*Pl*easant Valley Lutheran Church
W2450 Cty, Rd. WW
Eleva WI 54738

*"That all May come, Serving all the People of God"*
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*Church Secretary: Teresa Johnson – Cell: 608-751-8836*
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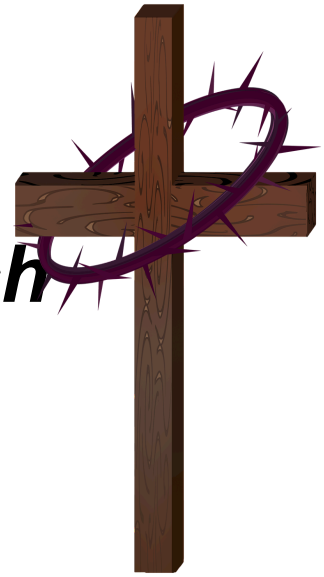
# ***Pleasant Valley Lutheran Church***



## DECEMBER Newsletter 2025

## BISHOP HALOM'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE: WHEN GOD SHOWS UP

As we approach the season of Christmas that so many of us adore, I'd like to address a few churchy words that theologians like to use and sound impressive when using them. The first word is *incarnation* and the second is *Emmanuel*.

If your church uses the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), you will again hear the passage from the first chapter of John on Christmas Day. The passage famously concludes in verse 14 with the words, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us…" This verse speaks directly to the concept of incarnation. In other words, it speaks to a God who literally takes on human flesh and enters this world in the form of baby Jesus. It's in stark contrast to what some believe and experience - a God who exists far away, only to look down on us from God's heavenly throne. Instead, the incarnate God speaks to a God who is willing to take on the human experience with all the joys and sorrows that come with it. One can readily see that Jesus did indeed make his way through the human experience. He felt joy. He felt pain. His eyes teared up. And even if I can't recall a story when he laughed, I gotta believe that he really did!

Another passage found in the Christmas season comes from the gospel of Matthew, which references Isaiah 7:14: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us.'" One of the most important lessons I ever learned in seminary was in a pastoral care class. I had hoped to learn what to say, especially to someone hurting or grieving. What I learned was much more important. Instead of learning what to say, I was taught to show up - to be present. As time passes, few will remember what I say, but will remember that I was there. That's precisely why the name *Emmanuel* means so much to me. It's a constant reminder that God is always with us. Consider the final words in the gospel of Matthew: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b) Presence matters because God embodies it and teaches it.

Christmas is known for its gift giving nature. We share gifts with one another to reveal our love for them. This year, I hope that regardless of the quantity or quality of the wrapped presents that lay under the tree, you will recognize the gift of presence. Not only the presence of your loved ones, but particularly the presence of God. So many of you will grieve as you experience the lack of presence from a loved one due to death or distance. My heart grieves with you. My hope lies in a God who provides and will gift you all with someone who will be present with you in some way at some time. If nothing else, remember God's presence as you receive the body and blood of Christ in the worship services that you attend, for that's yet another way in which God shows up.

Fellow disciples, Merry Christmas to you all and may the presence of God incarnate, Emmanuel, embrace you in such a way that brings warmth to your heart!

Bishop Martin

## Pleasant Valley Lutheran Church Council Minutes

**November 2, 2025**

The meeting was called to order by President Dwight Sands at 10:17 A.M. A prayer was led by Dave Vlcek. A motion was made by Dave with a second by Rhonda to approve the secretary's minutes and the treasurer's report as presented. Motion carried.

**Education Update:** The Sunday school children will present their Christmas program on Sunday, December 14 during the regular worship service at 9:00 A.M.

**Worship Update:** Lauren Vaske from Sharing the Dream will not be presenting on Sunday, Nov. 9. Pastor Dave Sands will lead a Thanksgiving service on Tuesday, November 25 in the park at 5:30 P.M. Rhonda will check with Art and Stephanie about providing music. Dwight is willing to donate some venison hotdogs and brats. We also have some hotdogs from the Fall Bazaar and other food items (condiments, chips, cookies, and hot chocolate) for a light supper.

We do not have a pastor to lead worship services on Nov. 16 and Dec. 14.

**Old Business:**

~Pastoral contract is still a work in progress. It was suggested that we pay the pastor $50 to teach confirmation on the weeks that he is not contracted.

~Fall cleaning continues to be a work in progress.

~Christmas Eve Worship service will be led by Pastor Sands. Time of service to be determined.

**New Business:**
~Chairs for the Sunday School area - A motion was made by Dwight with a second by Marty to budget up to $1000 to purchase a dozen padded chairs. Motion carried. Thrivent supported our Fall Bazaar to buy new chairs. Roxie will do some research on the type of chair to purchase.

**Mission Offerings:**
December - Feed My People
January - Natalie Evenson - local woman recovering from a major stroke.

A motion to adjourn was made by Roxie with a second from Rhonda. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:16 A.M. and closed with the Lord's Prayer.
The next council meeting will be on Wednesday, December 3 at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by,
Kay Sands

Members Present: Roxie Ulness, Dwight Sands, Dave Vlcek, Marty Johnson ,Rhonda Hoverson and Kay Sands

**Treasurer's Report:**

Summary of Offering and Expenses

| | YTD | September | October | November |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Offering /Misc | $41,708.51 | $7,013.14 | $4,202.27 | $2,485.51 |
| Expenses | $32,604.42 | $3,030.40 | $3,537.99 | $3,131.07 |

Offering Over Expenses - Sept - $3,952.74
Offering Over Expenses - Oct - $664.28
Offering Under Expenses - Nov - $645.56
Offering Over Expenses – Y-T-D: $8,629,25

**Mission Offerings:**
Sept - Mondovi Backpack Lunch Program - $186.00
Oct - Agnes' Table - $325.00
Nov - Monovie Food Pantry

**Memorials:**
Building Fund:
In memory of Joann Lehman, from Randy & Kay Sands
In memory of Joann Lehman, from Jean Hagen
In memory of Jim Charpentier, brother-in-law, from Joan Timm
In memory of Jim Charpentier, uncle, from Gary & Rhonda Hoverson

**Interested in online giving - go to the church website and click on **"Give Online Now".**

**Praise Team News**
The Praise Team has been invited to play at the memorial service for Ruth Poore on December 6. The group will play in worship at Pleasant Valley at 9 am on December 28, and will lead worship at 6:30 pm on December 25 and 28 at Chippewa Valley Correctional Treatment Facility (CVCTF) at 6:30 pm. Practices will be held on Wednesdays at 6:30pm.

**Sharing the Dream in Guatemala (STDG) News**
Lauren Vaske, Executive Director of STDG, reported on the students for which Pleasant Valley is providing scholarships. Keyla will be graduating from high school so will no longer need a scholarship. Heber will continue on with at least one more year of high school. Lauren indicated if Pleasant would like to continue providing two scholarships, she will notify us when she identifies a second student.

**H3 (Holy, Happy and Healthy)**
H3 meets at 9:30 am on Tuesdays at Immanuel Lutheran in Eau Claire and on Zoom. The group is reading the book "Way of Love" by Norman Wirzba. Contact Kim Vlcek for more information.

**RUTH (Rural Unity Through Hope)**
Members of RUTH had a display at the Whitehall Community Library's Lantern Walk on November 13. Deb is investigating the possibility of moving a house in Whitehall for temporary housing for those relocating after incarceration. Funding would be required to move, repair, furnish, and maintain the property, as well as to buy the lot and pay taxes. Work has begun to create a website for RUTH. There has been discussion about RUTH donating fruit trees to the community garden site being planned in Independence. Fifty-eight IV Hoodies have been given. In June, the Black River Falls Fire Station was the site of a bed build at which 48 beds were completed for Sleep in Heavenly Peace. A week will be designated for RUTH to receive donations for Randy's Round-Up in Whitehall. Local food pantry dates were shared with Jim Huber of the Luke 3:11 Project and he will be there to give out warm clothing to visitors. The next meeting is Monday, January 26, 2026 at 6:30 pm at Peace Lutheran, Pigeon Falls and on Zoom. Contact Kim Vlcek for more information about RUTH.

## W/ELCA News

The dates for the NW Synod of Wisconsin Women's Retreat have been changed to June 29-30, 2026. The event site is Luther Park in Chetek. Note it will be held on Monday and Tuesday, a change from previous years. The next W/ELCA Triennial Gathering is scheduled for July 16-19, 2026 in Des Moines, Iowa. Make plans to attend. More information is available at https://www.womenoftheelca.org/new-triennial-event-page

## IV Hoodie for You

Are you receiving IV treatments, or do you know of someone who is? Then you or that person can receive an IV Hoodie …free of charge! An IV Hoodie has a zipper in the sleeve or in the chest for a port to help make treatments more comfortable. Monetary donations are welcome. If you'd like more information please call or text Ellen Hauser at 715-797-4354.

**Thanks to our visiting Pastors and members this month who helped with worship.**

Pastor David Sands

Jeremiah Segerstrom

Art Syth

Kim Vclek

## Announcements:

- ★ Please pick up the updated Phone Tree list.
- ★ Sunday, Dec. 14th Sunday School Christmas program during the worship service.
- ★ Bring donations for the **Hat and Mitten Tree**
- ★ Confirmation Wednesdays at 6:00
- ★ Praise Team practice Wednesdays.
- ★ Let Teresa know if there are any announcements you would like included in the bulletin..

## TEXTS FOR DECEMBER

**December 7:**

- Isaiah 11:1-10
- Romans 15:4-13
- Matthew 3:1-12
- Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

**December 14:**

- Isaiah 35:1-10
- James 5:7-10
- Matthew 11:2-11
- Psalm 146:4-9

**December 21:**

- Isaiah 7:10-16
- Romans 1:1-7
- Matthew 1:18-25
- Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18

**December 25:**

- Isaiah 9:2-7
- Titus 2:11-14
- Luke 2:1-14(15-20)
- Psalm 96

**December 28 :**

- Isaiah 61:10-62:3
- Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7
- John 1:1-18
- Psalm 147 or 147:13-21

**From our Mailbox**

We are excited to share that **Summer Camp 2025 registration opens December 1st!** We are looking forward to another meaningful summer of faith, community, and outdoor ministry with your young people.

As we prepare for registration, we are asking **all congregations to use registration codes this year** for any amount you plan to support your campers with (whether it's $25, a percentage, or the full cost).

**Using a code helps us:**

- Track which campers are connected to each congregation
- Ensure campers receive the correct discounts accurately and easily
- Streamline billing and communication for your church and our office

This is *by far* the simplest and most efficient system for everyone. Please ask your administrators for the code.

Online Brochure

Thank you for the many ways you support this ministry and your young people. We are grateful to partner with you and look forward to welcoming your campers to a beautiful summer at Luther Park.

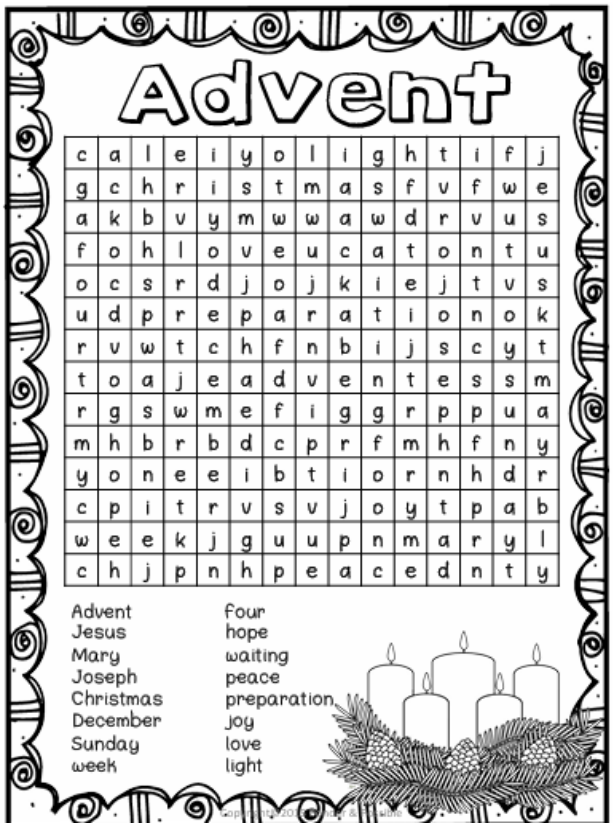
Peace and joy,

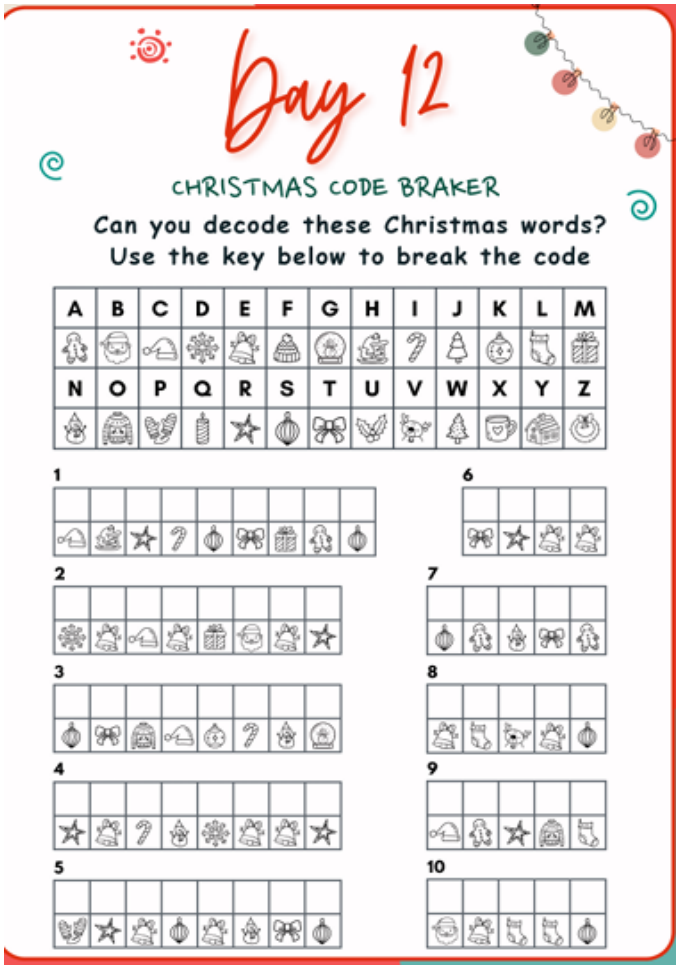
**Eric Klein <><**

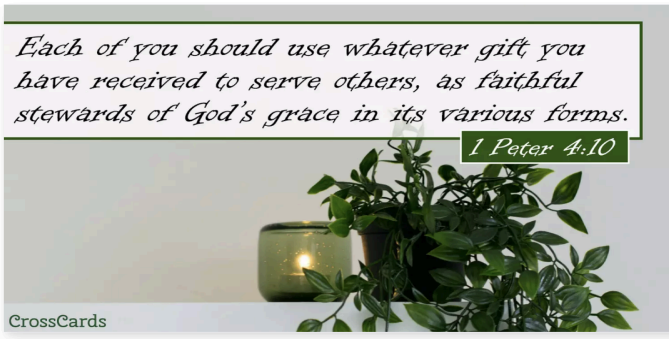
***he, him, his***
**Executive Director**
**Luther Park Bible Camp | Chetek, WI**
**(715) 859-2215 ext. 13**

**WE INVITE PRAYERS FOR:**

**Calling of a new Pastor for our church**
**Maureen (Preeny) Kuhn-**Kay Sands sister-in-law
**David (Red) McElwanie**
**Dave Hainz-** Healing- Teresa Johnson's brother-in-law
**Jim Johnson**-healing from surgery-Marty's dad
**Kari-**Healing
**Sadie Hoverson Odegard-** healing at home
**Sandy Schuh-**healing
**Sharon Hazen**
**Barb Anderson** (Chad's wife)- Cancer
**Nicki Vlcek**
**Karen Voss**
**Katie (Lammers) Household**
**Maria**
**Lyle**
**Chris - Kathy Tweets grandson**
**Sharon Anderson-** Healing
**Alice-**Art's mother-in-law-healing
**Barb-**Steph's friend
**Joy -**Kathy T. daughter
**Tanner-** Hodgkins
**Tony-** waiting for kidney transplant
**Randy Walker-** fighting cancer
**Joan Timm-** healing
**Guy Patrow –** Tested positive for ALS
**Karl Bahr –** continued healing
**Duane Vlcek and Ayla Hakes and family**
**Lisa & Glen-**Fostering children
**All our service men and women**:
**Alex Bauer-** now stationed in Virginia
**Middle East**
**Guatemala**
**Ukraine**
**Shelby Cole and family** - missionaries living in France
**Keyla & Heber** - the Sharing the Dream recipients, students in Guatemala
**Men incarcerated at CVCTF** and **Chaplain Hull**
**All those who are missing a loved one:** The family of Ruth Poore
**Those on our visiting list:** Gary and Sharon Hazen, Sandy Schuch, Sadie Hoverson Odegard




## Opportunities to Serve

Feel free to sign up for a single week or a full month. Expectations of opportunities have been developed. The expectations are placed near the area to be served.

| 2025/2026 | DECEMBER | JANUARY | FEBRUARY |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Communion Set-up** | 12/7 -12/28<br>Roxie | 1/4<br>1/11<br>1/18<br>1/25 | 2/1<br>2/8<br>2/15<br>2/22 |
| **Communion Server** | 12/7-12/28<br>Roxie | 1/4<br>1/11<br>1/18<br>1/25 | 2/1<br>2/8<br>2/15<br>2/22 |
| **Usher** | 12/7<br>12/14<br>12/21<br>12/28 | 1/4<br>1/11<br>1/18<br>1/25 | 2/1<br>2/8<br>2/15<br>2/22 |
| **Reader** | 12/7 Roxie<br>12/14 Marty and Teresa Johnson<br>12/21 Roxie<br>12/24 Marty/Teresa<br>12/28 Marty/Teresa | 1/4<br>1/11<br>1/18<br>1/25 | 2/1<br>2/8<br>2/15<br>2/22 |
| **Church Cleaning** | 12/7 -12/28<br>Sharon | 1/4<br>1/11<br>1/18<br>1/25 | 2/1<br>2/8<br>2/15<br>2/22 |
| **Serve refreshments** | 12/7 Teresa<br>12/14 Teresa<br>12/21<br>12/28 Teresa | 1/4<br>1/11<br>1/18<br>1/25 | 2/1<br>2/8<br>2/15<br>2/22 |

# Opportunities to Serve our Community

There are many ways to stay connected in our community and extended rural areas: Many organizations need volunteers. Please sign up ONLINE; many will not take drop in help. If you have any interest to help out or ask questions, you can call Marianna at 715-828-2185 (cell), email: Marianna.gilbertson@gmail.com or go online to view the websites.

| Agency | Activity/Program | Contact |
|---|---|---|
| **The Community Table(TCT)** | The Community Table has been nourishing hungry bodies and spirits in the Eau Claire Community by serving one meal each day, 365 days a year on a no-questions asked basis. Anyone can join our table during meal time. | TJ Atkins director<br>email at marketing@thecommunitytable.org OR<br>https://communitytable.org/ |
| **Feed My People Food Bank (FMPFB)**<br>Our volunteers make our mission possible. Because of their dedication, grit, and passion, they're connecting folks to much-needed food through thick and thin | Feed My People rescues nationally and regionally donated food from manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, and growers that might otherwise be thrown away. We welcome individuals and groups to come volunteer at the food bank. Opportunities include packing emergency food bags, repacking bulk products, and picking orders for our food pantry partners. | Learn more and sign up through our volunteer portal.<br>**Did you know we have regular group volunteer opportunities on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays?** Your group of 6-15 people can help us pack food from 9-11 am and 1-3 pm. Email Ken at ken@fmpfoodbank.org to get started. |
| **Inclusive Ministry Church** | A church experience where you are welcomed with abilities and disabilities, just as you | See their facebook page for more information. |
| **Beacon House** | A group of congregations in Eau Claire County collaborated together to support families in our community who were homeless. | https://www.familypromisecv.org/?utm<br> <br>_source=beacon-house.org |
| **Sleep In Heavenly Peace** | A group of volunteers dedicated to building, assembling and delivering single beds or bunk beds to children and families in need. | https://shpbeds.org/chapter/wi-chippewa-valley/ |
| **Respite for All** | Provides training for congregations to launch this outreach ministry and it offers ongoing support and mentoring. | www.respiteforall.org |
| **Chippewa Valley Habitat For Humanity (CVHFH)** | Christian non-denominational organization whose mission is “to put God's love into action by bringing people together to build homes, communities and hope.” | Habitat Affiliate Manager, Elizabeth, elizabeth@cvh4h.org or 715-833-8993 Or<br>Use this ***link*** ***today*** and take a look at the volunteer opportunities! |
| **Neighbor to Neighbor** | Is organized by Deacon Lidixe Montoya. church about N2N and how we can help or understand our Latin Speaking neighbors. | https://nwswi.org/neighbor-to-neighbor |
| **American Red Cross** | Volunteers Urgently Needed | www.redcross.org/volunteer.<br>Contact:<br>volunteerwisconsin@redcross.org for any questions regarding opportunities. |
| **Volunteer Wisconsin** | One-stop site connecting nonprofits in need of help with people who can are interested in volunteering | Click here for a full list of every organization currently looking for volunteers. Then, click on “Filters” at the top to sort the openings by city, interest, agency, age range, or about 20 different factors. After doing so, you’ll be left with a list of opportunities. |
| **Agnes' Table** | Monday, Wednesday or Friday from 8am to 12pm. Up to 3-4 volunteers at 1 time, preferably 1 shift. The tasks range from: serving breakfast, helping unload food rescue, restocking our pantry, cleaning jobs or meal prep for the next day. | https://www.agnestable.org/ |

# DECEMBER 2025

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3<br>6:00 Church Council<br>6:00 Confirmation<br>6:30 Praise Team Practice | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7<br>9:00 am Worship<br>10:00am Coffee & Fellowship<br>*LEADER: Dave Sands | 8 | 9<br>H3 meets 9:30 am at Immanuel Lutheran in Eau Claire and on Zoom | 10<br>6:00 Confirmation<br>6:30 Praise Team Practice | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14<br>9:00 am Sunday School program<br><br>10:00am Coffee & Fellowship<br>*PASTOR: Dave Sands | 15 | 16<br>H3 meets 9:30 am at Immanuel Lutheran in Eau Claire and on Zoom | 17<br>Confirmation<br>6:30 Praise Team Practice | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21<br>9:00 am Worship<br>10:00am Coffee & Fellowship<br>*PASTOR/Leader: | 22 | 23<br>H3 meets 9:30 am at Immanuel Lutheran in Eau Claire and on Zoom | 24<br>Christmas Eve Worship Service<br>*PASTOR: Dave Sands<br> | 25<br>Christmas Day<br> | 26 | 27 |
| 28<br>9:00 am Praise Team Worship Service in Church 10:00am Coffee & Fellowship 6:30pm Praise Team leads worship at CVCTF<br>LEADER: Jeremiah Segerstrom | 29 | 30 | 31<br> | 1<br> | 2 | 3 |