday focused on giving thanks and learning *why* we celebrate Thanksgiving. A highlight (and definite sugar-boost!) was creating their very own turkey snacks made with donuts and Fruit Loops. Let's just say these kids come off the bus with a Thanksgiving-sized appetite every Wednesday! We also watched a fun BibleMan video about being thankful for what we have, created colorful Indian corn with beads, and wrapped up the afternoon with more outdoor playtime.

We finished the month on a sweet note by **building gingerbread houses together and practicing for our Christmas program**. Sticky fingers, lots of laughs, and plenty of candy decorations made the day complete!

We are truly thankful to gather each Wednesday to grow in **faith, friendship, and fun**. What a blessing our Dynamic Disciples kids are to our church family!



Fences, Pigs, Needles, Roosters & Christmas Prep!

November was certainly a *wildly wonderful* month in Sunday School! We covered everything from lions to pigs, from threading needles to waking up with roosters — and even squeezed in some Christmas program practice. Here's a peek at what kept our kids busy (and our teachers on their toes!):

WEEK 1 – DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN

We kicked off the month with Daniel and his unexpected overnight stay in a lion's den — definitely not on anyone's bucket list! The children learned how fences can keep things in or out, and how God's laws are like strong, loving barriers that keep us safe. Just as God shut the mouths of the lions to protect Daniel, His Word helps keep sin from sneaking in. A powerful reminder... and thankfully no real lions were present that morning.

WEEK 2 – PIGS & THE PRODIGAL SON

Next up: pigs! The children heard the parable of the lost son and learned what happens when someone trades wisdom for wild spending. The young man found himself broke, lonely, and sharing space with pigs — definitely not the deluxe suite he imagined. But when he returned home, his father welcomed him with open arms. To help remember God's forgiveness, the kids painted their own piggy banks. (And yes, some pigs now have eyelashes, superhero capes, and polka dots. Very biblical.)

WEEK 3 – THREADING THE NEEDLE

This week's object lesson proved that threading a needle is *very* difficult — especially with tiny fingers and lots of giggles. We talked about a young man in Scripture who loved God but loved his wealth even more. The children learned that nothing we own is more valuable than knowing Christ, and everything we have is a gift from Him. Even needles. Even patience.

WEEK 4 – ROOSTERS & WAKE-UP CALLS

We wrapped up our lessons with a noisy friend: the rooster! Kids learned how roosters help wake up the farm each morning, and how one rooster gave Peter a wake-up call of his own. Peter promised he would never leave Jesus, but Jesus knew Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed. The children were reminded to keep their

eyes on Jesus — He gives us courage even when we feel scared or unsure.

WEEK 5 – CHRISTMAS PROGRAM PRACTICE

Our final Sunday was dedicated to Christmas program practice! The kids are excited to retell the story of Jesus' birth — *with a special appearance from our True North VBS friends!* Mark your calendars for **December 14 at 10 AM**. You won't want to miss this delightful, heartwarming, and slightly unpredictable performance by our amazing kids.



Living Word Warriors

DEAR READER,

There have been some comments made recently about the efforts of the cancer walk team and I'd like to try to clear some confusions up. The Living Word Warriors have a mission to fundraise all year in an effort to support our local community and the surrounding community for those who are fighting cancer. The money that we fundraise is to benefit those who are affected. In order to receive funds from *It Only Takes a Spark*, there is an application to fill out and then submit to the core committee. This can be found on their website at www.takesaspark.org. Currently, there are about 95 people who are benefitting from funds through this organization. Due to this number, it is crucial that all the teams are actively fundraising to provide funds to continue the support allocated to these individuals and their needs based on their treatment plans.

As a cancer walk team, we are required to pay a small fee, have a minimum of 8 members, fundraise yearly to support the cause, and participate in the annual cancer walk in June. The fundraising year is from August 1 through July 31. This year the Living Word Warriors thought it would be nice to do a 'big event' each quarter in an effort to raise funds. There is no overall goal in mind as this is our first full year

as a team, but there are goals within each event that we host. Last year we started late, in March, and were able to donate a little less than \$10,000 by the end of the fiscal year. This was amazing!! With that in mind, being able to double that number would be amazing for this year since we have 12 months instead of 4.

With our efforts thus far, the cornhole tournament that was held in September allowed us to profit about \$360 and the Fall Bazaar held in November was a great success. We don't have a final profit number yet, but can roughly say \$2000. We are blessed to have the support we have been given thus far. This mission is greater than me, you, or this team. It's for the community and the greater good of those who are battling a 24/7 sickness. Our mission is

to help others in a capacity that works for us and benefits them.

We will be trying to finish out the year with sales of our ornaments, coffee cups, lefse, and baked goods. Again, thank you to everyone who has supported us and continues to support us. It is very humbling how our church family rallies together for our mission.

God's work, our hands.

Laura Dallman

Living Word Warriors' captain



The Reason for the Season

HELLO AND HAPPY DECEMBER,

We recently held our **ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**. I want to thank everyone who submitted an annual report and also everyone who stayed for the meeting. It was fairly short and quick with only a handful of questions. However, I do want to emphasize that if you ever have questions, ideas or concerns throughout the year, you are more than welcome to contact me or anyone on church council.

The new **CHURCH COUNCIL** has been formed and here are the areas in which everyone will serve.

President: Jackie Olson

Vice President: TBD at December meeting

Secretary: Julie Berger

Treasurer: Shannon Vietmeier

Worship & Evangelism: Deb Buttke and David Kruger

Youth & Education: Laurie Maas and Sharon Hyde

Property Management: Tim DeJong and Kyle Schwandt

You may have noticed an **AD** in the *Grant County Review* newspaper for the hiring of a church secretary. This is not an easy job so please pray regarding the filling of this position. We are very grateful that Jan Beck has been willing to help during this transition.

Also in the works is the formation of a **CALL COMMITTEE**. We will have 5-7 congregational

members serve in this very important role as we begin the process of searching for a new pastor. Although this handful of men and women will take an active role, every single one of us has an important

part to play and that is praying for God's guidance. We can be praying for our next pastor, even though we don't know who he or she is yet. We can be praying for the call committee and asking for protection, discernment, and wisdom. We can be praying for our congregation and that God prepares

us to receive who He has planned for us. We can be praying for surrendering to His will and trusting in his timing. And of course we can be praying for Pastor Melanie and thanking God for providing her to us during this transition time.

ADVENT SEASON is upon us and we will once again be having supper and evening services each Wednesday night, starting December 3. This is a wonderful time to slow down and reflect on the coming of Jesus as our Savior. December can be a busy month and for some people it can be very stressful or even depressing, especially if this is the first Christmas without a loved one. May we keep our focus on the reason for this season, and may God fill our eyes and minds and hearts with wonder, awe, joy and hope.

Merry Christmas! Love, Jackie
Jackie Olson, Council President



WOMEN OF THE LIVING WORD

HELLO EVERYONE,

would like to inform you of all the activities that will be happening this next month on behalf of the Living Word Lutheran Women Group.

On December 7, 2:30 PM, we would like to invite all women of the church to join us for a **PORCH POT DECORATION EVENT**. Porch pots are outdoor decorations made from evergreen boughs, birch logs, ornaments, ribbons, etc... We will be traveling to Sheila Hoernemann's *She Shed* in Ortonville to construct our pots. The cost is \$45 and please provide your own large pot with soil. If you prefer to travel over as a group we will meet at the church at 2:00 PM. If you would like to participate but don't have a flower pot, soil, way to haul the completed project, please let me know. I don't want anyone to miss out just on a "technicality". We will have a light lunch of Christmas goodies and hot drinks.

December 13 at 9:30 AM we are hosting the annual **ST. LUCIA BREAKFAST**. We invite the community to join us so please RSVP to the church office as we have limited seating. At the writing of this letter, we are finalizing the plans and may need volunteers. Please stay tuned to the bulletin and church announcements for opportunities to assist.

December 16 at 6:00 PM, we are hosting the year-end **GENERAL MEETING** of the Living Word Lutheran Women. There will be a light BBQ supper and an assortment of Christmas goodies. BBQ will be provided, but please bring an assortment of goodies



to share for dessert. Pastor Melanie will lead the Bible study. All women are invited to attend.

You will notice the **MITTEN TREE** in the fellowship hall. We are once again filling the branches with hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, and socks. We donate the items to the local schools.

The **CIRCLES** start a new Bible study in January. There are 2 groups — an evening and a morning. They study the same lesson and meet monthly on the 3rd Tuesday of the month. The ladies would love to have you join them! If you would like to join in, please register on the back table as materials will need to be ordered.

This is my last submission to the newsletter as coordinator of the Living Word Lutheran Women. Thank you for the opportunity to share the activities and mission of

our organization. Sandy Christensen will take over in January with Teri Hjelle as her vice-coordinator. Until then, if you have ANY QUESTIONS about our December schedule, please do not hesitate to ask/call. I am happy to help.

Merry Christmas!

Brenda Seehafer (605)880-1788



PASTOR'S LETTER



EMANUEL

DEAR CHURCH FAMILY OF LIVING WORD,

We are entering such a beautiful time of the year! Beginning with Thanksgiving Day, we start to turn our hearts to anticipation – the anticipation of, once again walking through Advent, preparing our hearts for the birth of the Savior at Christmas.

A few years ago, I was gifted a beautiful book by a dear friend. Its title is EMANUEL, by Ruth Chou Simons. In her writing, she offers an invitation to us to prepare room for Christ, not only at Christmas, but always. One of her writings is entitled, God's Promise. It is beautifully written and I would like to share it with all of you this Advent season. It reads...

The birth of Christ was not accident, surprise, or eleventh-hour rescue plan. It was God's promise all along. To think of Jesus as an after-thought to God's purposes and plans is to miss the wonder of the Redemption Story altogether — the opening chapter of which didn't take place at the manger, but in the heart of God from before time began.

How can we know that the Christmas story matters at all if we don't fully grasp our great need for a Savior? So many of us scurry about at Christmastime, hoping to find meaning in this season, when the true gift of the birth of Christ is found in unfathomable love in the heart of God. Try as we might, we can't muster up the feelings we want to feel at Christmas; we will experience the magnitude of Christmas only to the extent that we understand the grace and

mercy of God's plan of redemption. The uncertainty and fear Joseph must have felt at the news of Mary's pregnancy turned to assurance when the angel of the Lord revealed the divine fulfillment of God's promise and plan. Joseph's circumstances didn't change; he simply trusted God to do the impossible. God's spoken promise, kept, removes our greatest uncertainties.

In the same way our heart posture determines how we begin to prepare Him room this Christmas, the full picture of God's promise of salvation invites us to see clearly what we're really celebrating in this season – and why it matters today in the midst of our uncertainties and impossible circumstances.

*So, this is a story of hope...a story of rescue. This is a story that turns the posture of our hearts from **me** to **He**. This is a story we keep telling day after day, season after season, year after year – even after the last ornament has been put away. This is God's promise to His people and to all who will come to Him as He comes to us.*

It is my prayer that this message which holds all of the themes of Advent, Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, will come to you with special meaning as you prepare your hearts for Christmas knowing that the coming of the Christ Child was GOD'S GREATEST PROMISE TO YOU!

*Wishing you and your families
a most Blessed Christmas!*

Pastor Melanie

LWLC FAMILY



Mission Fundraiser for the Christian Learning Center

Thank you to everyone who came to and participated in the mission fundraiser for the Christian Learning Center to be built in Cambodia through ALWM. It was wonderful to have Pastor Sam Chim in Cambodia and Pastor Bill Moberly join us by Zoom.

In mission for Christ, Sue DeJong



IMPACT THE WORLD MINUTES



LWLC NOVEMBER 4 IMPACT MEETING MINUTES

ATTENDING: Vicki Strege, Sue DeJong, Gloria Cooley, Linda Anderson, Pastor Melanie, Marcia Heinje, Kelly Peterson

Opened with prayer by Pastor Melanie. Meeting called to order. Sue moved and Gloria seconded the motion to approve the minutes.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Marcia read through the treasurer's report about what had been given through noisy change and through Impact for the year of 2025. Kelly said the youth fund has \$100,000 and does not need extra funding at this time. Scholarships also has about \$71,000. This money is invested. Marcia moved and Linda seconded the motion to file the treasurer's report. The total in the account for impact is \$6923.75.

OLD BUSINESS: Noisy Change for December was discussed. Sue moved and Linda seconded motion that Visiting Neighbors be the noisy change designation for December. Pastor Melanie will talk to Jan about putting the amount of noisy change donation in the bulletin each week. We will also try to get the noisy change designation in each newsletter.

NEW BUSINESS: Vicki talked to the school and there is a need for money for the lunch program and also needs of some students. Gloria moved and Marcia seconded the motion that we give \$500 to the lunch program at Milbank High School to be used for the students with the most needs and put the noisy change for January to give to Dan Snaza to use for student incidental needs at

Milbank High School. Motion carried.

Marcia moved and Gloria seconded the motion to give \$2000 to the education center in Cambodia. Motion carried.

An anonymous gift has been given to ALWM for \$2000 for the youth conference to be held in January in Cambodia and also the \$1700 needed for the motorcycle for traveling in Nairobi plus \$1300 toward the roof for the Maasai Church. Thanks were shown for this generosity.

Marcia moved to give \$700 to the roof on the Maasai Church at Makumira in Tanzania. Sue seconded the motion. Motion carried.

We listened to a video from Julie Smude who continues to work in Thailand even though she has been suffering from cancer. She has reached 4000 students since the terrible floods in northern Thailand. They have also suffered an earthquake. She thanked us for the prayers over the last two years. She says God's grace and our prayers have sustained her. We will discuss further funding for her when we meet again in January.

We will meet on January 6 at 10:00 AM.

Pastor Melanie discussed Filters of Hope. It is an economical way to provide clean water that lasts for 10 years. Vicki and Sue will see if this is something that Pastor Bill could use in Vietnam.

Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Secretary, **Marcia Heinje**



"FOOD PANTRY DONATIONS IMPACT THE WORLD"

The Impact the World Mission Board extends our thanks to the congregation for so promptly and generously stepping up to provide food for the food pantry that is so very much needed during the government shutdown. Many families in our community will have food on their tables at this time because of your generosity.

May God richly bless you.

COUNCIL MINUTES



LWLC NOVEMBER 12, 2025 COUNCIL MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Pastor Melanie Reiners, President Jackie Olson, Moe Reede, Laurie Maas, Steve Strege, Sandy Christensen, Tim DeJong, Deb Buttke and Julie Berger.

OPENING PRAYER: Pastor Melanie gave the opening prayer.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: Laurie made a motion to approve the agenda, which was seconded by Moe. The motion carried.

PASTOR'S REPORT: Upcoming events were discussed. LWLW officers will be installed on November 30 along with the new council members. Mid-week Advent services will begin on December 3 at 6:30 PM. with supper starting prior to that at 5:15. Christmas Eve service will begin at 5 PM. with no communion. The live nativity will be held December 14. Christmas events will be advertised. The church doors will remain open during the noon hour. Moe made a motion to approve the Pastor's report. Laurie seconded the motion. The motion carried.

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS: Deb, Tim, and Sandy will assist at communion on December 7.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: Laurie made a motion to approve the Secretary's report as corrected. Moe seconded the motion, and it was carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT/FINANCE REPORT: Moe made a motion to approve the treasurer's report, and Julie seconded. The motion carried.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT REPORT: Nothing to report.

WORSHIP & EVANGELISM REPORT: Living Word participated in *Treat Street* both in Milbank and Ortonville. Teri Hjelle will be heading up the Christmas Care Connection, and there will be information in the bulletin. A Family Fun Community Fundraiser will be held November 16 at the 4-H Complex. The St. Lucia Breakfast is set for December 13. Deb made a motion to approve the worship and evangelism report, and Laurie seconded the motion. The motion carried.

YOUTH & EDUCATION REPORT: The Christmas program is set for December 14 during the church service. There are projects in the works for older youth activities. Steve made a motion to approve the report. Sandy seconded the motion. The motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS: No old business.

NEW BUSINESS: We will advertise the administrative assistant/secretary position in the newspaper. Names were discussed for a call committee for the open pastor position. The church council will decorate the church for Christmas after church service on November 23.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: December 10, 2025, after the Advent service.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Newsletter items are due by November 19.

ADJOURNMENT: Steve made a motion to adjourn the meeting with Moe seconding. The motion carried. Pastor Melanie closed the meeting with a prayer followed by the Lord's prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Berger, Council Secretary



December 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
			3:30 Confirmation 3:30 Dynamic Disciples 5:30 Advent Meal 6:30 Worship	9:00 Community Coffee		
7 8:45 Sunday School 9:00 Coffee Fellowship 10:00 Worship/Communion	8	9 9:00 Quilting	10 3:30 Confirmation 3:30 Dynamic Disciples 5:30 Advent Meal 6:30 Worship 7:00 Council	11 9:00 Community Coffee	12	13 9:30 St. Lucia Breakfast
14 Sunday School Christmas Program 8:45 Sunday School 9:00 Coffee Fellowship 10:00 Worship/Program 11:00 Chapel Communion 4:00 Live Nativity	15	16 6:00 LWLW Potluck	17 NEWSLETTER ITEMS DUE 3:30 Confirmation 3:30 Dynamic Disciples 5:30 Advent Meal 6:30 Worship	18 9:00 Community Coffee	19	20
21 8:45 Sunday School 9:00 Coffee Fellowship 9:00 January Servant Team Meets 10:00 Worship	22	23	24 CHRISTMAS EVE No Confirmation No Dynamic Disciples 5:00 Candlelight Worship	25 CHRISTMAS DAY Church & Office Closed No Community Coffee	26	27
28 9:00 Coffee Fellowship 10:00 Worship	29	30	31 No Confirmation No Dynamic Disciples			

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Sandra Hansen (b.) Kevin Hedge (b.) Teresa Meister (b.) Charles & Nadine Veen (w.)	Cynthia Fish (b.) Jessica Lewno (b.)			Ryan Keeton (b.) Sean Keeton (b.) Hope Pekelder (b.) Kyle & Gretchen Weber (w.)	
7	8	9 Brian Dallman (b.)	10 Siriana Bien (b.) Rita Dahle (b.)	11 Lori Dockter (b.)	12	13
14 Jennifer Anderson (b.) Gloria Cooley (b.) Maggie Kruger (b.)	15 Marcia Heinje (b.) Laurie Maas (b.)	16	17 Troy Peschong (b.) Brenda Seehafer (b.)	18 Craig & Carolyn Randleman (w.)	19 Jeremy Nelson (b.)	20 Joshua Keeton (b.) Dylan Meister (b.) Hunter Reede (b.) Janel Sandvig (b.)
21	22 Marge Nelson (b.) Claire Schwandt (b.)	23 Jean Flaig (b.)	24	25	26	27 Shirley Schmidt (b.)
28 Mary Kinder (b.)	29 Kendall & Nanci Van Peursem (w.)	30 Barbara Kloster (b.)	31 Susan Hippen (b.)			