



## **CURRENTS**

DECEMBER 2023

***Reach Out , Share Christ with All***

**FROM PASTOR CHRIS**

Isaiah 40:6-8 (The Message translation)

*A voice says, "Shout!" I said, "What shall I shout?"*

*"These people are nothing but grass, their love fragile as wildflowers. The grass withers, the wildflowers fade, if God so much as puffs on them. Aren't these people just so much grass? True, the grass withers and the wildflowers fade, but our God's Word stands firm and forever."*

We read Isaiah a lot as we approach Christmastime. This particular passage we will hear on the 2nd Sunday of Advent, December 10. The message and imagery this prophet used sings beautifully and captures the promise that we realize as God's love come to us in Jesus.

Christmas is often about sharing love and celebrating goodwill to all humankind. That's one of the beautiful pieces of the season. But this text from Isaiah captures also the reality that our love and goodwill toward others is as fragile as all else in our lives. One puff and the flower fades, the grass withers.

The good news is that it's not all up to us. God's Word stands firm, God's love persists. Hopefully you will do something loving this season, something charitable, kind or good. Thank you, because the world needs one more act of compassion, one more listening ear, one more seemingly random act of kindness thrown out into it. And that matters. So much, that matters. That one thing from you, and one thing from someone else Jesus takes and uses in ways that we cannot count or imagine.

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*Cont'd from page 1*

And when we misstep, when we fail to act with love, Jesus uses his light shining in the siblings around us to comfort and guide us forward.

The next time you find yourself feeling wilted or fading, the joyful spirit waning from the weight or exhaustion of this season, or just life, or everything going on around the world... know that God is and always will be in control. Know that more good is coming, because God's Word and God's love stands firm forever. Remember that even the smallest of steps, the tiniest of kindnesses from you makes God smile and Jesus uses for extraordinary things.

It is Jesus who makes the season bright. It is Jesus who brings good news to the world – who lifts up the lowly, who topples the proud, who makes bountiful the plates of the hungry, and moves us all to share (Luke 1:51-53).

God is here. Let us celebrate the love of God in Jesus Christ together this Christmas, let us come to the table and be fed by the one who is God's Word and will stand forever. And may you be strengthened to share God's love, peace, and goodwill in many ways this Christmas.

Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy be yours in Christ!

-Pastor Chris



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*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14*

## 2023 VISION BOARD

**Gaye Johnson, President**

gayemj3@gmail.com

**Kari Washburn Vice President**

kari.washburn@yahoo.com

**Andrea Baxter, co-Secretary**

baxtera42@gmail.com

**Amy Noel, co-Secretary**

noelprairie@icloud.com

**Mike Martin, Treasurer**

marty495268@gmail.com

**Diane Jostad**—608-526-3597

**Patti Happel**—patiszoo@yahoo.com

*Please contact the vision board with any input you may have. Vision Board meetings are scheduled for the second Thursday of each month. **Next meeting December 14***

Your giving helps with our mission - ***Reaching Out to Share Christ with All***

<b>October</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Y-T-D Actual</b>	<b>Y-T-D Budget</b>
General Fund	18,664.00	19,186.00	158,029.38	191,868.00
Expense	21,810.80	19,186.00	184,861.27	191,868.00
Debt Reduction	50,165.00		53,490.00	

**Giving at HCLC** has been made even easier. You can now go directly to Paypal and search for Halfway Creek Lutheran church. You may also click or scan the QR code!

Thank you for helping us further our mission.



**Noisy offering** for December will be collected for ELCA Good Gifts!

**Year End Contributions:** As a reminder, contributions for 2023 should be post-marked or at the HCLC office by December 31, 2023. Thank you for your generosity and continue support of your church.

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*For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. Psalm 62:1*

**HALFWAY CREEK LUTHERAN CHURCH  
VISION BOARD SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
October 19, 2023**

MEMBERS Present: Pastor Chris Sesvold, Gaye Johnson, Amy Noel, Mike Martin, Kari Washburn, Diane Jostad, Patti Happel

Members Absent: Andrea Baxter

Call to Order @ 6:00

Devotion: Amy offered a prayer.

**Patti made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 1, 2023 VB meeting, Kari 2nd. Motion passed.**

**Worship & Liturgy**

Patti reviewed the discussion and recommendation of the the Music and Liturgy Team r/t Christmas worship schedule. **Amy made a motion that on December 24th, we have a 10AM service that focuses on both the last Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve and a 4PM Candlelight Christmas eve service. On December 25th, Pastor will have a Christmas Day video available. Patti 2nd. Motion passed.** Discussion: Worship team members will be singing during both services on the 24th.

**Finance Team**

Treasurer's Report – Mike answered questions on the September financial report that Jodie sent to us on October 13, 2023.

**Patti made motion to approve September financial report. Mike 2nd. Motion passed.**

Discussion:

1. Reviewed the draft of the letter that we want to go out to all HCLC members, giving them information on our current financial challenge. The letter will include: current state, what we've done so far to manage this, future considerations, and what we hope they will prayerfully consider to support the ministry of HCLC. Goal is to have letter go out soon. the VB will be available between services to answer questions on November 5 and 12, 2023.
2. Based on feedback from congregation, we may want to prepare two budgets for the Feb 2024 annual meeting: one that focuses on "business as usual" and one that includes

more long term plans. First budget meeting is scheduled for Saturday, November 4th at 10AM with Jodie.

Reminder that we are scheduled to meet on November 2nd at 6PM to go through a Visioning process.

Next VB Meeting is November 9th at 6PM.

Meeting adjourned at **7:30PM**

**HALFWAY CREEK LUTHERAN CHURCH  
VISION BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
November 9, 2023**

MEMBERS Present: Pastor Chris Sesvold, Gaye Johnson, Amy Noel, Kari Washburn, Patti Happel

Members Absent: Andrea Baxter, Mike Martin and Diane Jostad

Call to Order @ 5:55.

**Kari made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 19, 2023 VB Special meeting, Patti 2nd. Motion passed.**

**Patti made a motion to allow the Union Mills 4H to use the Heritage Hall for their meetings. Kari 2nd. Motion passed.**

**Action since last meeting**

1. Special meeting on November 2, 2023 to begin a visioning process.
2. The VB met with Jodi Anderson, Bookkeeper on November 4 to begin the process of creating a budget for 2024.

**Finance Team**

1. Jodi was able to provide an update on both dedicated funds and the current status of or Park Bank and Thrivent accounts. We had reviewed the October financials at the budget meeting on November 4th. **Amy made a motion to accept the financial report. Patti 2nd. Motion passed.**

2. **Noisy offering:** November's offering will go to LuMin Campus Ministry. December will focus on ELCA "Good Gifts." Amy will write an article for the newsletter to share with and thank the congregation of the impact we have been able to make with our noisy offerings.
3. **2024 Budget:** Jodi presented a draft of the 2024 budget. **Next step:** We will present multiple budgets to the congregation. This will include: balanced budget in which expense = income, a minimum budget with no salary increases, a budget that includes 2% increases for staff and minimum guideline increase for pastor and a fourth budget that includes some of our "dreams" for the future. Jodi will send a draft when complete and we will plan to review at the December 14th VB meeting.
4. Jodi reviewed the fees r/t Vanco (Simply Giving) and PayPal. Approximately 1/3 of our income comes in regularly through these services.

#### **Pastor's Report**

1. Large focus on Confirmation and SS programs including music and the Xmas program. Working with a group of youth and adults on planning to attend the National Youth Gathering next summer. "Baptism remembrance" was the focus of the milestone class for SS
2. Nursing home worship, community meetings, Fall Theological Conference and planning for Thanksgiving service with the other Holmen pastors were some of the other activities this month.
3. Special prayers and support to Beulah Sanders after her son's funeral and Pat Krause and her family through the end of her life.

#### **Property Team**

Thanks to the members of the congregation who assisted with the outdoor cleanup over the weekend of October 28th.

#### **Evangelism**

Each VB member was asked to write a personal note to a group of members over the next month.

#### **Plan for receiving new VB members for 2024**

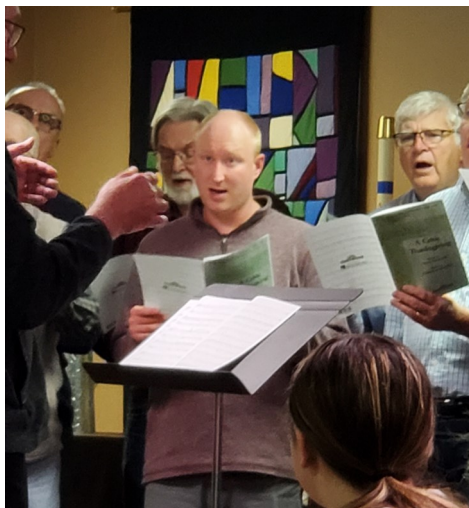
We will start the process of inviting members of the congregation to join us as a VB member. As you do this, prayerfully consider "What is your hope for the next year?" Both Mike and Gaye will be completing their terms.

**Patti made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kari 2nd. Motion passed.**

Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Next Vision Board Meeting is December 14, 2023 at 6PM.

## HYMNS & PIES



Our second annual Hymns & Pies celebration of Thanksgiving at Journey Lutheran was well attend!

Thanks to all who participated and enjoyed fellowship with song and delicious pies!



## BLESSING OF THE QUILTS



On November 12 the sanctuary was draped in beautiful quilts representing hours of dedication and creativity.

The quilts were donated to the Salvation Army this year.

Thanks to the quilters group for sharing your time and talent! Quilting starts again in February. See you then!

## YOUR CEMETERY NEEDS YOU



Remember Halfway Creek Cemetery when you're making your charitable contributions — and please consider a donation to the cemetery in your will, too. The cemetery does not receive funding from Halfway Creek Lutheran Church. It needs your help with donations to mow the lawn, trim trees and provide general maintenance. That expense is more than \$3,000 annually.

For more information, call Raymond Lee at 608-769-6964 (cell) or 608-526-3900 (home).

## LOOSE “NOISY” OFFERING MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Each Sunday, we ask you to put your change (and bills/checks) in the cake pan and to “Make some NOISE!” Over the past one and a half years, you have made a difference within our church, our community and throughout the world. Let us show you how.....

**Within the church:** We started our loose offering campaign by collecting for piano tuning, Sunday School/Youth Education, then later the Quilting Ministry.

**Within our local community:** We have supported a whole variety of causes. This includes LuMin Campus Ministry, Catholic Charities Warming Shelter, Holmen Lutheran Food Cupboard, Holmen’s Hope summer lunches and backpack programs.

**Within the world:** ELCA World Hunger and Water projects, disaster relief for hurricanes and Maui fires, shipping costs for World Relief and the Hope Centers for Children of Africa.

All of this generosity represents over \$3000! THANK YOU!!

As we begin 2024, the Vision Board would like to hear from you if there is an organization that you volunteer for or a cause that is important to you, that we should consider for our loose “NOISY” offering.

## LUMIN COOKIES ON CAMPUS



Thanks for supporting LuMin La Crosse Campus ministries with Cookies on Campus. We donated over 500 cookies for Cookies on Campus! We got a resounding THANK YOU from students that stopped to see Pastor Paul and grab a cookie or two!

## YOUTH GATHERING UPDATE

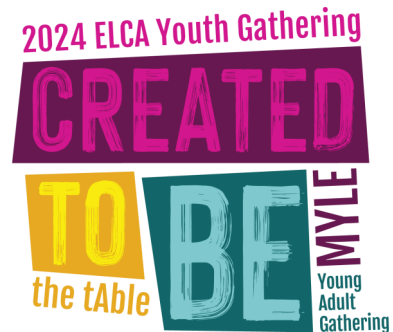
Three adults and 5 youth have registered for the Youth Gathering in July! There is still time if you are interested in going along!

Thank you to everyone who purchased cookie dough or meat sticks from our first fundraiser! We earned about \$600. We are currently selling candles for Christmas.

These orders are due December 6! We have an order form in the Gathering Space. Thanks in advance for helping us get to New Orleans in July!!

Youth Gathering parents will be meeting **December 3 at 9:30 a.m.** to fill out paperwork and talk about more fundraising opportunities. We'll also be finalizing travel plans.

Anyone wishing to support our youth on their Youth Gathering trip can send donations to church or find the giving tab on our website at [halfwaycreek.org](http://halfwaycreek.org).



[fb.com/youthgathering](https://fb.com/youthgathering)

[elca.org/gathering](http://elca.org/gathering)

[@elcagathering](https://twitter.com/elcagathering)

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

*If your birthday is missing, please notify the office.*

<b>1</b> Justin Happel	<b>8</b> Mason Dokkebaken	<b>15</b> Mark Thompson	<b>22</b> Alayna Ruhbusch
<b>2</b> Maddy Arendt	Trent Gander	<b>16</b> Cami Hill	<b>23</b> David Erdman
<b>3</b> Matthew Payne	<b>9</b> Troy Fiers	<b>17</b> Lindsay Tuquero	<b>24</b> Rebecca Moss
<b>4</b> Alice Jackson	Jon Halverson	<b>18</b> Daniel Daily	<b>27</b> Emily Arnold
<b>5</b> Rita Johnson	Megan Sacia	Michelle Olson	<b>28</b> Tilly Kinsman
Cameron Legrave	<b>10</b> Patty Brandau	<b>19</b> Owen Bringe	<b>29</b> Elsie Barbour
<b>6</b> Laura Oines	Brooklyn Cook	<b>20</b> Chad Brandau	<b>31</b> Jacob Thornton
Esther Smith	<b>11</b> Rick Shisler	Shannon Jandt	
<b>7</b> Jodi Eide	Katie Yahnke	<b>21</b> Kelly Anderson	
Adam Thoma	<b>12</b> Kelly Hanson		
	<b>14</b> James Bringe		



*We pray for ... Ed Scholze, Bob Loper, Joan Vaughn, Bridget Ferkl, Thelma Severson, Lisa Herrera Evans, Katie Wier, Phoebe Kitzke, Gayle Kuespert, Beulah Sanders, Cary Heyer, Eric Erdman, Dawson Reed, Jenny Lee, Mary Dokkebaken, Karla Johnson, Alice Fonfara, Marie Jezova, Coats family*



## With Sympathy

Pat Krause passed into eternal life on November 4, 2023. Her funeral was held at Halfway Creek on November 13. We lift in prayer Pat's family and friends. Rest eternal grant Pat, O Lord; and let light perpetual shine upon her. Amen.

## SERVING AND WORSHIP

		SEXTON	ALTAR GUILD	OFFERING COUNTERS
<b>DEC 3</b>	8:30	Mike Martin	Carrie Nicole	
	10:30			Rhonda Sonja
<b>DEC 10</b>	8:30	Stan Schwier	Bette P	
	10:30			Bette P Susan J
<b>DEC 17</b>	10:00	Archie A.	Nancy H.	Jodi Eide
<b>DEC 24</b>	10:00	David Chase	Barb H Bette P	
	4:00	Morgan Jostad		Diane Mike
<b>DEC 31</b>	10:00	Archie	Kari W.	Mike John D

### Volunteer to help at Worship

Use [Sign-up Genius](#) button on the website or E-News; call the office or email [assistant@halfwaycreek.org](mailto:assistant@halfwaycreek.org).

Gifting your time is important to help meet the needs of this congregation at each service.

Thank you so much for sharing your time and talents!

### Thank you!

PowerPoint operators are just one of the many roles that are filled by volunteers each weekend! We'd love to have you join us!

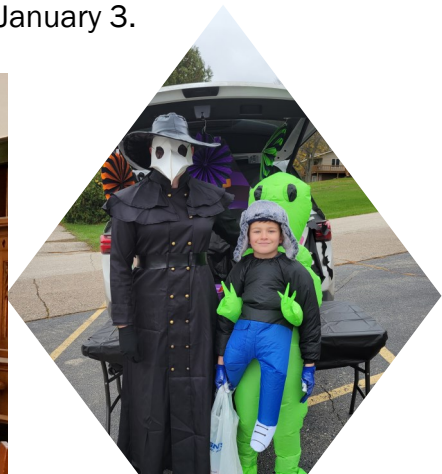


## SUNDAY SCHOOL & CONFIRMATION

The kids are gearing up for the Christmas Program on Sunday, December 17 at 10 a.m. The “Living Word” script is filled with song, narration, a few speaking parts and accompaniment by Lynn Wegner. Thanks to the confirmation students for helping out along with the teachers, parents and Pastor Chris. What a special way to celebrate the birth of our Savior.

Students will practice Sundays: December 3 and 10 along with Wednesday, December 13th.

Plan to enjoy some time off following the program. No Sunday School December 24 and 31. No confirmation on December 27 and January 3.



## **A MESSAGE OF THANKSGIVING FROM BISHOP MALPICA**

*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God. —Colossians 3:17*

Dear Church,

As you gather this Thanksgiving season with friends and family—whether they be relatives, family in Christ, or chosen family—I want to express my deep gratitude to each congregation and individual for your support and commitment to participating in God’s mission of love for a world in need. Through prayer, presence, and financial gifts, your generous support has allowed the La Crosse Area Synod to accomplish so much this year. I am continually inspired by the way you live the call to cultivate life-giving relationships rooted in God’s love.

Your mission dollars, added to other congregations, mean that together we support:

- Lutheran Campus Ministries, where students find welcome and a place to ask questions about life, meaning and purpose.
- Congregations in time of pastoral transition, challenge, and celebration.
- First Call Theological Education, to assure our first call pastors feel supported and equipped in their new calls.
- Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin as they offer direct care for our neighbors in need so they might thrive.
- Global companions of Peru and the Czech Republic
- Support to churchwide for Directors of Evangelical Mission (including Pastor Dione Stepanek), ELCA World Hunger, Youth Gathering, and missionaries and so much more!

Our shared contributions between synod and ELCA churchwide amplify our impact. United in giving, we extend our reach, touching even more lives. Together, our efforts embody the spirit of being church together.

And we remember our broader mission through congregations and individuals that

Continued

Message from Bishop Malpica continued here...

make direct impact in your communities. We see this across in our synod with local outreach programs, community service projects, and partnerships with neighborhood organizations as you live out and witness to “God’s work, our hands.”

You and your generosity make this possible, and it’s why I’m thankful for you.

But why do we do what we do?

Why do we invest our time, talent and treasure in this endeavor of church?

The answer lies in the transformative power of God’s love for the world through Jesus. We love because God first loved us and calls us to live this love in all we do and say. Our lives are a witness to this.

The church’s mission is driven by the belief that through Jesus, lives are changed, hope is restored, and love is shared with the world. We are called together to be the church, to be the hands and feet of Christ in our communities, and to share God's love with a world in need.

Thank you again, not just for your generosity, but for your steadfast faith and unwavering commitment to the work we do together. Your love and actions are a reflection of Christ's light in our world.

Merciful God, we thank you for the fellowship and generosity within our Synod. Bless our gifts and efforts that they may bring hope and love where it's most needed. In gratitude and joy, we serve in the name of Jesus. Amen.

## **BISHOP MALPICA AT HCLC**

Hear more from Bishop Malpica when he joins us for worship on **January 14** at both the 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. services! Let’s offer him a warm HCLC welcome!

## CHRISTMAS SERVICES PLANNED

### Oh Come Let Us Adore Him!

*Join us this season as we celebrate the birth of our Savior. All are welcome!*



**Christmas Program & Worship**  
Sunday, December 17 at 10:00 a.m.

**Christmas Eve Services**  
Sunday, December 24 at 10:00 a.m.  
and 4:00 p.m.

**December 31 Worship**  
10:00 a.m.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

### December

**3** – first Sunday of Advent;  
930 a.m. Youth Gathering meeting;  
6 p.m. 4H mtg  
**14**– 6 p.m. Vision Board meeting  
**17** – 10 a.m. Christmas Program  
**21** – 9:30 a.m. Bible Study  
**24**– 10 a.m. & 4 p.m. Christmas Eve  
services; No Sunday School  
**31** – 10 a.m. Worship; No Sunday  
School

### January 2024

**7** - 6 p.m. 4H mtg  
**11** – 6 p.m. Vision Board meeting  
**14** – Bishop Malpica at HCLC worship  
**18** – 9:30 a.m. Bible Study  
**21** - Sugar Creek Sunday at HCLC

### February

**4** – Annual Meeting, Cemetery Meeting  
**14** – Ash Wednesday

## BIBLE STUDY

Join us for Bible Study group on Thursday, December 21 at 9:30 a.m. We'll be discussing chapter 8 of Unafraid by Adam Hamilton.

Halfway Creek Lutheran Church  
608-526-3701  
[www.halfwaycreek.org](http://www.halfwaycreek.org)

**WORSHIP**

8:30 and 10:30 a.m.  
Education Hour 9:30 a.m.

**OFFICE HOURS**

**Monday—By Appointment**

**Tuesday—9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.**

**Wednesday—9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.**

**Thursday—9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.**

**Friday—Closed**

**Saturday—Closed**

**Sunday—Worship**

**PASTORAL CARE**

If the need arises for Pastoral Care,  
please contact Pastor Chris at  
608-526-3701 or 608-397-1578.

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

Find us on Facebook, Instagram,  
YouTube and our website

@halfwaycreeklutheranchurchholmen  
#halfwaycreeklutheranchurch  
#reachoutsharechristwithall

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