



FISH LAKE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Mailing Address:
PO Box 206
Harris, MN 55032
Phone: 651-674-4252
Online: www.fishlakelutheran.org
Office Hours:
Monday—11:00-4:00
Wednesday, Thursday 11:00-4:00
Friday 11:00-4:00

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Vine & Branches

March 2026
The Pastors Page

A Church That “Plays” Together, Stays Together

It can be tempting to think of church as a refuge from the world — a place to retreat when the noise, conflict, and demands of daily life feel overwhelming. And in many ways, it is a refuge. Here we pray, we rest, we sing, and we remember that we are beloved children of God. But the church was never meant to be a wall that shuts the world out. It is meant to be a community that shapes us, strengthens us, and sends us back into the world with courage and compassion.

Fish Lakers gather all across our community. This past month, eight members of our church participated in a community theater’s production of “Into the Woods.” Other church members meet up to play volleyball and softball games. We have wonderful representation in the local 4-H, and still others meet to serve through the American Legion. In these spaces, faith is lived in everyday ways: teamwork, respect, service, perseverance, and care for the common good. Our congregation is not separate from the community; we are woven into it.

Lent invites us to be especially intentional about this shared journey. The season reminds us that life holds both mountaintop moments and valleys of struggle. We walk with Christ toward the cross, and we walk with one another through grief, illness, uncertainty, and change — as well as through celebrations, new beginnings, and unexpected joy. Lent calls us to honesty about our humanity and to deeper compassion for one another’s burdens.

When we gather in these forty days, we practice what it means to belong to one another. We learn to listen more carefully, to serve more generously, and to trust that God is at work among us. Strengthened by this community, we are sent back into our homes, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods ready to contribute to the well-being of the world God loves.

Church is not a place to hide from life. It is a place where we become more fully alive — together — for the sake of our neighbors.

“And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:24-25



A church that “plays” together, stays together!
Front row: Pastor Teleen (audience member), Ashleigh Kroschel, Julia Meagher, Margaret Meagher
Back row: Jen Kroschel, Gayle McClellan, Signe Reistad, Pete Meagher
(Not pictured: Abigail Skiba)

Fish Lake Lutheran Leadership & Staff
Pastor: Rev. Teleen Saunders
Office Administrator: Denise Steinberg
Parish Deaconess: Sr. LaDonna Olson
Custodian: Bill Young
Choir Director: Signe Reistad
Organists: Cindy Blesener,
Gayle McClellan,
LaDonna Olson

Church Council Members
Rick Cedergren, President
Pete Meagher, V. President
Jen Kroschel, Secretary
Nancy Hoffman, Treasure
Jeff Lustig
Michelle Young
Julia Meagher (Student Representative)



Worship Service each
Sunday 10:00 am, Online options also
Choir Rehearsal 9:00am each Sunday

2nd Fish Lake Lutheran Church Council mtg.6:00pm
4th WELCA worktime 9:00am, meeting 10:30am
Final Words from the Cross Chapter 3, 4-5pm
8th Day Light Saving Time Starts
10th Encore Bible Study 2:00pm
Social Ministry Meeting 6:00pm
11th *Final Words from the Cross Chapter 4, 4-5pm*
15th Deadline for Vine & Branches Articles
18th *Final Words from the Cross Chapter 5, 4:00pm*
19th WELCA sewing/coffee time 9:00am
21st Block of the Month 8:30am
22nd Food Collection Sunday
24th Encore Bible Study 2:00pm
25th *Final Words from the Cross Chapter 6 @ 4:00*
26th Property Committee Meeting 9:00am
28th Communion Class
29th Palm Sunday

President: Laurie Knutson, Treasurer: Cindy Blesener, Secretary: Mary Kay Linder,
Social Secretaries: Kathy Lodin & Jan Burda

The regular WELCA meeting was held on Wednesday, February 4, 2026.

1. Secretary's report was approved as submitted. A thank you letter of donation was received from A Place for You.
2. Treasurer's report is as follows: opening balance in the checking account was \$744.10; deposits totaled \$46.64; expenses were \$226.89 leaving a balance of \$563.85. The savings account balance is \$1,309.86.
 - a. Social Secretary: Kathy sent out approximately 25 Christmas cards; Valentine cards have been purchased.
 - b. Notes from the Council: See Vine and Branches for recent meeting notes.
 - c. Quilt Bingo: We now have 21 quilts in our inventory for 2026.
 - d. Block of the Month: Next meeting is February 21st. WELCA members have been asked to donate Egg Bake and serve in the kitchen.

Old Business:

- a. Grad Quilts: : Three quilts for 2026 grads have been completed; working on one more. There are five graduates for 2027. Checked on any available quilts that are on hand to fill this need.
 - b. Baptism Quilts: Tied two quilts for boys. Should be enough on hand for immediate future.
3. Donations to/from WELCA:
- a. Reading Buddies/Comfort Buddies: Have many on hand. Discussed purchasing holders for small buddies. Will continue looking for children's books to include with the Reading Buddies.
 - b. Safe Haven Foster Shoppe/Bundles of Love: Have bibs and Burp cloths to be delivered.
 - c. Northwoods Animal Shelter/Anoka County Humane Society: Ten pet beds were delivered in January. Four more will be delivered along with a fleece blanket.
 - d. Food Shelf: February is soups (lift off tab covers) and looking for can openers.
 - e. Schools: Personal care items are delivered alternating between Trinity and Cambridge. Hope Tanko is the contact.
 - f. A Place For You Homeless Shelter, Pine City: No report.
 - g. Little Libraries: Books are delivered to Trinity on an ongoing basis.
 - h. Mission Quilts: We have 10 mission quilts on hand. A listing of all quilt donations should be recorded in the sewing room. Quilt log is posted on the wall.
 - i. Meadow Creek Women's Shelter: There is a great need for women's clothing. Point of Contact is Patti Ricke. There are bins under the coat rack in the basement for any donations. Patti will pick up and deliver these items. Any and all items of gently used clothing are greatly appreciated. Also, they could use personal care items such as soaps, shampoo, conditioner, dental hygiene products, lotions, sanitary pads and adult briefs. As to the best way to manage collection of these items it will be discussed further.

Reminders: WELCA serving day is February 22nd. LaDonna will be serving.

Next workday is February 19th - 9 am to noon.

Next meeting is March 4th at 10:30 am. Work begins at 9:00 am.

All women are welcomed to any of our gatherings. The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Submitted by Mary Kay Linder

Poems by Sarah Cedergren

"THE WINTER CALF"

My thoughts have turned to dreaming about spring
The ruts of winter fading out of view
Each ray of sun feels like an offering
The oldest thoughts resurfacing as new
The soul can sense the changing of the guard
A rooting out, this season in-between
The phantom arrow always hits the mark
Our expectations felt instead of seen
In holy reverence the mind submits
Each ladder starts us on the bottom rung
Too many stars to count, my son admits
Forever searching for the brightest one
The brilliant glow before us is the way
The winter calf abiding in the hay

2026 FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP AT FISH LAKE

	Budgeted Offerings	Actual Offerings	%	Above/Below Budget
1/25	4,082.17	2,372.69	57%	(1,828.72)
2/1	4,082.17	5,497.69	131%	1,296.28
2/8	4,082.17	3,773.44	92%	(308.73)
2/15	4,082.17	2,813.77	69%	(1,268.40)
2026 YTD	28,932.91	20,177.59	70%	(8,755.32)

Thank You to all those who have donated to the following funds so far in 2026
Cemetery Fund: \$630.00 Building Fund: \$10,760.00

Little Free Libraries:

We continue to collect books for all ages, from baby picture books to adults. A bin full of books are delivered to Trinity Lutheran Church, North Branch monthly, they maintain three Little Free Libraries in the North Branch area. The donation bin is at the donation station in the fellowship hall. Thank you for all you have brought so far.



WELCA is collecting prescription medicine bottles for the animal shelter. **Please bring empty prescription bottles ONLY**—(no over the counter bottles) to the Fellowship hall donation center.



All labels need to be removed!



Shalom Thrift Shop Assistance

Are you or your family in need of some financial assistance, or do know of a family that is? Members of Fish Lake Lutheran volunteer their time at the *Shalom Thrift Store* in Cambridge. Because of the generosity of their time, Fish Lake Lutheran receives funds each month to help families with financial struggles. **All requests are confidential.**

Contact Pastor Teleen Saunders or the church office if you, or someone you know, could benefit from this service.

Encore Bible Study December

Bible Study at Encore Senior Living in North Branch is at 2:00 p.m. every other Tuesday! This warm and welcoming group will dive into God's Word together, exploring timeless truths and how they meet our everyday lives. Whether you're brand new to Bible study or a seasoned reader of Scripture, you'll find good conversation, meaningful insights, and a few laughs along the way. Come ready to learn, share, and be encouraged—you might just leave with a lighter heart and a deeper faith!

ALL AGES WELCOME
March 10 & 24

Address: 38610 14th Ave,
North Branch, MN 55056

First Communion Class –March 28th 9:00am-11:00am

At our church, anyone who puts out their hand at God’s table is served.

The sacrament of Holy Communion is too important to turn anyone away. Communion instruction happens in a variety of ways. We include the practice in our weekly worship services. The children learn about it at Faith Weavers, Confirmation, and VBS. We learn about it during sermons. And there is a special class held once a year specifically dedicated for children. If your child has not had instruction on first communion, they are invited to learn more on March 28th at 9:00am. This class is geared specifically for elementary aged children. It’s interactive and informative. We have a special recognition at our Maundy Thursday service on April 2nd at 7:00pm.



Welcome New Members—February 1st, 2026



Ingrid Anderson & Randy Quale



Lisa Gardner

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
March 15th (3rd Sunday)	Lutheran Social Services	Katherine Tiede
April 26th	Health of Minnesota Lakes (tentative)	Claire Rude
May (Memorial Day Weekend)		
June 28th	Memory Loss and Caregiving	Anne Marie Erickson



Dean & Jane Oelfke



Nancy Reistad, Josh & Signe Reistad

PLEASE JOIN US FOR
THE BAPTISM OF
**EMMET
PATRICK HUGHES**
APRIL 12TH
Parents: Allison and Patrick Hughes
Sponsors: Annette & Joseph Fairbanks
Jacob & Clarice Hughes
Molly Hughes

LOOKING AHEAD
APRIL 8TH
COMMUNITY MEAL - 5:30 PM
**YOUTH PROGRAMMING
RESUMES - 6:00 PM**
We're excited to gather again
for food, fellowship, and a great
evening with our youth!

**ARMED
FORCES DAY**
MAY 17
Please let the church
office know of family
members or friends who
are in the armed forces.
Where they are
stationed and their title.

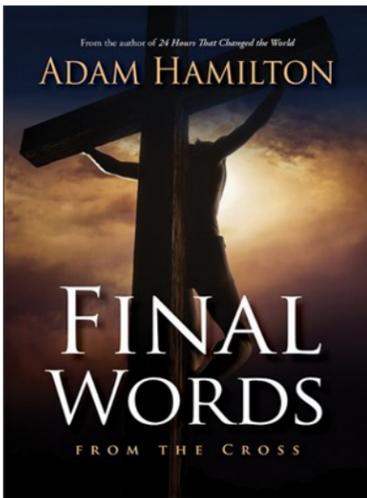
Happy Birthday!

CELEBRATING MARCH BIRTHDAYS!

Zach Sanborn (1), Samuel Gilbert (3), Dean Oelfke (4), Nancy Bengtson (5), Hope Tanko (6), Barb Sauer (7), Keira Savely (9), Stephanie Berg (11), Marissa Johnson (13), Sophia Marty (13), Marty Zachrison (13), Colton Bauer (14), Steve Mettling (14), Evelyn Santjer (16), Andrew Skiba (16), Kalli McColley (21), Marilyn Wicklund (21), Bev Zachrison (21), Kristina Ripp (24), Mark Blesener (25), Brooke Parks (25), Isabella Wood (26), Katie Groh (28), Ashleigh Kroschel (28), Andrea Patton (28).

Kiera Hollenkamp & Hayden Doberstein

**WE ARE
EXCITED
AND BLESSED
TO HAVE YOU JOIN
OUR CHURCH FAMILY**



Lent at Fish Lake 2026

Lent Bible Study — *Final Words from the Cross: Hope for Real Life*

Fish Lake Lent Bible Study – 6 Week Schedule (2026)

Book: *Final Words from the Cross* by Adam Hamilton

Meeting: Wednesday afternoons at 4:00, followed by a soup supper

Week 3 — March 4, 2026

Chapter 3 *Final Words from the Cross*

Theme: “We Don’t Suffer Alone”

Word from the Cross: “*Woman, here is your son... Here is your mother.*” (John 19:26–27)

Week 4 — March 11, 2026

Chapter 4 *Final Words from the Cross*

Theme: “When God Feels Far Away”

Word from the Cross: “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” (Matthew 27:46 / Mark 15:34)

Week 5 — March 18, 2026

Chapter 5 *Final Words from the Cross*

Theme: “God Knows Thirst”

Word from the Cross: “*I am thirsty.*” (John 19:28)

Week 6 — March 25, 2026

Chapter 6 *Final Words from the Cross*

Theme: “Into God’s Hands”

Word from the Cross: “*It is finished.*” (John 19:30) and “*Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.*” (Luke 23:46)



Palm Sunday March 29, 2026
Children’s egg hunt following worship

Maundy Thursday April 2, 2026
7:00pm Communion worship

Good Friday April 3, 2026 7:00
Tenebrae service with choir

Easter April 5, 2026 10:00am
Easter Celebration

CONTINUING the EOSIS Meadow Creek Women’s Clothing Collection

WELCA is coordinating a collection of women’s clothing and outerwear for the women at EOSIS Meadow Creek (Addiction center in Pine City). There is a great need for women’s clothing. Point of Contact is Patti Ricke. There are bins under the coat rack in the basement for any donations. Patti will pick up and deliver these items. Any and all items of gently used clothing are greatly appreciated. Also, they could use personal care items such as soaps, shampoo, conditioner, dental hygiene products, lotions, sanitary pads and adult briefs. As to the best way to manage collection of these items it will be discussed further. Meadow Creek- 17305 Meadow Creek Ln, Pine City.

Prayer Requests



Injured and ill: *John Stanz (father of Maggie Hubbling), Mary Neria (mother of Nina Schisano), Sean Meagher (brother of Pete Meagher), Nancy Bengtson, Gene Polson (friend of Jackie Diamond), Curt Ferrie, Shelly Anderson Lind, Cindy Blesener.*

Please pray for these Lutheran churches and their pastors in our synod who are being targeted by ICE. Many of their members have already endured violence and persecution before fleeing their countries of origin.

Cristo Rey (Spanish speaking)-Pastora Ana Becerra, Foundation of Life-(Anuak South Sudanese/Ethiopian)-Pastor Gilo Agwa Eternal Flame Hmong Lutheran Pastor Jua Jay Her Hmong Central-Pastor Nouk Vagh, Minnesota Faith Chinese-Pastor Thomas Tsen.

Awaiting organ transplant: *Matthew Anderson (cousin of Shelly Lustig).*

Partner congregation: *Wasa Congregation in Tanzania.*

Remember and Pray for our homebound members: *Evie Janssen, Jack & Linda Sprinkle, Tom & Carol Nieman, Marlys Rohr, Deb McGivern, Carol Cimbura, Harley Twingstrom, Dale Sauer.*



A Joyful Welcome to the Family of Faith!

We are thrilled to celebrate the baptism of **Waylon Wesley Smith**, who was lovingly welcomed into the body of Christ through the waters of baptism.

May this sacred moment mark the beginning of a lifelong journey of faith, love, and grace. As a church community, we rejoice with their family and commit to walking alongside Waylon as they grow in spirit and truth. Let us continue to lift them up in prayer and surround them with encouragement as they begin this beautiful chapter in their spiritual lives.

Welcome, Waylon! You are deeply loved and wonderfully made.

Parents: Sarah & Eaun Smith
Sponsors: Jacob Jones & Ilissa Jones

Our immigrant siblings are currently being targeted in unjust ways simply because of the color of their skin. The Saint Paul Area Synod is committed to walking with our neighbors through this terrible time of crisis. The Immigrant Support Fund goes directly to families connected with the synod’s ethnic-specific congregations. Donations to this fund support food relief, rent assistance, and legal fees when appropriate.

Send a check payable to:

“Saint Paul Area Synod”
(write “immigrant support” in the memo line)
St. Paul Area Synod
105 University Ave. W.
St. Paul, MN 55103

Or give online at:
spas-elca.org/immigrant-support

There is also a link on the Fish Lake Home Page



2026



Spaghetti Dinner

A HUGE success due to the hard work of the FLL youth!



The help and support of the adults that helped make this event possible is much appreciated!

Thank you
Cedergrens
Diehls
Kopps



To: Fish Lake Lutheran, WELCA from Rush City Food Shelf, Inc.

Your 2025 donation of \$600.00 to the Rush City Food Shelf is very generous and SO appreciated. We are an ALL donation, All VOLUNTEER food shelf assisting hundreds of our community members with their food shortages every Tuesday, every month, all year. Area FOOD BANKS enable us to access as much as \$7.00 of food with each \$1.00 of donated. Your kindness is making a real contribution to this community.

THANK YOU!

Pamels Burt Hagan, RCFS Executive Director.

Here is how donations helped RUSH CITY FOOD SHELF in 2025

490 different individuals served (more than 2024)

175 different households were served (more than 2024)

Averaged 61 households per month (more than 2024)

Average 157 households per month (more than 2024)

Average 39 pounds of food to EACH person in a family (same as 2024)

DONATIONS & VOLUNTEERS make all this possible to help solve hunger in this community.

MARCH MEANS MATCH: The greater Minneapolis Council of Churches MN FOODSHARE Campaign begins March 1– April 6. FOOD BANKS have had to increase prices to shelves because of inflation, tariffs, growing food monopolies, and fewer corporate donations forcing RCFS to pay twice as much for food in 2025 than 2024. MN may be singled out again to withhold SNAP benefits, really increasing food shelf demands.

Easter Memorial Flower Order

As part of our Easter Celebration, we will again have a garden of Easter Lilies grace our altar.

If you wish to donate a plant in honor of or in memory of a loved one.

Please return this form and your payment to the church office by

Friday, March 20th. (Note it can be left in the offering plate)

Please pick up your flowers after Easter Worship

	Qty.	Total
6" Easter Lily	\$15.00 each	_____



Make check payable to Fish Lake Lutheran Church
Please write "Flowers" in the memo

Your name: _____ Phone #: _____

In Honor of

In Memory of

COUNCIL MINUTES

FISH LAKE CHURCH COUNCIL
February 9, 2026 7:15pm

Fish Lake Lutheran Church
Stark, MN

Members

Present: Michelle Young, Rick Cedergren, Nancy Hoffman, Jeff Lustig, Julia Meagher, Pete Meagher, Jen Kroschel

Advisor: Pastor Teleen Saunders

Call to Order

Council President Rick Cedergren called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

Consent Calendar

Items on the consent calendar were presented for approval. The following motion was made by Michelle Young, seconded, and unanimously approved: CC 26.02.01 Moved: That the Council approve the agenda and previous minutes as presented.

Devotion/Opening Prayer

Michelle compared the focus of winning the Super Bowl (the “ultimate goal” for so many) to us being consumed by our own desire to acquire the “one thing” and how that, if we’re not careful, can replace God as our greatest love and devotion. We can love God, follow Jesus, and still “win Super Bowls,” but we must always be checking our hearts to determine our motivation and what we consider most important.

Pastor’s Report

Pastor Teleen’s pastoral cares for January included one baptism and five pastoral calls. Highlights of the month were the Annual Meeting, welcoming ten new members to our church, and attending a Quality of Call Leadership Summit. Looking ahead, Ash Wednesday is February 18, there will be a Lenten book study beginning, and Wednesdays will be soup supper followed by faith formation. Lastly, Pastor Teleen reminded us that in light of recent events involving ICE enforcement, we must remember our calling as the church to stand with those who are hurting, to bear witness to truth with compassion, and to remain grounded in prayer as we seek justice, dignity, and hope in the midst of suffering.

Financial Reports

LaDonna was unable to attend the meeting. We were provided with a balance sheet as of February 6, 2026. At the current time, our building fund (Restricted Equity Fund 2060) balance is \$24,730.76. This is mainly due to a donation made towards the new ADA compliant door that will be installed in the Fellowship Hall.

Committee Reports

- *Communications–The website will be updated in the near future.
- *Property and Safety–The committee is getting one more bid for the ADA compliant door in the Fellowship Hall before having the project completed in the spring.
- *Social Ministry–The quilt raffle drawing was held.
- *Worship and Music–An ad will go out to find a lead organist (Gail will be moving out of the area).
- *Youth and Family–The Spaghetti Dinner was a big success with lots of volunteers. Many kids are signed up for summer camp.
- *Evangelism and Stewardship–Ten new members joined Fish Lake.
- *WELCA–No report.

New Business

The following motion was made by Michelle Young, seconded, and unanimously approved:

CC 26.02.02 Moved: That Rick Cedergren be named Council President.

The following motion was made by Michelle Young, seconded, and unanimously approved:

CC 26.02.03 Moved: That Pete Meagher be named Council Vice President.

The following motion was made by Michelle Young, seconded, and unanimously approved:

CC 26.02.04 Moved: That Nancy Hoffman be named Council Treasurer.

The following motion was made by Michelle Young, seconded, and unanimously approved:

CC 26.02.05 Moved: That Jen Kroschel be named Council Secretary. If any council member is interested in being liaison to any committee, please let President Cedergren know.

The following motion was made by Michelle Young, seconded, and unanimously approved:

CC 26.02.06 Moved: That Church Council meetings will be held the first Monday of the month beginning at 6:00 p.m. Pastor Teleen informed the Council that Gail will be moving out of the area and therefore we will be in need of an organist to rotate playing with LaDonna and Cindy. She would like this new hire to also coordinate organists so that all services are covered.

The following motion was made by Rick Cedergren, seconded, and unanimously approved:

CC 26.02.07 Moved: That Pastor Teleen is authorized to draw up a job description for a lead organist and post it. Pastor Teleen will keep the Council informed when anyone applies so that we may take part in interviews.

The following motion was made by Michelle Young, seconded, and unanimously approved:

CC 26.02.08 Moved: That \$100 from the Memorial Fund (2095) be transferred to the Library Fund (2150) to purchase books for the Lenten Bible Study and that \$100 from the Memorial Fund (2095) be transferred to the Piano Fund (2062) to pay for having the piano tuned.

Old Business

There were two requests for Shalom Funds this month—one to help a family pay rent and one for gas station and grocery gift cards. Additional volunteers from Fish Lake are needed at Shalom Shoppe Monday from 12-4 and/or the first Saturday of the month at 12:30.

Communion assistant and devotion sign ups were passed around.

The Lord’s Prayer and Adjournment The following motion was made by Nancy Hoffman, seconded, and unanimously approved:

CC 26.02.09 Moved: That the meeting be adjourned.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: March 2, 2026 6:00 p.m.

Fish Lake Lutheran Church, Stark, MN

The New Council



Front row: Michelle Young, Nancy Hoffman, Julia Meagher, Jeff Lustig
Back row: Rick Cedergren, Jen Kroschel, Pete Meagher