

# LIVING WORDS

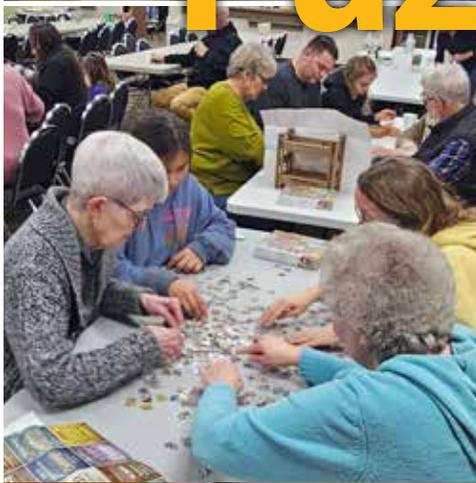
LIVING WORD LUTHERAN CHURCH

438.9672 CHURCH

MARCH 2026 NEWSLETTER



## Puzzle Mania



About 25 people gathered for an evening of fun and fellowship for our very first Puzzle Mania night! Congregational members gathered for a taco salad supper, followed by a devotional message with a puzzle theme to it, and then settled in for a friendly 500 piece puzzle competition. Door prizes were randomly given throughout the night. Group #4, comprised of Jeannie Leininger, Melanie Schwandt, Darla Loeschke, Kerby Weets, and Colby Weber, finished in 1st place in just under 45 minutes! They received a prize and one of the puzzles. Every team displayed persistence as they all FINISHED before heading home for the evening. P.S. The missing puzzle piece was found!



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## LWLC FAMILY

# LENT



**T**he mid-week services began on February 25 and are preceded by the serving of a meal beginning at 5:30 pm. The service will follow at 6:30 each evening. Each service will have a devotional message by Pastor Melanie and emphasis on the hymns of Lent. The titles of the messages are listed below.

Our hope and prayer is that these messages during the Season of Lent will touch your hearts in a special way, giving deeper meaning to God's gift of the Savior.

### Wednesday, March 4

5:30 PM – Supper; barbecues

6:30 PM – Worship: *Did I Say That Out Loud*

### Wednesday, March 11

5:30 PM – Supper; roast beef

6:30 PM – Worship: *The Road to the Passover*

### Wednesday, March 18

5:30 PM – Supper; pulled pork

6:30 PM – Worship: *A Nod of Recognition*

### Wednesday, March 25

5:30 PM – Supper; ham

6:30 PM – Worship: *An Encounter with Jesus*

### Sunday, March 29 – Palm Sunday

10:00 AM – Worship: *It's Sunday...But Friday's Coming*

### Thursday, April 2 – Maundy Thursday

6:30 PM – First communion for several young people. Worship: *Wash All of Me*

### Friday, April 3 – Good Friday

6:30 PM – Tenebrae Worship

### Sunday, April 5 – Celebration of Easter

No Sunday School

8:30-9:45 AM – Breakfast

10:00 AM – Worship: *Profiles In Joy*

## OUTREACH

### March Noisy Change

Noisy Change for the month of March is designated to go to the Alpha Center. This nonprofit based in Sioux Falls provides a wide range of services to women and men involved in an unexpected pregnancy. The goal is to provide positive alternatives with practical support.



## GR 7-12 YOUTH GROUP

# Bowling

Josie Dallman and her friend Lydiah attended a January youth group event of bowling. There were more who had planned to join us, but the sickness going around knocked them down and they decided to stay home to feel better. The 2 girls gathered at *Top Hat Lanes* in Milbank where they enjoyed a short message on being strong and courageous with the bible verse of Joshua 1:9 as our focus. They also enjoyed a pizza supper and cosmic bowling. They had a blast! The girls cheered each other on and yet had friendly competition in each game they bowled.

If you are in grades 7-12 and are interested in participating in our youth group, please let me know. I have an app, **TEAM REACH**, where we discuss and plan our next activity. In March, I am looking at a couple of options locally. Reach out and let me know if you are interested in joining us!

**FUTURE ACTIVITIES:** There will be another activity planned for our youth grades 7-12 in March as we stay fairly local. Stay tuned for those plans.



## LW WARRIORS

# Quilts For Raffle

### GREETINGS AGAIN,

Raffle Ticket sales are in full swing. If you are interested, find a team member to purchase your tickets. There are only 200 tickets being sold, and I have a feeling they will go quickly. Team members who are currently selling tickets: Lois Norris, Jessica Lewno, LaDonna Taylor, Rhonda Beckman, Sandy Christensen, Megan Bilben, and Laura Dallman.

Current items for sale, upcoming events planned, and other information will be shared on our facebook page, [www.facebook.com/groups/lwwarriors2025](http://www.facebook.com/groups/lwwarriors2025). I hope to see you follow us along our journey.

**COMING UP IN MARCH:** We will continue our raffle ticket sales and also introduce luminary bags. If you have people who you'd like to dedicate a bag



to, there are 2 options: *In Honor Of* or *In Memory Of*. We will have a signup sheet and take payment when you sign up. The bags will be made by our team and displayed the night of the walk, 2nd weekend in June at Lake Farley Park.

**STILL AVAILABLE:** coffee cups (\$12) and our 2025 original ornaments (\$5).

*With Strength and Courage, Laura Dallman*  
*Living Word Warriors' captain*

## YOUTH

### DYNAMIC DISCIPLES NEWS

We kicked off February with a wonderful outing to see *David* at the Mill Theater. We invited members of the congregation to join us, and **35 people** gathered for this deeply moving look at the life of David. It was a meaningful time of fellowship and a great reminder of God's faithfulness through every season. We didn't have classes on the 11th due to an early out and the 18th due to weather. **There will be NO Dynamic Disciples on March 11 and 18.**



### FIRST COMMUNION

We are excited to share that **seven youth** from our congregation began First Communion classes on **February 22**. Please keep these students in your prayers as they begin their journey toward receiving their First Communion on **Maundy Thursday, April 2**.

Following the service, everyone is invited to a coffee fellowship to celebrate and honor these students.



### SUNDAY SCHOOL

Our Sunday School classes have begun their lessons on **Jesus' journey to the cross**. In the weeks ahead, students will be learning the Easter story and discovering why it is so important for their lives today.

On **Easter Sunday**, children are invited to participate in an **Easter egg scavenger hunt in the sanctuary** during the Easter breakfast — a fun way to celebrate the joy of the resurrection!



### RAINFOREST FALLS VBS UPDATE

Preparations are underway for **Rainforest Falls VBS**, and we need your help!

Please save the **long brown twisted paper** that comes in Amazon packages for our "vine" decorations.

You can place donations in the **Sunday School storage room off the fellowship hall**.

Watch for a **sign-up sheet coming soon** for volunteers and youth participants.

**VBS Dates:** May 31 – June 4

We are excited to *Explore the Nature of God* together with our church families!



## WOMEN OF THE LIVING WORD

Although we were blessed with some beautiful temps mid-February as we head into March we are reminded that winter is still with us. Even so, as St. Patrick's Day, Lent and Easter are up and coming let's hope we see more spring-like colors in the future.

This month the Women of Living Word focus on **LAYETTE KITS** as the **MISSION PROJECT**. Supplies needed to complete the layettes are as follow:

- 4 cloth diapers
- 4 diaper pins
- 2 rubber or reusable swimmer pants (NOT diapers)
- 1 sleeper
- 2 onesies
- 1 receiving blanket
- 1 blanket
- 2 washcloths

These supplies are taken to the Orphan Grain Train and volunteers complete the kits and send them on where needed. You might be interested to know that although well-meaning variations are tempting, please do not deviate from the list of supplies above. It may result in heavy fines and/or the entire shipment being confiscated by customs officials. The cost to ship each box of layette kits averages \$11. Please, consider a monetary donation to your local Orphan Grain Train to help with shipping if you wish to do more or donate in this way. Thank you.

A big thank you to our LW Lutheran Women



who remember our graduates throughout the year. Angels are truly among us.

Looking to the future the **LWLW Quarterly general meeting will be held Wednesday April 15**, at 6:30 pm at Living Word Lutheran Church. We would love to have as many of the congregation ladies attend as possible. There are no commitments or requirements. Please just come, learn and enjoy the fellowships. A light lunch/snack will be served.

Also, this spring Living Word will celebrate five high school graduates. Please plan on joining us as the LWLW wish them well and send them off to do great things.

As we embark upon the Lenten season, let us remember how good our God truly is and that what He does for us is worth telling others about. Let us ask Him to give us the words to praise him daily. Stay warm everyone and God Bless!!

**Sandy Christensen**

*Women of the Living Word Coordinator*



## PASTOR'S LETTER



# Our Road to Jerusalem Begins with Ashes

As we came together on Ash Wednesday this year in less than desirable weather, we began our journey with Jesus to Jerusalem, once again. We are reminded annually that Lent is a journey of spiritual renewal.

The putting of ashes on our forehead should be a sign, not to others, but to the man or woman in the mirror, that we are taking the first step. If not, it is as hollow as this story that I related on Ash Wednesday. A boy took his brother to get ashes on Ash Wednesday. Instead of going to church as they were told, they went to McDonald's where the older brother dipped his finger in the ash tray that still existed at the time and rubbed ashes on their foreheads.

Or, it could be as hollow as the man who lived anything but a righteous life but would go to church early in the day to get his ashes, then parade around at work so all could see what a righteous man he was. In both cases, they wore the mask of righteousness but never experienced the meaning or the reality that their spiritual journey of renewal was starting at the moment!

Then why do this? Why take a visible and outward sign and display it before the world? That's the



answer right there. We do it not for the world to see. We do it not to prove how righteous or religious we are. We do it because we know we are sinners. We do it because we know Jesus is the cure for our sin problem. We do it because we want to look in the mirror and see

a man or woman who has made that first conscious step toward the renewing of our minds and spirits. We do it to make a difference in our lives, to make a difference in the lives around us. It is a pact with the Lord that is symbolic because ashes throughout scripture were used to indicate repentance, a change of mind, a change of direction and a change of heart. Ashes are not the end all of why we receive ashes. Rather, they are the beginning of your Lenten journey of renewal.

So as we are on this journey together, it is good for us to worship together each week, seeking direction for each step of the way as we seek renewal, redirection, and rededication of our lives as followers of Jesus Christ. As we make our way to Palm Sunday and Easter, I am excited to take everyone along each week as we study from the Gospels — Matthew, Mark and John.

*In Christian love, Pastor Melanie*

# COUNCIL MINUTES



## LWLC COUNCIL MEETING REPORT FEBRUARY 11, 2026

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Pastor Melanie Reiners, President Jackie Olson, Laurie Maas, Deb Buttke, Sharon Hyde, Kyle Schwandt, Dave Kruger, and Shannon Vietmeier. Pastor Melanie opened with prayer.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:** Agenda Approved (LM/SH)

**PASTOR'S REPORT:** The new secretarial position is going very well. There are many areas in the office that need updating and fixing, i.e. Shepherd's Staff, Cradle Roll, etc. which will be worked on now. There are extra Staffing Administration duties being done on off time; council will discuss it further in March. The audit is planned to take place in March; it was delayed as one of our auditors was filling in as Church Secretary full time. Between illnesses and school schedules the Confirmation Class schedule has been sparse; make-up work will be assigned so the information is adequately covered. There are multiple New Member inquiries and the new members will be received soon. Ash Wednesday and Lent will utilize the series "Imagining the Gospels". Sue DeJong is willing to work on the Easter Breakfast again; as it is a youth event Pastor Melanie will be in touch with Laura Dallman to discuss involvement of the older children as well. The Impact Committee has contacted two youth to attend the June Vietnam Mission Trip with Pastor Bill Moberly; they were excited for the opportunity. There is Mission Travel money to aid in the trip and its ancillary costs. There may or may not be a need for additional minimal fundraising to support the young missionaries on their trip. Pastor's Report Approved (DB/DK)

**COMMUNION ASSISTANTS:** March 1: Kyle, Schwandt, Dave Kruger and Sharon Hyde. Ash Wednesday: Julie Berger, Kyle Schwandt, and Deb Buttke.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:** Two corrections: There was a Financial Report received by Church Council in

January. Laura Dallman is with two "L"s and no "h". Secretary's Report Approved with the above corrections (LM/DK)

**TREASURER'S REPORT/FINANCE REPORT:** Kelly is on vacation and Shannon's training has not yet been completed; therefore there are no financial reports. The reports will be emailed to the council once Kelly returns. Shannon produced the paychecks, took care of the offerings, and necessary bills; however, there are more financial items to deal with in January before the Finance Report can be generated. There was a late payment on the credit card in December. (That occurred while the prior secretary was being removed from the account and everything was switching to a new card.) Update Approved (DK/SH)

**PROPERTY MANAGEMENT REPORT:** ProPresenter software in the booth is still working on the patch version that was installed after the crash a while ago. ProPresenter was supposed to provide a fixed version to replace it; but has not done so at this point. That replacement is being followed-up on. Currently the office Pro-Presenter is a free version and not the booth version; it would be best to have them paired under the paid version. Once the correct ProPresenter version is in place in the booth then the software updates should be able to be installed and the extra abilities that come with the subscription can be explored and utilized. Pastor Melanie will follow-up with Annette to see if the various computer issues that were causing office slow-downs in the past are still causing problems. Property Management Report Approved (LM/SH)

**WORSHIP & EVANGELISM REPORT:** A couple names were received for a possible website refresh. The website, as a whole, was redone within the past year or so. However, we need to determine as a church what specific areas need to be updated/changed. The congregation will be encouraged to form a group of younger individuals and those interested in this area to come up with a list of specific items that need changing or refreshing on the website. We can make announcements and run the request in the bulletin for those interested to call the office. At some point a specific person(s) will need to be designated and given the directions on keeping up the website with  
*See next page for more "council minutes"...*

## COUNCIL MINUTES



...continued from previous page "council minutes" current photos, events, a more comprehensive list of groups to join and explanations of those groups, etc. Evangelism - we're working on ideas to share the gospel. Shannon mentioned a fix-it group run by men of a church. An idea that could compliment a men's group is men mentoring boys in various things like basic car maintenance, etc. This can be outreach and have a devotion aspect. Dave has seen a lot of positive congregational feedback on old songs from childhood. The music team is very dedicated and does an excellent job in matching hymns to the service. In addition to their good work it was proposed that we solicit song ideas from the congregation that the music team could choose from throughout the year so that the congregants are able to sing their favorite hymns in fellowship during service. A bulletin insert can be made for members to list their favorite hymns. An idea for something along the lines of "Plant One Seed" was discussed as an initiative for congregants to invite people to church. 20 adults and 15 kids attended the David movie; it was a great turn-out. Eric Olson will meet with the Church Council March 11th at \*7:15 pm to discuss Trail Life; a church-based, Christ-Centered, Boy-Focused mentoring and discipleship program. (\*Originally Eric Olson was going to meet at 5:30; but as it is Lent he has been rescheduled to 7:15 pm) Worship and Evangelism Report Approved (KS/LM)

**YOUTH & EDUCATION REPORT:** The swing set project for church requires a commercial swing set. After a lot of research Laurie determined the most economical choice is a USA company called King Swings. A breakdown of a couple options was provided to the council. The prices did not include the dirt work; that would need to be completed prior to delivery. Kyle will check out the slope of the proposed swing set area to have some idea about how much dirt work will be required. There was discussion on the base. Due to pricing, the options basically came down to pea rock or rubber mulch; both have their plusses and minuses. It was suggested we see what other churches use and ask the parents of children that will utilize the

swing set about preferences for the base as well as the swing set style itself. There is some customization like benches, trash cans, separate swing structures, etc. It was agreed that a set that is geared not just to young children would be best as generally the young children like the bigger kid's structures anyway.

At the meeting the office had not yet heard from the insurance company; however, an email was sent the following day estimating an increase to the insurance premium of approximately \$61. The monies for the project would come from the youth account. Multiple donations have been made to be focused on youth and some specifically were for a swing set (that direction was given verbally). Youth and Education Report Approved (DB/SH)

**OLD BUSINESS:** Shannon updated council that the Call Committee had met with Pastor Aaron Deutsch of Augustana District. He was very helpful with various information and helped to combine the lengthy Job Description and Congregational Profile into one postable Job Description. The full versions will be provided to candidates when they apply. There have not been any applications at this point. The postable Job Description is now live on both LCMC and Augustana District websites. The Call Committee intends to contact a couple of people brought to their attention as networking is very important in finding candidates. They also plan to attend various LCMC and Augustana District events in order to network and get our church name in people's minds for either consideration or recommendation to Pastors they know.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Pastor Melanie should have a week off every month. Several names were mentioned of people that could help lead service. In April or May Pastor Melanie will go on a mission trip to Sierra Leone.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** March 11, 2026 at 7:15 - after church Lenten service. Note: Eric Olson Trail Life discussion has been rescheduled to 7:15 pm.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Newsletter items are due by February 20, 2026.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn approved (SH/LM) The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

*Respectfully submitted, Shannon Vietmeier,  
Council Treasurer substitute Secretary*

