



CHRIST LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR



better. This year I will pay off my debt and open a savings account. This year I will spend less time on my phone and more time actually talking face to face with my family and friends. But studies show that 40% of people who make New Year's resolutions quit by the end of the first month with almost everyone giving them up within four months.

What we want for ourselves God has always wanted for us. It's the reason God freed God's people from slavery in Egypt. Because God believes no one should be used, abused and oppressed to fill another person's pocket. It is the reason God gave God's people the Ten Commandments. "Follow these simple guidelines," God says, "and you will be free." The 4th Commandment tells us no one is free when the elderly are left to fend for themselves with no one to care for them. Children, take care of your parents. They took care of you when you were small and vulnerable. The 7th talks about stealing. No one is free when someone steals from them what they have worked hard for. The 8th about bearing false witness. No one is free when spreading lies and destroying another's reputation is common practice.

And it is why God sends God's Son to us this Christmas Season and every Christmas Season? So our lives can be richer, fuller and more meaningful. "Watch!", God says, "Watch how my son lives." "Listen," God says, "to what he says." "Do as he does and you will be free indeed."

But the truth is, it is not easy. Following Jesus is a lot like New Year's Resolutions. We try for a while and then we give up. It's harder than it looks. But do not give up hope. You can try again in a week – or a month. And the good news is, we have a God who does not give up on us. God's Son's name is "Emmanuel." God is with us and plans to stay with us forever.

And His Name Shall Be – Emmanuel – God with Us By Pastor Paula Geister-Jones

We welcomed a new year this past week. Some of us stayed up until midnight December 31. Some of us were in bed when the clock struck 12, but either way, it was 2026 the morning of January 1.

Each new year brings with it the hope it will be better than the last year. Isn't that partially the reason for New Year's Resolutions? We want our lives to be richer and more meaningful so we decide this year I will get into shape. I will exercise and eat

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Worship News	2
Ordination	3
New Member Sunday	3
Food Pantry updates	3
God's Global Barnyard	3
Mardi Gras	4
Go and Tell	5
Christmas Program	6
Milestone Ministry	6
Food and Fellowship	7
Kitchen Help Needed	7
God and Games	7
Mission Trip 2026	8
Volunteer Opportunities	8
Boundary Waters	9
High School Open Gym	9
Breakfast and Books	10
Ageless Adventures	10
Meals and Memories	10
Baptisms/Funerals	11
Memorials and Gifts	11
January Hymn Nerds	BC

Anyone who wants to support Christ Lutheran Church can make a donation using the website or Q.R. Code below.

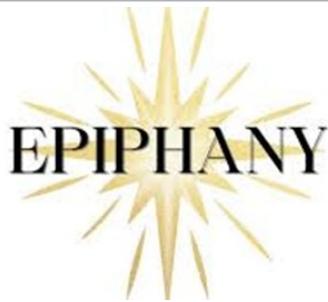


<https://clcstoughton.org/giving/donate/>

Sunday Worship is available to Livestream on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/>

JANUARY WORSHIP NEWS



January Worship Schedule 2026
We return to our regular schedule with
Traditional Worship at 8:00 a.m. and Worship Express at 9:15 a.m.



Sunday, January 4 – A Celebration of Epiphany and Holy Communion

This year, once again, we are going to celebrate the tenth day of Christmas with the arrival of the Wisemen on January 6th this year. Their arrival at the manger reminds us once again that the truly wise person seeks out and worships God's Son, Jesus.

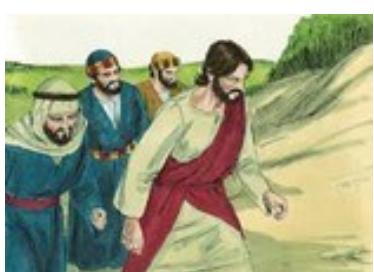
Preacher: The Shepherd Caleb and the Three Wisemen.



Sunday, January 11: Worship and a Celebration of Jesus' Baptism

Lutherans have two sacraments. What makes it a sacrament? Jesus takes something we encounter every day – like water and bread – and adds new significance to it by attaching God's Word. The water in Baptism now becomes the way God washes us clean of our sin and makes us God's child. The bread of Holy Communion becomes his body and a way for us to remember his life, death and resurrection. So today we take a good look at Jesus' baptism.

Preacher: Pastor Paula



Sunday, January 18: Worship with Holy Communion

In today's gospel reading after John the Baptist's witness to Jesus, John's disciples decide to check Jesus out and decide to follow him. We come to worship, hear the Word preached, enjoy the company of the community of believers and go out into the world to invite others to come and experience this Jesus for themselves.

Preacher: Pastor Paula

Special Music: Chancel Choir and First Class Ringers



Sunday, January 25: Worship

Jesus begins his public ministry shortly after John the Baptist is imprisoned. In today's gospel reading he calls four fishermen to follow him. He invites them to come, catch fish for God's kingdom, and he disappoints them by refusing to impress them.

Preacher: Pastor Paula



Kjell Bakken's Ordination Service Saturday, January 10

Kjell Bakken has preached at Christ Lutheran a number of times and you have enjoyed him immensely. Kjell's ordination is Saturday, January 10th @ 11:00am followed by lunch at 12:30pm at West Koshkonong Lutheran Church and we are invited to attend.

New Member Sunday – March 8th at both Services

New members will officially be received into our faith community on Sunday, March 8 at both services. If you know anyone who is interested in joining or if you are that someone, please contact the church office so Pastor Paula can arrange a visit.

New Member Orientation will be on **Sunday, February 22** and on **March 1** immediately following the 9:15 a.m. Express Service. You can choose either Sunday to attend the orientation. We meet in the

Conference Room right off the narthex. Feel free to bring a cup of coffee and a snack. We ask that people come prepared to have your photo taken. It is an informal time to get to know one another and to share information about the congregation.



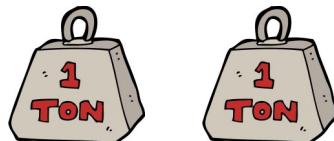
Sunday School Christmas Program Raised Funds for Stoughton Food Pantry

On the day of the Sunday School Christmas Program the loose offering given during the program and the coffee donations were designated for the Stoughton Food Pantry. \$746 was raised. Thank you for your generosity and thank you children for another wonderful Christmas Program!

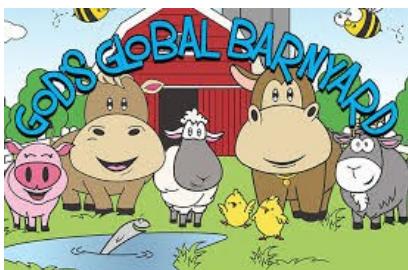


STOUGHTON WISCONSIN FOOD PANTRY

Our cupboard is never bare; Serving those in need



Christ Lutheran begins collecting food for the Stoughton Food Pantry starting **Sunday January 4th** and continues collecting through **Fat Tuesday, February 17th**. We have less time than usual to meet our goal, so get ready. Let's be God's hand and feet in this world and start bringing groceries or making financial donations on Sunday, January 4th. Thrivent will help us reach our goal by donating two \$250 Seed Actions Grants. On Sunday February 8th the 5th – 8th Graders will make their yearly grocery run to Wal Mart during the Sunday school hour to see who can purchase the heaviest groceries. With less time to donate, our goal is 2 tons or 4000 pounds, but that doesn't mean we can't collect more. Every \$2 of each cash donation equals 1 pound of food.



During Epiphany we focused on feeding people in our community. During Lent we raise funds for the **ELCA's God's Global Barnyard** and feed people who are part of our global community. Let's see how many cows, goats, sheep, pigs, chickens and bees we can buy. When you give a family chickens they not only eat, but have a means of producing an income that will send their children to school and give them hope for tomorrow.



Mardi Gras

Sunday, February 15
10:50 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

We begin serving food
immediately following the
8:00 a.m. worship service and
continue to 12:00 p.m.

The menu includes...

- Chicken and Sausage Gumbo over Rice with Cornbread
- Buttered Noodles
- Pancakes with Strawberries and Whipped Crème
- Meatballs and Mashed Potatoes with Swedish Rye
- Cookies and Floats
- Coffee & Milk.

Food is reasonably priced

New Games this year include “Take a Chance with Jonah” Human Slot Machine and “David and Goliath” Nerf Gun Target Practice. Of course there will be prizes. Other activities include past year’s favorites... “Cross the Red Sea with Moses” Cake Walk, “In Jail with Paul and Silas”, Bible Bingo, Bible Trivia, some awesome crafts with Crafty Jacob Crafts, Esther’s Face Painting Beauty Parlor, Fishing with the Disciples, a Hallway of Games and Resurrection Bean Bag Toss.



**THERE WILL BE A BOUNCE HOUSE IN THE
LARGE YOUTH ROOM!!!!!! YEAH!!!!!!**

Tickets will be sold for Cross the Red Sea with Moses Cake Walk and In Jail with Paul and Silas. **3 for \$1.00** Sign up to bring cakes, pies, cupcakes, brownies, cookies etc. for the Cake Walk. The sign-up sheet is in the narthex on the Mardi Gras Table. We also need people to help run the event.

Come, have a great time and enjoy some wonderful fellowship!

GO AND TELL BY ROGER SLACK



Having gone through the Christmas Season and looking forward to Good Friday and Easter Sunday, my mind tends to wander and think about some of the behind-the-scenes aspects of the events in Christ's life and the people around him. Jesus' mother, Mary, amazes me with the highs and lows she must have felt throughout Jesus' lifetime.

To have an angel appear and tell her she would bear the Son of God. The Honor given to her, but also realizing after, who can she tell that would not look at her in disbelief and disappointment (Joseph, especially). The thought of being a first time mom to the Son of God. If he sneezes, "Is he getting sick?" "Does he have a fever?" The self pressure of failing God as his mother. My hope is that as a young girl, if there was a baby in the house, she was the one that was holding it and carrying it on her hip.

The disappointment of having to give birth in a stable; the smell, the animals, "Why can't we find a better place for God's Son to be born, not here". Then the joy when the shepherds came and told them what had happened to them on the hillside. She now had other people that knew that Jesus was God's Son and believed her story without her having to convince them. The awe and humility she felt when the Wisemen came, providing gifts, without being told to, just because they knew he was the rightful king of the Jews. Then the panic and terror when she realized there were already people that wanted to kill her baby. She had to protect him at all cost. That was probably in the back of her mind all of Jesus' life. When he was twelve in the temple staying behind to talk and learn from the Priests and teachers: "How could we have been so careless to assume he was with us? What if he said something to the wrong person so they found out who he is? What if they had already killed him?" You can hear the frustration in her response when they do find him. He was, technically, a man at that age to the Jews, but they lived in Nazareth and it's easier to protect him there with them. Then Jesus waits 18 (?) years. Maybe to make sure Mary is taken care of when his brothers and sisters (Matt. 13:55-56) are fully grown, I don't know. After Jesus' baptism, Mary probably felt helpless while he was in the wilderness, not knowing if he was alive or had anything to eat or drink, until he came back and began doing the miracles and helping and teaching so many people. The joy and pride she must have felt. Then to stand at the foot of the Cross and try to make sense of what would obviously not be her version of how her son's life was to end. How could she have failed to prevent this? "God, he did so much good for your people, Why?" Then the ultimate joy and elation she must have felt when she found out that she did not fail him, but that God really was in control, she just couldn't see it.

I look at things through 21st century eyes and realize speculating can be dangerous and lead to wrong conclusions. I hope her faith was far stronger than what I can imagine during those highs and lows.



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY AND CONFIRMATION NEWS



A Big thank you to all participants, Helpers, Staff and Parents for this year's Christmas Program "An Animals Tale".

We started practicing the Christmas program with all of the main characters in October. We did this because the main Characters that they were playing would need lots of time to develop the characters. We also started practicing our songs back in October as a Sunday school. This meant we practiced as an entire Sunday school for the shared songs and practiced individually for each of the class specific songs. The kids mastered it all. They all did a beautiful job and the performance was great. I think of the practice time and anticipation. You have to have faith in the process and each year the kids do a beautiful job. I want to thank all of the people that made this performance a success. First the Kids that performed in this year's program. Thanks to their parents for getting them to and from practices each week especially during our final rehearsal. I want to give a special thank you to Linda Kunz for her help as co-director and musical director. A Special Thanks to Kyla Betts and Janice Betts for helping with weekly play practices and to Danielle Tavener for help with the costumes. Thanks to our Sunday School Staff who are always practicing with the kids in class and helping out on the day of the performance: Kristine Annen, Lainey Conant, Libby Conant, Dave Erdman, Alani Estervig, Ellie Gross, Asia Hoverson, Eileen Klinzing and Kylee Soderling. Here are some pictures....



Our First Graders and their parents met with Pastor Paula on November 23rd during Sunday School to learn about Advent to make an advent wreath. Here are some pictures from that Milestone Ministry event.



4th Grade – First Communion Instruction will begin on Sunday February 22nd, March 1st, 8th and 15th at 10:45 a.m. 4th Grade Students and their Parents will meet with Pastor Paula to receive 1st Communion instruction. **Wednesday, April 1st at 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.** 4th Graders: Meet with Pastor Paula and Jenny Hoffman to make bread for the church service on **Maundy Thursday April 2nd at 6:30 p.m.** where 4th Graders will receive their 1st Communion.



Food and Fellowship Wednesday Evenings

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

A minimum donation of **\$8.00** is requested to help cover the cost of food. **This year all meals will have a gluten-free option.** Confirmation students and their families, God and Game participants and their families, Seniors, Chancel Choir, Uke Fellowship, Bell Choir Members, really – anyone and everyone – is invited to sit down and break bread together. Enjoy a hour of good food and fellowship.

We will begin the new year with another favorite...

Wednesday, January 7

Chile or Potato Bacon Soup, Grilled Cheese or Egg Salad Sandwiches, Green Salad
Cookies and Ice Cream, Coffee, White or Chocolate Milk and Apple Juice

Wednesday, January 14

Baked Chicken, Cheesy or Baked Potatoes, Green Salad
Swedish Rye Bread, Brownies and Ice Cream, Coffee, White or Chocolate Milk and Apple Juice

Wednesday, January 21

Lasagna – with and without gluten, Buttered Noodles (for the children), Lettuce Salad
Garlic Bread, Rice Krispies and Ice Cream, Coffee, White or Chocolate Milk and Apple Juice

Wednesday, January 28

Pigs in the Blanket with Chips, Scalloped Potatoes and Ham – gluten-free option, Fresh Veggies and Dip,
Brownies and Ice Cream, Coffee, White or Chocolate Milk and Apple Juice

Looking for More Cooks



Do you like to cook? Jen and Pastor Paula are looking for about 6 people who would help us with Food and Fellowship meal prep. The plan is to divide into two groups – Jen's Group and Paula's Group and prep the meal every other Wednesday. We would meet in the kitchen at 2:30 p.m. and prep the meal. At 5:15- 5:30 p.m. the cavalry arrives (parents of confirmation students) and you would be free to enjoy Food and Fellowship.



God and Games Begins Again Wednesday, January 7

6:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Grades 3rd – 6th

It doesn't matter if you are a regular or not, you are always welcome. Alani Estervig and Libby Conant would both love to meet you. The evening starts out with a short devotional and continues with fun and games.

Open Gym here at CLC - Coffee, Chaos and Community.

(Families with little ones, we will also have the nursery open and staffed)

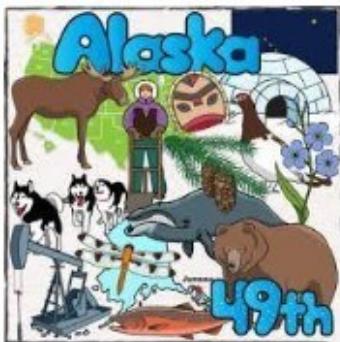
What: Free Open Gym for kids and families

When: Thursday, January 15th, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Who: This is open for kids from birth through Pre-K. Nursery is available

We have snacks including coffee and treats for the parents/grandparents/caregivers. We read a story, do a craft and play games in the gym. Perfect opportunity for your kids to get some exercise and playtime in a new environment with new toys and new friends. Our Theme this month is: **Winter Wonderland!**





Mission Trip 2026 for Youth 8th Grade - Adults

**Mission Trip 2026
Youth 8th Grade - Adults
Alaska – South of Anchorage
Friday, June 19 – Sunday, June 28**

DO NOT LET THE COST SCARE YOU. There are numerous opportunities in the coming year to bring your cost down a big chunk and we have some extra funds in the youth account for people who work hard to help raise the funds and there are people in the congregation who will help you pay for your trip.

We are just beginning to work out the details of the trip, I have talked to Justin, our mission trip consultant with Praying Pelican. For the next 6 months we will be in conversation discussing possibilities.

What do I know? I have told Justin we would like a mission trip that gives the group a variety of work to do because we will be bringing a group of people with a variety of gifts. So we discussed children's ministry, repair work, building, food pantry, soup kitchen, etc. We are expected at the sight between 2 and 5 p.m. on Saturday, June 20. If we catch the flight from Madison to Anchorage on Friday, June 19th we will have time to explore the city. Hopefully we will have the energy. We leave from Madison at 6:00 a.m. and arrive at 11:30 a.m. but have actually been traveling for 8 1/2 hours (1 1/2 hour layover in Minneapolis). We leave our sight on Friday, so we have Saturday to add another adventure to our trip. How many times are you going to go to Alaska? We need to do this.

THERE IS STILL PLENTY OF TIME TO FUND RAISE. We still have Mardi Gras, Lenten Suppers, GARAGE SALE, Easter Breakfast, Sunday School Sock Hop and Syttende Mai.

Links to Sign-Up Genius for the events listed above for Volunteer Hours:

Mardi Gras:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409094BADA72AAoFC1-58551460-mardi>

Lenten Suppers:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409094BADA72AAoFC1-58551832-wednesday>

Garage Sale:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409094BADA72AAoFC1-58551465-garage>

Easter Breakfast:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409094BADA72AAoFC1-58520546-easter>

Sunday School Sock Hop:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409094BADA72AAoFC1-58551469-copy>

Syttende Mai:

Everyone is invited to sign-up for any event to help. We are always looking for volunteers and you do not need to be going on the mission trip to sign-up!



Boundary Waters Canoe Trip 2026
Monday, July 20 – July 26
Youth in Grades 7-12 and ALL INTERESTED ADULTS
Cost: \$500 \$450 after \$50 campership

The trip is in late July. We will be home before football starts.

As always, to keep our costs down, we pack out our own food and tents and provide as many of our own Duluth packs as possible. We have 15. The Outfitter provides the canoes, paddles, life jackets, a few Duluth packs, bunkhouse accommodations for Monday, July 20, breakfast the following morning and a shower when we come off trails.

We leave early Monday, July 20. By early I mean at 6:00 a.m. That means you need to be at the church by 5:30 a.m. to pack. Why so early? We have 500 miles to travel. Bring food to snack on in the vehicles. We stop at Duluth harbor for lunch. Bring a packed lunch if you like, but food MAY be purchased there. We arrive in Grand Marais around 4:00 p.m. We hang out for a while and have pizza at Ole and Lena's around 5:30 p.m. After eating we finish the trip up the Gunflint to Voyageur Outfitters. The cost of that meal is part of the trip.

What do you do in the Boundary Waters? You paddle, portage, cook your meals over an open fire, swim, fish, enjoy the wilderness and the people you are with. Bring a book to read and some small portable games. We come off the water between 7 - 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, shower, pack up and leave for home. The cost of the trip also covers breakfast/lunch at the Mid Trail Cafe about 30 miles south of the Outfitters on the way home. We usually arrive home about 10:00 p.m. For youth who can drive, parents may want to leave a car in the church parking lot. Once you have signed up, we will share with you a list of items that you will need to pack.

REGISTRATION FORMS ARE ON THE INFORMATION DESK



High School Open Gym Sunday January 4th

First Sunday of the Month – 10:45 a.m. - Noon

Here is a chance for our high school students to enjoy the gym or just hangout. Enjoy yourself! The space is yours.

ADULT PROGRAMMING FOR JANUARY



Breakfast & Books – A Book Study

Sunrise Restaurant

Thursday Mornings 9:30 a.m.

We are back at it Thursday, January 8th. Please, come join us.

There is always room for more at the table.



Ageless Adventures

Fireside Theater in Fort Atkinson

Friday, February 20

The Musical “Beehive”

\$87.00 – includes Gratuity

Everybody loves the '60s – the fashions, the movies, the moon landing, and, of course, the music! It was the greatest decade for popular music. BEEHIVE celebrates the powerful female voices of the 1960s, featuring songs by everyone from Lesley Gore to Janis Joplin, The Shirelles to The Supremes, Aretha Franklin to Tina Turner, and so many more! The show is a nostalgic journey through the decade, told from the perspective of six young women coming of age and accompanied by a live band. Join us as we showcase hits like “My Boyfriend’s Back,” “Be My Baby,” “Son of a Preacher Man,” and “Me and Bobby McGee.”

You know the routine by now. Sign up at the Information Desk by **January 20**, write out a check to “Christ Lutheran” for \$87 and hand it in to Jean at the Front Desk and meet at the church at **10:00 a.m. Friday, February 20**. Let us know if you can drive and are willing to carry a few passengers.

Meals and Memories

Tuesday, January 20

11:30 a.m.

Cost: \$12

Program: Ken Cosick will share his experiences in Canada’s Quetico National Park.

Ken Koscik started his adventuresome journeys to the Quetico Provincial Park (QPP) back in 1969. QPP is 1.2 million acres of pure wilderness. The park shares the Canadian border with the famous Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA) in Northern Minnesota and is well known for its wilderness canoe camping experience and great fishing. With over 85 trips into QPP, Ken has camped more than 540 times overnight and canoed over 3,000 miles in the park. I guess you could say he loves canoeing, camping and fishing in QPP. Ken also enjoys the challenge of catching the Grand Slam which is at least one smallmouth bass, one walleye, one northern pike and one lake trout on a trip. Ken will share his love for and experiences in QPP. This will include the awesome beauty of the wilderness, the wildlife, the canoeing, the camping, the fishing, the solitude and most importantly, the friendships and camaraderie that he has experienced. Ken is a storyteller, so get ready for some whopper fishing stories from him!!! Ken will also talk about some practical items such as the logistics which will include equipment, travel time and costs. You may ask what’s the difference between the QPP and the BWCA? Ken says the Quetico Provincial Park is the Boundary Waters Canoe Area on steroids.

Menu: Barbecue Ribs, Baked Chicken, Scalloped Potatoes, Green Beans, Swedish Rye Bread, Apple, Cherry or Strawberry Rhubarb Crisp with Ice Cream, Coffee and Milk.



December BAPTISMS



December 14: Maverick Mitchell
Fuller son of Mitchell and Sydney Fuller

In Christian Sympathy



December 8: Joan May
"Joann" Roneid

Gifts & Memorials

Given by:

Sandra Maerz

In Memory of:

Joan Roneid



December 7: Eowyn Maeve Severson,
daughter of Jacob Severson and Taylor
Brikowski.



A lock-in around the Christmas Tree in the
Narthex on Friday December 19th more pictures
on Facebook.

**"So we are
ambassadors for
Christ..." -**

2 Corinthians 5:20

January Hymn Nerds



The season of Epiphany is about Christ revealing himself to the world. He reveals his light through his words and miracles. Rev. Ruth Duck the lyricist of the text for our hymn, "Arise, Your Light Has Come!" calls upon Christians to respond to this light by obeying the Holy Spirit's call. Christ's glory shines on us. Now we are called to show forth God's glory out in the darkness of our world. The text is based on Isaiah 61 and is a hymn of encouragement being directed toward God's people. Rev. Duck initially began her writing by adapting older hymns to include language that was more inclusive.

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