*Pl*easant Valley Lutheran Church
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"That all May come, Serving all the People of God"
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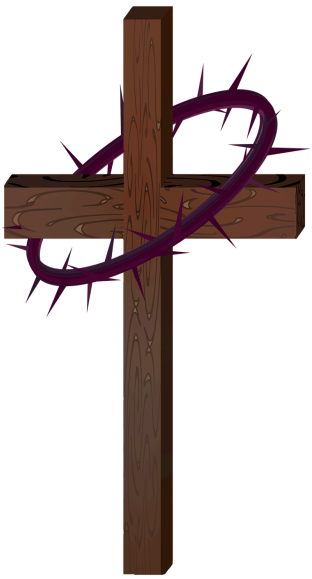
Pleasant Valley Lutheran Church

JANUARY Newsletter 2026



A message from Rev. Yehiel Curry, *the ELCA presiding bishop. His email address is bishop@elca.org.*

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? (Isaiah 43:19).

What does it mean to wait with hope? The upcoming months will be filled with great hope. We have the hope of Advent, the promise of Christmas and the excitement of a new year and all the possibilities it offers. We also have the Lenten journey that guides us toward continued hope in the risen Christ at Easter. But we shouldn't focus on a specific date, as if we're expecting something to happen at a certain time. Instead we wait for something more meaningful, more profound. We hope for a deeper awareness of God's presence among us.

I want to return to that first place of hope: the birth of Jesus in Judea, a place I had the privilege of visiting two years ago as part of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with the Metropolitan Chicago and Florida-Bahamas synods.

This trip navigated through much of the Gospels, from Bethlehem to Nazareth, from Capernaum to Jerusalem, among others. Throughout the journey, I wondered what Peter had felt when Jesus said, "Come, follow me." I tried to imagine Paul's emotions along the road to Damascus as he heard Jesus' call to a new life, not as a prosecutor but as an apostle. Now, as I look back at that time, I hope and pray for a lasting peace for the people of the Holy Land, Palestinian and Israeli alike, as they embark on their own journey through an uncertain future.

That's where we find ourselves today and always. God continually reminds us that tomorrow is not for us to know about until it unfolds before us. The journey I am talking about is not from Advent to Christmas or from Epiphany to Lent. Instead it's the journey we have been called upon to take together. If you had asked me six months ago whether I would be writing to you today as your presiding bishop, I would have said it is not for me to decide but God's will.

In Isaiah, we read, "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?" (43:19). This new thing isn't a new beginning—not for a church that has been around for nearly 40 years, for a faith tradition more than 500 years old, defined by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who was born in a manger more than two thousand years ago. Instead it's a chance to remind ourselves that we are one church, connected in the call to share the "good news of great joy" with all the people.

We are a church dedicated to the work of justice and peace, hope and renewal, love and grace. And right there, that word comes forth, tied to everything else: hope. We hope for greater justice in this world and peace for all humanity. We hope for renewal in God's salvation; we hope to love and be loved. In other words, hope is not a novel idea born out of wishes but a constant relearning of the grace and mercy God has given us, time after time after time.

In the coming months, I look forward to affirming this hope, both in myself and in you. I pray we can continue to be a church that listens deeply, loves generously and serves our neighbor with justice. I am excited to connect with you through *Living Lutheran*, in new videos we share online, in resources shared with your congregations and synods, and in person.

May this time of waiting be one of awakening. May we perceive the new thing God is doing, all over again. And may we walk together, rooted in hope, reaching toward what God is unfolding.

A message from the ELCA presiding bishop. His email address is bishop@elca.org.

Pleasant Valley Lutheran Church Council Minutes

December 3, 2025

The meeting was called to order by President Dwight Sands at 6:35 P.M.

Stephanie Kuehl attended the meeting to share some plans for the funeral of Ruth Poore. She has personally signed up for a trial subscription to Google Workspace. This will allow her to livestream Ruth's funeral and the Sunday School Christmas program. This will give us an opportunity to see if we have a need for Google Workspace in the future.

A motion from Marty with a second from Roxie was made to approve the secretary's minutes and the treasurer's report as presented. Motion carried.

Education Update: A Thrivent card will be used to help with expenses related to the Sunday School Christmas program. It will be held during the 9:00 A.M. worship service on December 14. The final rehearsal and party will be held on Friday, December 12. Rhonda is assisting Corissa Sands with the preparations.

Worship Update: We have no one to lead worship on Dec. 21. Marty will contact Art Syth and Kim Vlcek.

Property Update: No report

Old Business:
~Pastoral contract - A contract proposal was given to Pastor Dave Sands for his consideration.
~Fall cleaning - still a work in progress
~Christmas Eve Service will be at 6:30 P.M. with Pastor Dave Sands leading the service.
~New chairs for the Sunday School area are still being researched.

New Business:
~Ministry profile - Stephanie Kuehl has reposted it in its original form.
~Church Ministry Plan for 2026 (budget) - tabled until Jan. meeting.
~Nomination committee - we will have 2 openings on council.
~Annual Meeting - January 25, 2026 following the worship service.
~Sharing the Dream scholarships - $440 per student. One of our two students, Keyla, is graduating. This will be considered when the Church Ministry Plan for 2026 is proposed.
~Caroling/Poinsettias for shut-ins - Kay will purchase them in time for the Praise Team to deliver. Date and time to be announced.
~Lift inspection - Dwight will contact Access Elevator in La Crosse about the NEIS inspection.

Other:
The council would like to acknowledge and thank Crystal Sands for making and donating 16 quilts for the Tomah VAMC. Pastor Dave Sands recently blessed the quilts during a worship service and Crystal delivered the well received quilts to the hospital.

Attendance at Luther Park Bible Camp will be required for the confirmation students. Registration is open now to receive an Early Bird discount. Pleasant Valley Lutheran Church will financially support the students attending. The details and fund raising events will be discussed further at the next council meeting.

Mission Offerings:
December - Feed My People
January - Natalie Evenson
February - Jill Anderson

The next council meeting will be on January 7, 2026 at 6:00 P.M. A motion was made by Rhonda with a second from Marty to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by,
Kay Sands

Members present: Roxie Ulness, Dwight Sands, Marty Johnson, Rhonda Hoverson and Kay Sands

Treasurer's Report:

Summary of Offering and Expenses

	YTD	October	November	December
Offering /Misc	$54,385.19	$4,202.27	$3,288.49	$4,223.00
Expenses	$45,052.29	$3,537.99	$3,671.53	3,675.87

Offering Over Expenses - Oct - $664.28
Offering Under Expenses - Nov - $383.04
Offering Over Expenses - Dec - $547.13
Offering Over Expenses – Y-T-D: $9,332.90

Mission Offerings:
Nov - Mondovi Food Pantry-306.00
Dec - Feed My People - $285.00

Memorials:
In memory of Ruth Poore:

Praise Team:
From Dale & Sharon Anderson
From Dan & Nola Herzberg

Luther Park Scholarships & Caring Ministry:
From John & Christine Tinker
From Art Syth
From Francis & Sandy Krueger
From Marilyn Wendt
From Ruthann Rasmussen

Lift Fund
From Larry & Crystal Sands

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

Praise Team News
The Praise Team 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 6:30 pm.

Sharing the Dream in Guatemala (STDG) News
Lauren Vaske, Executive Director of STDG, reported on the students for which Pleasant Valley is providing scholarships. A correction from last month's article. Keyla has one more year left in high school and Heber will continue in high school in 2026. You can find more information about Sharing the Dream in Guatemala on their website: https://www.sharingthedream.org/

H3 (Holy, Happy and Healthy)
H3 will resume meeting every Tuesday at 9:30 am at Immanuel Lutheran in Eau Claire and on Zoom. The group will begin a new book "A Beautiful Year" by Diana Butler Bass. Contact Kim Vlcek for more information.

RUTH (Rural Unity Through Hope)
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

Aaron Athas

Kim Vclek

Announcements:

★ Please do not forget to pick up the communication tree in case of bad weather or activate a prayer chain. Let Teresa know if you need to be added or any corrections needed to be made.

★ Annual Church Reports Due **ASAP**. I need to put all reports together by **January 11th** for member review before January 25th.

★ January 25th Annual Church Meeting

★ **Luther Park Bible Summer Camp 2026 registration is open.** Registration is online this year.

★ Bring donations for the **Hat and Mitten Tree**

★ Praise Team practice Wednesdays at 6:30.

★ Let Teresa know if there are any announcements you would like included in the bulletin; Friday before Sunday Worship.

Mission offerings:

★ January - Natalie Evenson - local woman recovering from a major stroke.

★ February - Jill Anderson

TEXTS FOR JANUARY

January 4:

- Jeremiah 31:7-14
- Ephesians 1:3-6,15-19a
- Matthew 2:13-15,19-23
- or Luke 2:41-52
- or Matthew 2:1-12
- Psalm 84 or 84:1-8

January 11:

- Isaiah 42:1-9
- Acts 10:34-43
- Matthew 3:13-17
- Psalm 29

January 18:

- Isaiah 49:1-7
- 1 Corinthians 1:1-9
- John 1:29-42
- Psalm 40:1-12

January 25:

- Isaiah 9:1-4
- 1 Corinthians 1:10-18
- Matthew 4:12-23
- Psalm 27:1, 5-13

From our Mailbox

Cyber fraud is on the upswing this week. Churches in Marshfield and Eau Claire have especially been affected by scammers both via email and TEXT message. Please know that your pastor isn't requesting gift cards with the backs scratched off, that your pastor hasn't changed their contact information and they should be vigilant on checking the email address from those persons imitating your trusted leaders.

Blessings to you!

Elizabeth Bartsch
Assistant to the Bishop-Administration

Dear Member Congregation Leaders,

In accordance with Luther Park Bible Camp's Constitution, Section C7.01, this message serves as the official sixty-day notice of the **2026 Annual Meeting of the Luther Park Corporation**. Details are as follows:

Date: February 7th, 2026
Time: 9:30 AM coffee and pastries, 10:00 AM meeting start, Lunch following meeting
Location: Ministry Center at Luther Park Bible Camp *(we will no longer be live streaming)*

This notice is being delivered to each member congregation and posted online at lutherpark.org, fulfilling the constitutional requirement for advance notice.

Dear congregations,

The NWSWI Creation Care Team is putting together a synod-wide video celebrating the many ways our congregations are caring for God's creation. From community gardens to energy-saving upgrades, recycling ministries, outdoor worship, composting efforts, native plantings, advocacy, or educational programs—we want to highlight the good work already happening across our synod.

We're asking each congregation to send us:

- **Short video clips** and/or
- **Photos** of your creation care activities, events, or projects

Deadline: ***January 15, 2026***

How to submit: Email files or a shared-drive link to ***admin@elcbateman.org***.

Our goal is to create an inspiring video that lifts up our collective commitment to care for creation and encourages others to join in this vital work. Thank you for helping us tell this story!
If you have questions or need help capturing a video or photo, please reach out—we're happy to assist.

With gratitude for your ministry,
NWSWI Creation Care Team

The Synod Creation Care team wants to extend an invitation to anyone in your congregation who is interested in Creation Care to attend their next meeting on January 21st at 1 p.m.
The Zoom Code and Meeting ID is below. Please pass this along to your congregation members or your green team members. Thanks so much!
The meeting ID is 811 4473 3838
Passcode 739625
****

If you have any photos you would like to submit to the newsletter email them to:
pleasantvalleylutheranchurch@gmail.com
"Subject newsletter photos"

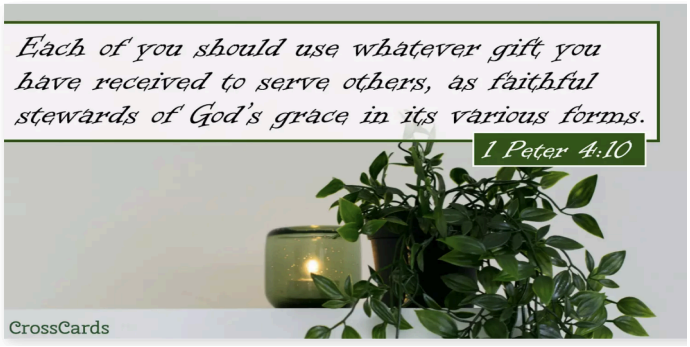
Super Moon over church with deer. Submitted by Marty Johnson

WE INVITE PRAYERS FOR:

WE INVITE PRAYERS FOR:

Calling of a new Pastor for our church
Beth Stoddard- hospital
Dave Hainz- Teresa's bother-in-law
Maureen (Preeny) Kuhn-Kay Sands sister-in-law
David (Red) McElwanie
Jim Johnson-healing -Marty's dad
Kari-Healing
Sadie Hoverson Odegard- healing at home
Sandy Schuh-healing
Sharon Hazen
Barb Anderson (Chad's wife)- Cancer
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
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** and **Lenny Odegard**
Those on our visiting list: Gary and Sharon Hazen, Sandy Schuch, Sadie Hoverson Odegard

It's a New Year and a great time to help out your church family. Please consider helping our worship and fellowship time go smoothly:) There is no age limit from young to wise. Please see below the opportunities that we have. Thanks.



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	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
Communion Set-up	1/4 1/11 1/18 1/25	2/1 2/8 2/15 2/22	3/1 3/8 3/15 3/22 3/29
Communion Server	1/4 1/11 1/18 1/25	2/1 2/8 2/15 2/22	3/1 3/8 3/15 3/22 3/29
Usher	1/4 1/11 1/18 1/25	2/1 2/8 2/15 2/22	3/1 3/8 3/15 3/22 3/29
Reader	1/4 Marty 1/11 1/18 1/25	2/1 2/8 2/15 2/22	3/1 3/8 3/15 3/22 3/29
Church Cleaning	1/4 1/11 1/18 1/25	2/1 2/8 2/15 2/22	3/1 3/8 3/15 3/22 3/29
Serve refreshments	1/4 Teresa 1/11 1/18 1/25	2/1 2/8 2/15 2/22	3/1 3/8 3/15 3/22 3/29

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 email at marketing@thecommunitytable.org OR https://communitytable.org/
Feed My People Food Bank (FMPFB) 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. **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 _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 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. Contact: 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/

JANUARY 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4 9:00 am Worship 10:00am Coffee & Fellowship *PASTOR: Dave Sands	5	6 H3 meets 9:30 am at Immanuel Lutheran in Eau Claire and on Zoom	7 6:00 Confirmation 6:30 Praise Team Practice	8	9	10
11 9:00 am Worship 10:00am Coffee & Fellowship 10:00am Coffee & Fellowship *PASTOR: Bonnie Isaacson	12	13 H3 meets 9:30 am at Immanuel Lutheran in Eau Claire and on Zoom	14 6:00Confirmation 6:30 Praise Team Practice	15	16	17
18 9:00 am Worship 10:00am Coffee & Fellowship *PASTOR: Dave Sands	19 MLK DAY 	20 H3 meets 9:30 am at Immanuel Lutheran in Eau Claire and on Zoom	21 Creation Care: To attend their next meeting at 1 p.m. Meeting ID: 811 4473 3838 Passcode 739625 6:00 Confirmation 6:30 Praise Team Practice	22	23	24
25 9:00 am Praise Team Worship Service in Church 10:00am Coffee, Fellowship & ANNUAL MEETING 6:30pm Praise Team leads worship at CVCTF LEADER: Jeremiah Segerstrom	26	27 H3 meets 9:30 am at Immanuel Lutheran in Eau Claire and on Zoom	28 6:00 Confirmation 6:30 Praise Team Practice	29	30	31