

"For the Lord gives wisdom;
from his mouth come
knowledge and understanding.
Proverbs 2:6 (NIV)

A photograph of a sunset or sunrise over a body of water. The sky is filled with warm, orange, and yellow hues, with some darker clouds on the horizon. The sun is a bright, glowing orb in the center of the frame.

Meaning

True wisdom doesn't come from the world but from God Himself. When we listen to His Word, He fills us with insight and understanding.

January 2026 Newsletter

"Communicating the Love of Jesus"

Sunday School: 9:00 a.m.
Worship Service: 10:00 a.m.

Living Word Lutheran Church

PO Box 242, New London, MN 56273
Located north of the New London Township Hall on Cty Rd 9 NE
Phone: 320-354-4637
Email: pastor@livingwordlutheran.net
Website: www.livingwordlutheran.net

Questions for Pastor...

"How was your Christmas?"



I know I'm not the only one who got asked this question!

Before I get to the answer, I have a little story to share:

On one Christmas break from seminary we were visiting my parents. Violet and I went to the nursing home in town to see some folks I knew when I was growing up.

We hadn't gone to see Mary St. John, but just like the prophetess Anna did when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into the temple to dedicate Him, Mary "came up to us at that very moment" and we began visiting. Mary was the wife of the mechanic that my dad "turned wrenches with" for some thirty years.

I don't remember exactly what I said, but it must've been something along the lines of *"How was your Christmas, Mary? Did you have any special meals or gifts?"* But I definitely remember word-for-word Mary's response: Mary stopped smiling and looked me in the eye, *"David! You of all people should know Christmas isn't about food. It isn't about presents. It's about Jesus!"*

Wow! What a reminder! It's so easy to get caught up in the trappings of Christmas that we miss the point of it all. Oh, we "know" that 'Jesus is the Reason for the Season,' but when someone asks "How was your Christmas?" - and they almost always do - and we mention family or food or gifts or travel and not Jesus, well, we miss a prime opportunity to point people to Jesus!

God tells us in 1 Peter 3:15 "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have..." So, what can you be prepared to say when someone asks "How was your Christmas?"

Here's a suggestion: Tell them of something you did during the Christmas season that reminded you of something about Jesus. (You can also tell them about food, family and gifts.)

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For example:

"Family came home and we went to a Candlelight Service. And the pastor showed this hilarious video about a little girl in a Christmas program who took the 'Jesus' doll out of the manger and wouldn't let "Mary" put it back - even when "Mary" put her in a headlock. The pastor said we should learn from that little girl and not leave Jesus in the manger, but take Him with us."

Or maybe,

"We went to a Christmas program that the kids put on, and I learned something I didn't know. That holly is a symbol of Jesus. The leaves remind us of the thorny crown and the red berry reminds of the blood he shed on the cross when He grew up."

Or,

"It was good. Family was home. I got a cool gift. We ate oysters - and didn't die. AND we went to a Candlelight service. It's my favorite service of the year." And when they ask "why?" (and some of them will) you can add: "Because it reminds me that Jesus is the Light who shines the way for me in dark times."

Or,

"It was a pretty quiet Christmas. Watched some shows. And I noticed something new when I watched "Charlie Brown Christmas" for the 10th time: When Linus recited the angel's message: "Fear not..." he dropped the security blanket that he held tight the rest of the show. It was obviously designed to show that Jesus' coming takes away our fears.

Or even simpler,

"We went to a Candlelight service, and I was reminded _____.
(you fill in the blank.)

Christmas may be the one time of year when people are open to hearing you say something about Jesus. (They know it's about Him too!) So, what reminded you of some truth about Jesus this Christmas?"

Thanks for asking
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net



Mark Your Calendar...

Mission & Ministry Team

(PLEASE NOTE: We meet the 3RD Thursday this month)

Thursday, January 15th @ 6:30 p.m.

Elders' Team @ 5:30 prior to MMT



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January Fellowship Outings...

Fellowship Supper:

Thursday, January 8

6:00 p.m.

Max's on the Green

(Little Crow Golf Course)



Celebrate January Birthdays:

Tuesday, January 27

11:00 a.m.

Westwood Café - Spicer



Annual Whist Night at Pastor & Violets

January 23rd

6:30 p.m.



Wise WOMEN would have brought diapers, blankets and baby wipes. And if they

Thot for a day: Wise WOMEN would have brought diapers, blankets and baby wipes. And if they

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Who Can You Invite?

Who can you invite? Pray about it. Ask God to give you the words and opportunity. Then just do it. Ask them to come with you. Offer to pick them up. (And if they don't take you up on your invitation,, keep praying for them and for another opportunity to invite.)



- January Fellowship Supper - January 8 - 6:00 p.m.
- The Chili Cookoff - January 17 - 4:30-6:00 p.m.
- Whist Night at Pastor & Violet's - January 23- 6:30 p.m.
- Celebrate January Birthdays - January 27 - 11:00 a.m.

Chili Cookoff...

2026 Chili Cook Off

Saturday, January 17th.

4:30 - 6:00 p.m.



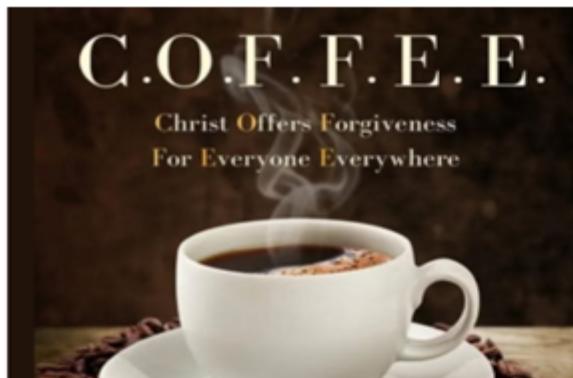
This is a Living Word outreach event, so please invite friends to eat (and compete)!

Competition Rules and Information -

- Chili cannot be store-bought, pre-made, canned or frozen - Competitors **MUST** have made it
- You must be at the church, in your booth with your chili ready for tasters no later than 4:15 PM. (Church will be open at 3:30PM)
- You will receive an entry number or color. Clearly display this card at your station. This will help attendees be acutely aware of your awesome chili!
- At least 1 person must be present during the competition and tasting at all times. Guests who come to taste and vote for your chili can do so from 4:30-6:00 PM. Please plan for 1 crock pot to supply taste testers for the entire time.
- Living Word will supply a table, outlets, tasting cups, spoons and napkins. We will NOT supply crock pots or extension cords.
- Judging will be done by the participants who are tasting - Trophy will be awarded!

PLEASE sign up on the list following or contact Tammy via Text or call 320-905-2434 so we can plan accordingly. (We need at least 6 Competitors.)

Join Us Sunday
Mornings for...



Save The Date...



Confirmation News...

6-7th Confirmation classes:

- Each Wednesday in January At 6:00



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Thought for a day: I read somewhere that it takes a village to raise a child. Where is this village and is there a number you can call?

Page 7 A Minute for Parents (& Grandparents)...

Set an example by giving an "After-Christmas" Gift that keeps on giving. (The same one God gave us at Christmas)

By now some of the Christmas presents you gave your kids (or grand-kids) have become broken. Others have been forgotten. Hopefully some are still in use. But the start of a new year would be a great time to resolve to give your children the present they really want most—your presence.

His presence is the present God gave us at Christmas. It's the one He has promised to give us until the end of time "And surely I am WITH YOU always, to the very end of the age." Mt. 28:20

Of all the things my parents did to show their love, the things that stick in my mind most are the times they made a special effort to just "be there." Chances are the same can be said for you. And chances are that is what your kids will remember too.

How can you spend more time with your children - collectively and individually? After school? In the evening? On the weekends?

Maybe read them a story instead of reading what's on your phone. Play a game with them instead of watching TV. Plan a special project that you can work on together. Have a "Date Your Kid" night once a week. Set aside one night as "Family night." Get their input on what they would like to do on those days. Sit down with them and plan what you will do then put it on the calendar.

"Being there" isn't limited to the kids that still live under your roof. When could you "be there" for your kids that are away at college?

When could you "be there" for those children that live on their own?

Follow Jesus' example and give the gift of your presence.
It says "I love you" like nothing else.

Thank You from the Jastrams..

Our hearts are full of gratitude to you, our dear readers, for your prayers and support of LCMS mission work here in Japan. Thank you so much! Dan & Joan Jastram

Read the current newsletter at:

<https://tinyurl.com/4zahrweu>



Opportunities for Growth...



Sunday Morning Bible Study

The Book of Revelation
Every Sunday @ 9:00
Please join us for coffee and God's Word



[Men's Study](#)

Family Relationships
Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m.
(pre-study meal at 6:15)



Monthly Morning Women's Study:

Women's Study will NOT meet in January.
Next Bible study will be Wednesday,
February 11th, at 10:00 a.m. at church.

Simple Ways to Give Your Spiritual Life a Lift...

Read through the Book of James

(It's a lot like Proverbs - Practical Wisdom for Everyday Life)

(Or you can listen to Pastor read the passages. He will text or email you a link to each day's recording)

You'll find the readings listed on our Daily Readings page.



LWML Meeting & Women's Study:

LWML Will NOT Meet in January.

Next meeting and Bible study will be
Wednesday, February 11th, at 10:00 a.m. at church.

SHOES FOR MISSIONS:

A huge thank you to all who have donated! This is an on-going fund-raiser for Lutheran Island Camp.

Please continue to bring your good used shoes, slippers, or boots to church. Collection tote is in the entry of the church.



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What for a day: Most things in life -- other than clothes -- are easier to get into than to get out of.

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Living Word's 2026 Goals Update...

- Continue the Make A Meal program.
We made more meals on Nov 15th
- Continue the monthly Fellowship outings: Birthdays and Supper
Jan 8 - supper; Jan 23 - Whist; Jan 27 - birthdays
- Continue the Birthday Card/Anniversary ministry
Ongoing
- Challenge every member to bring a guest this year
Be praying about who you can invite to join you for any of our Fellowship Outings or the Chili Cookoff, Jan 17.
- Enlist Youth and Young Adults to help with our
"Visitors (and members) Coffee Cart"
- Initiate the "Prayer D-Fence" Program
(Adults "adopting" a kid to pray for, send cards etc...)
- **THIS MONTH we begin enlisting people who commit to pray!**
- Enlist younger members to help with the Building Project
Early 2026
- Host Tuesday's Table
Coming September 2026
- Chili Cook-Off
Our next Cook-Off is Saturday, January 17th
- Host another Block Party or Community Festival
This will depend on our building project
- Coordinating with Redeemer, Willmar and St. John, Atwater to host joint youth events
Ongoing
- Continue growing our active Youth numbers
Bell ringing at "Celebrate the Light of the World" in Dec
- Offer support and encouragement to the Parents of Youth
Ongoing
- Keep the church yard looking nice and continue to de-clutter the storage areas inside.
Ongoing
- Parking Lot maintenance
After the Building Project is complete
- Encourage participation in Sunday School
Christmas Program on December 14th



Email Inspiration...

By Dave Veerman (via Mikey's Funnies)
In memory of Dave's wife, Judith Gail
(Bright) Veerman, whose address
changed to Heaven this year.

For centuries suffered
yearning relief
desperate for rescue
firm in belief

Reading and watching
young until old
expecting deliverance
as prophets foretold

Then pregnant virgin
in stable birth
angels proclaiming
God's peace on earth

Messiah, Deliverer
new kingdom came
heart transformation
in Jesus' name

Millenia passed
and Christ lives in me
his Holy Spirit
setting me free

With decades of blessing
fully grace gifted
my future assured
sin's burden lifted

But tears and struggle
knowing lost love
awaiting, longing
looking above

Grieving, alone
aged muscles aching
future in doubt
slower steps taking

Holding the Truth
my prayers ascending
faithful in hope
beginning and ending

So come Jesus, come
I'm faithfully waiting
our bright reunion
my Savior, my King

I wait

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Make-A-Meal Program...

One of the best (and
simplest) ways to share
Jesus' love is by taking a
meal for someone who
is going through a tough
time.

Please grab some meals
from the freezer at church to take to someone who needs to
know Jesus cares!



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That for a day: It's probably my age that tricks people into thinking I'm an adult.

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Email Humor...

I WAS SHOCKED
I was shocked, confused, bewildered
As I entered Heaven's door,
Not by the beauty of it all,
Nor the lights or its decor.

But it was the folks in Heaven
Who made me sputter and gasp—
The thieves, the liars, the sinners,
The alcoholics and the trash.

There stood the kid from seventh grade
Who swiped my lunch money twice.
Next to him was my old neighbor
Who never said anything nice.

Herb, who I always thought
Was rotting away in hell,
Was sitting pretty on cloud nine,
Looking incredibly well.

I nudged Jesus, "What's the deal?
I would love to hear Your take.
How'd all these sinners get up here?
God must've made a mistake.

'And why's everyone so quiet,
So somber - give me a due."
"Hush, child," He said, "They're all in shock
At the thought of seeing you."

A humorous reminder that God sees what we can't see- people's hearts, and that Heaven is a gift Jesus bought for us. It's not a place we get into by being better than others. Thank God for that! And for His mercy!

Smoke-Detector Battery Outreach

The Confirmation Students and Pastor handed out 50 batteries in November -
Another simple way of Sharing the Love of Jesus in a practi-





Who is This **BABY?**

WHO IS THIS BABY BORN IN A MANGER?

In chemistry, He turned water to wine.

In biology, He was born without the normal conception.

In physics, He disapproved the law of gravity when He ascended into heaven.

In economics, He disapproved the law of diminishing return by feeding 5,000 men with two fishes and 5 loaves of bread.

In medicine, He cured the sick and the blind without administering a single dose of drugs.

In history, He is the beginning and the end.

In government, God said that he shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace.

In religion, He said no one comes to the Father except through him; So, who is He? He is Jesus! The only one who is Emmanuel - GOD, with us!

Jesus had no servants, yet they called Him Master.

He had no degree, yet they called Him Teacher.

He had no medicines, yet they called Him Healer.

He had no army, yet kings feared Him.

He won no military battles, yet He conquered the world.

He committed no crime, yet they crucified Him.

He was buried in a tomb, yet He lives today.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel !



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Thought for a day: At Christmas, we are reminded that the best things in life aren't things.

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Opportunities to Serve...

Remember to use our "We Prayed for You" program...

We'd like to send out a card or two each week to people we prayed for during worship.

We are currently in need of a volunteer to mail the cards. If you could help, talk to Pastor David.



Custodian Volunteers Needed.

Most months in 2026 are available

Pick Your Month for you (or your family) to be our Church Custodian.



Thanks to Meggie Ashburn for cleaning in January !

We are still in need of volunteers. Talk to our Trustee, Lonnie Robbin, to sign up or find out more details.

Will You Help with Our Prayer D-Fence ?

Prayer D-Fence is our new ministry of praying for the Kids, Youth and Young Adults of our congregation.

Prayer is one of the powerful weapons (along with His Word) that God has given us to fight Satan and his temptations:

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Ephesians 6:18

One of the Elders' Team goals for 2026 is to get this new ministry up and running. The first step is to enlist people who will commit to pray at least once a day for one of our young people. Tammy Miller has volunteered to help coordinate this prayer ministry. Please let her know if you are interested in being a prayer partner for our youth!!

Building Committee Update...

Check out the new computerized drawings on the table by the entry door at church.



Money in CDs and Building Account: \$207,760

A HUGE "Thank You" to everyone who has made a pledge !!!

The BUILDING TEAM will meet Tuesday, January 20th @ 5:30 to continue putting together some specific plans!

January 2026 - Daily Readings

We start the year focusing on GOD'S WISDOM - Found in the BOOK of JAMES.
Pastor records the readings (along with devotions based on the readings).
To receive these audio recordings daily, just email him: pastor@livingwordlutheran.net.
NOTE: Email or text Pastor with questions you have on something you read.

WEEK OF JANUARY 4

Jan 5 Matthew 13:53-56, James 1:1 _____
" _____
Jan 6 Mark 3:20-21,31-32; John 7:1-5 _____
Jan 7 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, Acts 15:13-19 _____
Jan 8 James 1:2-4, 16 _____
Jan 9 James 1:5-8 _____

WEEK OF JANUARY 11

Jan 12 James 1:9-11 _____
Jan 13 James 1:13-15 _____
Jan 14 James 1:16-18 _____
Jan 15 James 1:19-21 _____
Jan 16 James 1:22-25 _____

WEEK OF JANUARY 18 -

Jan 19 James 1:26-27 _____

Recordings of the Daily Readings can also be found on our website at:

<https://www.livingwordlutheran.net/devotions.htm>

Jan 20 James 2:1-7 _____

Jan 21 James 2:8-13 _____

Jan 22 James 2:14-26 _____

Jan 23 James 3:1-12 _____

WEEK OF JANUARY 25

Jan 26 James 3:13-18 _____
Jan 27 James 4:1-6 _____
Jan 28 James 4:7-10 _____
Jan 29 James 4:11-12 _____
Jan 30 James 4:13-17 _____

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 1

Feb 2 James 5:1-6 _____
Feb 3 James 5:7-11 _____
Feb 4 James 5:12 _____
Feb 5 James 5:13-18 _____
Feb 6 James 5:19-20 _____

January 2026 - Living Word Lutheran - Calendar of Events

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4 9:00 - SUNDAY SCHOOL - ADULT STUDY 10:00 - WORSHIP w/communion 11:15 - FELLOWSHIP	5	6 6:30 - MEN'S STUDY	7 6:00 - CONFIRMATION 7:00 - YOUTH GROUP	8 6:00 - FELLOWSHIP SUPPER @ Max's on the Green (Little Crow Golf)	9	10
11 9:00 - SUNDAY SCHOOL - ADULT STUDY 10:00 - WORSHIP 11:15 - FELLOWSHIP	12	13 6:30 - MEN'S STUDY	14 6:00 - CONFIRMATION 7:00 - YOUTH GROUP	15 MISSION Ministry 5:30 - ELDERS' TEAM 6:30 - MISSION & MINISTRY TEAM	16	17 4:30 - 6:00 CHILI COOK-OFF
18 9:00 - SUNDAY SCHOOL - ADULT STUDY 10:00- WORSHIP w/communion 11:15 FELLOWSHIP	19	20 5:30 - BUILDING COMMITTEE 6:30 - MEN'S STUDY	21 6:00 - CONFIRMATION 7:00 - YOUTH GROUP	22	23 6:30 -WHIST at Pastor & Violet's	24
25 9:00 - SUNDAY SCHOOL - ADULT STUDY 10:00 - WORSHIP 11:15 - FELLOWSHIP	26	27 11:00 - Celebrate JANUARY BIRTHDAYS @ Westwood Café-Spicer 6:30 - MEN'S STUDY	28 6:00 - CONFIRMATION 7:00 - YOUTH GROUP	29	30 Lord's Supper Dates • Sunday, January 4th • Sunday, January 18th	31
Feb 1 9:00 - SUNDAY SCHOOL - ADULT STUDY 10:00- WORSHIP w/communion 11:15 - FELLOWSHIP	Feb 2	Feb 3 6:30 - MEN'S STUDY	Feb 4 6:00 - CONFIRMATION 7:00 - YOUTH GROUP	Feb 5	Feb 6	Feb 7

Upcoming Schedules...

After-Worship Fellowship

We will have coffee / water and cookies at 11:15 after worship .Please join us when you can! ...and, if you can, please sign up to serve coffee and goodies some Sunday.



Usher Schedule

Jan 4	Jim & Torasie Larson
Jan 11	Jason & Levi Miller
Jan 18	Pam Johnson & Linda Van Meter
Jan 25	Larry Levin & Volunteer needed
Feb 1	Jim & Torasie Larson

USHERS NEEDED

We are still in need of more ushers to help collect offering. Please sign up at church if you could take a turn. Thanks!

Elders

Jan 4 and 11	Scott & Dan
Jan 18 and 25	Kevin & Duane

Custodian

January	Meggie Ashburn
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Altar Guild

January	Mona Hjelle
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Accompanying Musicians

Jan 4	Sharon Willen
Jan 11	Scott Wachter
Jan 18	Sharon Willen
Jan 25	Scott Wachter



"Participate" in Worship from home...

If you can't be here in person: Watch on our YouTube channel with Sunday services being livestreamed at
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCG9eU-VvIJEU22yCYxbhwjg/featured>

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Thought for a day: If you can't think of a word, say "I forgot the English word for it." That way people will think you're bilingual instead of ignorant.

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Thank God For...

You've seen our sign board out by the road with the beginning of a sentence: "Thank God For..." Each week we'd like to change the ending of that sentence to encourage people who drive past to remember that God is the giver of all good things - especially things we take for granted.

In December we thanked God for...

It was too cold, snowy and windy to venture out to the sign board ! Let Pastor know how you'd complete that sentence in January - and pray for a bit warmer weather



Friendship Sunday is coming...

Marcia has begun collecting prizes for BINGO

(Held after Friendship Brunch in February). Please let her know if you have any prizes you could add. Thanks!



Seen on Church Signboards...

**Make Jesus
Your
New Year's Solution**

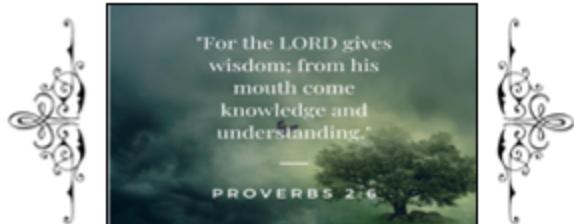
January Discipleship Verse...

*"For the Lord gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding."*
Proverbs 2:6

Email Wisdom...

From God's Book of "Practical Wisdom for Everyday" (Proverbs)

- He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD And He will reward him for what he has done. Proverbs 19:17
- Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails. Proverbs 19:21
- Wine is a mocker and beer is a brawler, whoever is led astray by them is not wise. Proverbs 20:1
- It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel. Proverbs 20:3
- Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the LORD and He will deliver you. Proverbs 20:22
- All a man's ways seem right to him, But the LORD weighs the heart. Proverbs 21:2
- To do what is right and just, is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. Proverbs 21:3
- The plans of the diligent lead to profit, as surely as haste leads to poverty. Proverbs 21:5
- He who guards his mouth and his tongue; keeps himself from calamity. Proverbs 21:23
- There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD. Proverbs 21:30
- The horse is made ready for the day of battle; but victory rests with the LORD. Proverbs 21:31
- Rich and poor have this in common, the LORD is the maker of them all. Proverbs 22:2



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Thought for a day: I'm the kind of person who gets more cleaning done in the 30 min before someone comes over than I do in a week.

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Thank You...

- to everyone who remembered us with cards and gifts this Christmas! Your support and partnership in the Gospel is truly an amazing blessing!
Pastor David & Violet
- "Thank you for supporting House of Hope Madagascar with your mission monies recently. That blessing came just in time for Christmas for our children there."
(Received in response to our financial support of House of Hope Madagascar - one of three missions we voted to support at our last Mission and Ministry Team meeting.)
- "Thank you for lifting up the bright light of Jesus for others to see."
(Received in response to our continued financial support of the mission of Rev. Dan and Dr. Joan Jastram in Japan - the second of three missions our MMT pledged to support.)
- "Thank you to the members of Living Word for your generous partnership with us at Hope Pregnancy Center."
(Received in response to our financial support of Hope Pregnancy Center in Willmar - the third of three missions our MMT pledged to support)

If you have someone you'd like to thank, please email
webmaster@livingwordlutheran.net

Communion Notes...

The Lord's Supper will be celebrated in January on the normal First and Third Sundays
(January 4th & 18th),



Reminders:

- Wine - is in the two outer rings of the individual-cup tray
- Grape Juice - is in the inner ring of the individual-cup tray
- Gluten-free bread wafers are available for those who have gluten-sensitive conditions. You will find these wafers in a separate cup in the communion tray.
- Those who are not comfortable coming to the altar should inform an Elder or Usher, and communion will be brought to you in your pew.

Sunday School Christmas Program

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A Minute for Couples...

(from the Prepare-Enrich blog)

Set Your Marriage Up for Success in the New Year

After a couple weeks of indulging in the treats and trappings of the holidays, getting back to real life when it's all over can be a very rude awakening. You had visions of bouncing into the new year motivated and refreshed, but in reality you're dragging yourselves across the threshold, feeling moody and irritable. It's no surprise when you take that out on each other—or fall into some negative relationship habits to boot. Needless to say, this isn't the best way to start out the new year.

Of course, this outcome isn't inevitable by any means. Starting off strong—with intention—can set a positive tone for the coming months. Wondering how to start now? Here are 4 tips to try:

1. Take care of yourselves physically.

It's common for people to let themselves indulge over the holidays, imbibing in the sweets and treats more than you normally would, staying up late, and abandoning your usual workout routine. While it's tempting to put all the healthy choices on hold until after the holidays, taking care of your physical well-being during this time can make the transition back to "reality" a bit easier. It could be something as simple as getting out for a walk after enjoying a big meal or prioritizing a good night's sleep (or a nap!) when you can. Not letting yourself get completely rundown over the holidays means you'll be feeling healthy and energized to start the year, ultimately having more in your tank to invest in your marriage.

2. Do your future selves a favor.

If there are some changes you want to make in your daily life or relationship, take a little time now to pinpoint ways you can set your future selves up for success. Think of it like the little things you might do at night to pave the way for a smoother morning. They're definitely not things you have to do, but you are always glad you did. For example, maybe you get a head start on meal planning for the first few weeks of the year, or you schedule out date nights for the first couple months. Perhaps you're planning on making some changes to the division of household tasks or the way you handle the family calendar, so you have a check-in to ensure you're aligned on your new system. Putting in a little extra effort now will free up capacity as things get busy again and make it easier for you to follow through on your plans.



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Thought for a day: Men say women should come with instructions. What's the point of that? Have you ever seen a man read the instructions?

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3. Find a source of shared motivation.

Individually, you probably know the feeling of finding that special thing that sparks your motivation. As a couple, that feeling can be even more powerful! Whether you're setting a shared goal, getting realigned on priorities for the year ahead or re-establishing the vision you have for your family and marriage, knowing you're working toward it together strengthens your bond and puts something positive on your horizon.

4. Keep the feel-good vibes alive.

Just because the holidays are over doesn't mean your marriage has to return to a state of mundanity. You can make your relationship embody the warmth and joy of the holidays year round. Put effort into planning dates, leave little surprises for each other, give a gift for no reason, or find something to celebrate on a random weeknight. A lot of effort goes into making the holidays feel special for kids and loved ones—your marriage deserves the same. Sure, not everyday will feel like Christmas morning, but you can make it a bright spot when things are feeling pretty ho-hum.

If you struggle with returning to real life after the holidays, you're not alone. While it might seem like a minor problem, it becomes bigger when you consider how that can affect your relationship with your spouse. Taking a little extra time now allows you to step into the new year with a proactive mindset that will benefit all areas of your life—including your marriage.



Thanks to Ondrej Paska (See Matthew 14:24-33)

01-04-20

PETER FINDS HIS FAITH TO BE MUCH STRONGER IN THE WINTER

Miscellaneous Notes...

Food Pantry Reminder

Please remember to bring your donations for the Food Pantry on the 2nd Sunday of each month. Place them in the purple container by the door at church. Thank to everyone for donating!



Check out our "Free Stuff" Table

Here's just a sampling of what you'll find :

- Kid's books
- January Newsletters
- January—March Portals of Prayer
- Smoke Detector batteries

Recorded videos of Sermons

Sermons can be found in on our Living Word YouTube channel (New London Living Word) at

<https://www.youtube.com/@newlondonlivingword8097streams>

Dec 7	"Why we have a certain hope for Jesus' return."
Dec 14	Christmas Program - "Symbols of Christmas"
Dec 21	"What is it about Jesus that brings Peace?"
Christmas Eve	"Lessons from the account of Jesus' birth."
Dec 28	Church was cancelled due to the blizzard conditions.

Still Available: Direct Deposit for Your Offerings

Living Word has the option of an electronic option for making regular offerings. Contributions can be debited automatically from your checking or savings account .



If you are currently giving on a weekly basis, you will no longer need to write out 52 checks a year or prepare 52 envelopes. And, when travel, illness or other circumstances prevent you from attending services, this program will allow your weekly offerings to continue on an uninterrupted basis. An authorization form and a "Frequently Asked Questions" flyer are available from the church office.

After-Worship Prayer Ministry

We have people who will pray with you or for you after Sunday service. They gather for prayer near the piano, just meet them there.

Also, we're always looking for a few more people who have a passion for praying!!!

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That for a day: In Egypt, thousands of years ago, cats were worshiped as gods. Cats have never

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Prayer...

Remember to use "The Prayer Force"

Please continue to call, text (320-220-1816) or email (pastor@livingwordlutheran.net) prayer requests to Pastor David for the Prayer Force prayer chain to include in their prayers. Thanks!



And an Invitation to Join our "Prayer Force"

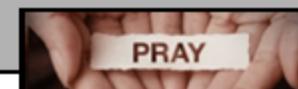
Being a part of our prayer chain is a **HUGELY** important - and very simple - way you can serve God and His people! When a request to pray comes in, Pastor forwards it via text message (or email for those who don't have a cell phone). Then you simply include that request in your prayers. Text Pastor today and tell him "Yeah, I can do that!" Thanks!

Please Remember to Pray At 11:09 Every day

(inspired by Luke 11:9: "So I say to you, Ask and it will be given to you; Seek and you will find; Knock and the door will be opened to you")

Remember to take a time-out to PRAY for things like...

- Thanking God that Jesus is **STILL** Immanuel - God with us!
- Thanking God for all who attended our Christmas Program or Candlelight Worship
- Continued wisdom for guidance and decisions (BIG and small)
- The Holy Spirit's power to follow God's Plan everyday in 2026
- Thanking God for all the blessings of 2025 (take time to list them)
- Asking God to open our eyes to see His guiding in the coming year
- A "Christmas-like" attitude of giving that continues all year
- Safe travel (and good weather for traveling)
- Asking God to open people's eyes to see that Jesus is what they need
- For God to continue giving comfort and peace to all those grieving.
- Asking God for courage to follow where He guides
- For all those who are home-bound or in nursing facilities
- Thanking God that His Word is Truth amidst the lies of the world.
- Protection from the deceitful messages Satan sends your way
- Asking God for faith to stand for His Truth like Daniel's 3 friends !
- Asking God to humble you, seek Him and repent (2 Chronicles 7:14)
- God's protection, wisdom & courage for government leaders
- The ministry of Hope Pregnancy Center in Willmar
- The ministry of House of Hope - Madagascar
- The ministry of the Jastrams in Japan



Monthly Music Videos...

Here is some great new music from the month of December...

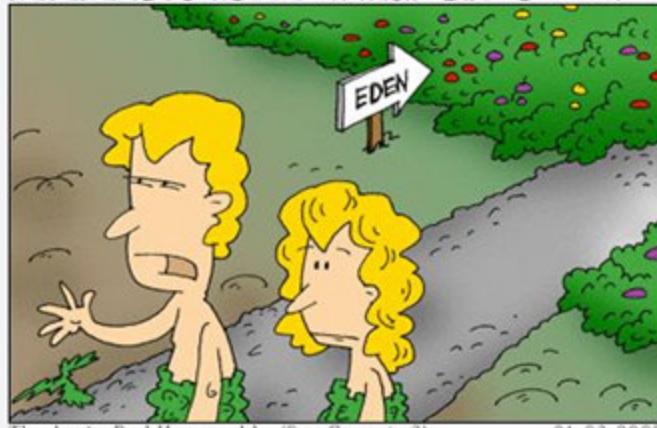
- This is an AI song, but I do like "Lord Bless This New Year" ...
<https://youtu.be/ssMyYBEvw-g>
- Tauren Wells just released a song, "Here Comes The Church" ...
<https://youtu.be/NbEBtc0etXs>
- "Where Would I Be" is new from Matthew West & Peter Burton...
<https://youtu.be/INHTQTCR9s>
- Zach Williams released "If God Lives Here" ...
https://youtu.be/a_trv5TsnI
- Niki Lou Savich released a new song called "Lean Into Jesus" ...
<https://youtu.be/nMUK7IKRz1Q>
- "Thankful" is new from Forrest Frank...
https://youtu.be/TWvJaFWD_wY
- Ben Fuller just released a new song called "Walk With Me" ...
<https://youtu.be/SZm44h5CjEc>
- Stephen McWhirter has a new song, "All Of The Praise" ...
<https://youtu.be/9cu0AeugeM0>
- "Year to the Day" is new from Benjamin William Hastings with Josh Baldwin... <https://youtu.be/Ymdz3xrrHb0>
- Madison Ryann Ward released "Ripple" ...
<https://youtu.be/9Inw5KqjMWM>
- "Running Home" is new from Lost & Found...
<https://youtu.be/3TvpSmypdZ0>
- "Broken" is a new release from Hudson Tucker...
<https://youtu.be/GN9Ydgl5egQ>
- "Praise the Lord Forever" is the latest from Pat Barrett...
<https://youtu.be/PBACC2GG8O4>
- Rockers, Van Zant released a new song, "Awesome God" ...
<https://youtu.be/XnKDU3I9hF4>
- "Jesus Is Love" is a beautiful new song from Terrian...
https://youtu.be/Tr_Pv8Hp_lo
- "Fill Me Up" is a catchy new release from Hadon...
<https://youtu.be/i39k7WsGAfQ>
- "No Idol" is new from Brandon Lake with Skema Boy...
<https://youtu.be/3EyWAum9a9c>

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Thought for a day: Someone who thinks logically is a nice contrast to the rest of us.

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Thanks to Dad Hengeveld (See Genesis 3) 01-03-2005

OUR RESOLUTION LAST YEAR COULD HAVE BEEN "LESS FRUIT", BUT NO ... WE WENT WITH "TRUST PEOPLE MORE"

Story Behind The Song...

We are still in the twelve days of Christmas so I would like to talk about that familiar Christmas song, "The Twelve Days of Christmas".

The 12 days celebrate the time between Jesus' birth (Dec 25th) and the arrival of the Three Wise Men (Magi) on Epiphany (Jan 6th). This is a period of feasting and celebration with Epiphany marking the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

While the song's origin has been much debated, it may have been used as a type of catechism, a way to teach faith secretly. The religious wars in sixteenth century England made it dangerous to be a Catholic. Many people practiced their faith in secret. As the legend goes, Catholic families courageously developed unique ways to secretly pass the faith onto their children, like "The 12 Days of Christmas." The well-known song was used to teach children about the Catholic Church.

1st Day of Christmas—A partridge in a pear tree.

A partridge is a bird that is known to sacrifice its life for its babies. This bird represents Jesus, who is willing to give his life for us. The pear tree symbolizes the Cross.

2nd Day of Christmas— Two turtle doves

Did you know that turtle doves often mate for life? Because of this, they are seen as symbols of love, fidelity, and connection. In "The

Twelve Days of Christmas," the two turtle doves represent the Old and New Testament, which are deeply connected and meaningful.

3rd Day of Christmas—three French hens

The three French hens signify the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and love (or charity).

4th Day of Christmas—four calling birds

The four calling birds symbolize the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which spread the good news of Jesus' life and teachings.

5th Day of Christmas—five golden rings

The five golden rings represent the first five books of the Old Testament, also known as the Pentateuch or the Torah. These books include: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

6th Day of Christmas—six geese a-laying

The six geese a-laying symbolize the six days of creation, emphasizing God's power as the creator of the world.

7th Day of Christmas—seven swans a-swimming

The seven swans a-swimming represent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

8th Day of Christmas— eight maids a-milking

The eight maids a-milking symbolizes the eight Beatitudes preached by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

9th Day of Christmas—nine ladies dancing

The nine ladies dancing represents the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

10th Day of Christmas—ten lords a-leaping

The ten lords a-leaping signifies the Ten Commandments, which provide guidance for how to be the-best-version-of-yourself.

11th Day of Christmas—eleven pipers piping

The eleven pipers piping represent the eleven faithful disciples of Jesus: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the Younger, Simon, and Jude.

12th Day of Christmas—twelve drummers drumming

The twelve drummers drumming represent the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostles' Creed, which summarizes the core beliefs of Christianity.

Whether or not you believe the legend that this song was created as

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That for a day: The last person that quit or was fired will be held responsible for everything that goes wrong.

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a type of secret code to teach about Christianity, the explanations of the daily "gifts" are a great reminder of the aspects of our faith. So whenever you hear the "12 Days of Christmas" think of the deeper spiritual meaning of each day of the song.

I'm sure you are very familiar with the traditional version of this song, but here are a some of my favorite "creative" versions...

- A version from Pentatonix... https://youtu.be/rJ_fUqN2bFY
- The Sideboys... <https://youtu.be/QOjrl8icSWg>
- This is the classic funny version from Straight No Chaser... <https://youtu.be/2Fe110IMz8>

As a bonus, check out this old, but hilarious enactment of the "12 Day of Christmas" ... <https://youtu.be/XXtCSUaKNTk>

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



THEBACKPEW.COM - jlarson

SNOWMEN with Fitness New Year Resolutions