



# The Messenger

July 2023

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

A member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## Confirmation Camp at Pine Lake

*"Hear, my child, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck" (Proverbs 1:8-9).*



I felt God's presence strongly during my time at the camp. Many factors contributed to feeling God's presence strongly. The serene natural surroundings, the supportive community, the worship services, and the opportunity for reflection created an atmosphere conducive to connecting with my spirituality. I was overwhelmed by this deep experience with God.

It's truly inspiring to witness God's work in calling youth to serve at the camp. Their eagerness to assist campers in deepening their relationship with Jesus Christ is wonderful to see. Witnessing the transformative power of young people's commitment to sharing and nurturing their shared beliefs is truly remarkable and made me feel the presence of God strongly.

The first day of camp at Pine Lake proved to be an exceptional experience for the campers, primarily due to the unique Bible study session conducted on a pontoon boat. The scenic setting, enhanced focus, and communal bonding facilitated by the pontoon boat setting elevated the spiritual experience. Sharing personal faith stories inspired the youth. Furthermore, the impressive hospitality demonstrated by the camp leaders was amazing. The leaders exhibited an attentive and caring attitude toward individual campers.

JT and Braydin had a fantastic time at Pine Lake camp, where they had the opportunity to work with Rev. Seth, Matt, a youth leader from Our Savior's in Sun Prairie, Rev. Amy from St. Paul, and youth leader Jennifer from Zion Lutheran Church in Fairwater.



The collaboration between me and the leaders from Our Savior's in Sun Prairie and St. Paul's created an inclusive and engaging environment for JT, Braydin, and all the campers. The combined efforts among us contributed to a comprehensive program that catered to the spiritual and personal growth of the campers.

Rev. Seth's penchant for walking barefoot was an intriguing and distinctive aspect of the camp experience. His preference for being close to nature through barefoot walks reflected a deep connection with the environment. Youth leader Matt's involvement brought youthful energy and relatability to the camp. Matt's presence fostered a sense of friendship and peer support among the campers. I met his little son, who is quite talkative, and has an interesting imagination.



Rev. Amy's participation provided invaluable guidance and spiritual mentorship throughout the camp experience. Her wisdom, pastoral care, and passion for fostering spiritual growth inspired JT, Braydin, and the campers to delve deeper into their faith and actively engage in various activities.

Daily worship service at the old chapel was spiritually significant and very enjoyable.



(Continued on Page 2)

## Confirmation Camp at Pine Lake

(Continued from Page 1)

I was impressed by the wonderful daily worship service at Pine Lake, especially with the youth taking a leading role in the worship experience. Involving young people in worship can be a powerful way to encourage their spiritual growth, foster their leadership skills, and create a sense of community among the campers.

I was very happy to see the campers studying the bible by themselves. They engaged with each other in a meaning and respectful way.



Dressing up in costumes can bring a lot of fun and excitement, especially for children. It was great to see that the staff at Pine Lake organized such an event to feed the children and make the experience more enjoyable for them. Costumed events often create a festive atmosphere and can enhance the overall experience for everyone involved. As you see in the picture, JT is raising a card indicating the kind of food he would like to eat.



My friend Jerry visited me for a day. He and I volunteered at the canteen and had the opportunity to interact with all the children, which created a welcoming environment for everyone and fostered a sense of friendship. Additionally, Jerry and I volunteered to clean the dining room.

On the last night at the camp, campers, and staff especially, held onto a unique memory of the outdoor Light Service. It was a beautiful and meaningful way to bring closure to the camp experience. singing hymns or songs, listening to readings or speeches, and engaging in moments of silence or prayer. All were very spiritually moving to the campers. Such a service on the last night of camp can serve as a symbolic way to conclude the experience, allowing campers and staff to come together one last time before parting ways.



JT, Braydin, and I would like to go to the camp next year, and I pray that more youth will attend. Thank you for raising money so that the youth can have this amazing experience.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Dr. Niveen Ibrahim Sarras, Ph.D.



The Food Pantry has been very busy this month. We've had quite a few new people and still most of our regulars. This month we served 54 families feeding 186 people. We've gotten a new very large family, so that swells our numbers. We are desperately in need of paper products, and still need spam, dish, bar and laundry soap, sugar and Hamburger Helper. If you could help with any of these things, we would appreciate it. We do appreciate all the help we receive from you. It's surprising how many people in our community are so needy. We are very happy to be able to help. Thanks. — Karen Jordan



The



Moses



Message

Hi everyone. Hope your summer is going well!! Just be safe and have fun!! There isn't much going on except the Filthy Fun Run on July 15th at O'Hauser Park in the Village of Fox Crossing and the BIG EVENT on July 31st to August 3rd and that is VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL!! This isn't really school, but a fun way to learn more about Jesus!! So think really hard about attending and pick up a registration form in the church narthex. Also, kids in grades 6th and up, we are in need of helpers!!!! Confirmation kids, this is a good way to get those much needed community service hours. Contact the office if you are willing to help out or sign up on the volunteer sheet in the narthex. PLEASE, we need your help!!! Have a great month of July and enjoy the fireworks!!!

God blessings on all!!!!

With God's Blessings,  
Gwen Hoehne  
Sunday School Superintendent



*Design of the newly donated digital sign, which will be installed within 8-10 weeks. The current sign will be relocated on the church property (site yet to be determined).*



## Fun Things to do This Summer!

In spite of the heat and haze, there are lots of activities going on in our area that you might want to see. Joy Case has compiled the following list.

### “Pirates of Penzance”

#### Inspiration Theatre, Winneconne High School

August 3 and 4, 7:00 pm, August 5, 6:00 pm, and August 6, 2:00 pm Free Admission, but you can reserve tickets at their website.

<https://www.inspirationtheatre.org/tickets>

### Neenah Community Band Concerts

Riverside Park, 7:00 pm

July 11—Greatest Hits

July 25—To the Skies

August 1—Happy Wanderers German Band

August 8—Get up and Dance

August 15—Ambassador Dance Band

Concerts are Free. Donations Appreciated.

### Riverside Players “Theatre in the Park”

#### “All Shook Up”

Riverside Park, July 26-30

Ticket Cost: \$18 from Neenah Parks & Recreation (in person or online)

Inspired by Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, All Shook Up follows a small Midwestern town that is thrown into a frenzy with the arrival of Chad, a good-looking, motorcycle-riding roustabout with a guitar on his back, blue suede shoes on his feet and a song in his heart.



**ST. MARK'S**  
CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES  
June 15, 2023



**Present:** Laurie Olson, Pennie Linna, Mary Jane Hartley, Ryan Blank, Jason Blank, Sherri Denney, Kim Wallmuller, Jenny Case, Pastor Niveen Sarras, and Dawn Jones

**Others Present:** Judy Hellmen and Pat Westphal

**Call to order:** Meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

**Devotions:** Jenny shared a devotion. Pastor will share devotions in July.

**Approval of minutes:** Minutes from May 18, 2023. **MSC to approve Jason Blank/Pennie Linna**

**Thank yous:** Pat Westphal, Judy Hellman, and the worship and music ministry team for all the work on gathering information on the Clavinova and Organ. Ellen LaMarche for her financial donation to install digital sign.

**Financial Report:** Mary Jane summarized the financials. We are under budget at this time. Giving for May was less than May expenses. Summer typically trends toward less giving. Overall, we are still ahead.

**MSC to approve the May financial report Sherri Denney/Pennie Linna**

**Pastor's Report:**

1. Saturday, June 3, 2023. St. Mark's and Islamic Center ecumenical potluck. It was very successful. We learned about Islam and enjoyed delicious food. We had 15 women and three men from St. Mark's attend.
2. Monday, June 5, 2023, I attended the Property Ministry Team meeting to discuss the electronic sign that Ellen donated.
3. Tuesday, June 6, 2023, I attended St. Mark's Racial Equity Team meeting. We are planning to introduce the congregation to different events about Native Americans, which include visiting Oneida Nation Museum (DePere) and the Pow-Wow in Neenah in September.
4. Saturday, June 10, 2023, I officiated Sonny Koerner's memorial service.
5. Sunday, June 11-Tuesday 13, 2023, I attended the Wisconsin Missional Leadership Cohort workshop at Green Lake conference center. The next meeting will be in October 2023.
6. Wednesday, June 14, 2023, I started to teach a class about Lutheranism to new church members—Emily and Dominic.
7. Thursday, June 15, 2023, I met with my Neenah colleagues to talk about the joint worship service at Riverside Park on September 3, 2023.
8. Sunday, June 18, until Friday, June 23, 2023, I will be attending the confirmation camp at Pine Lake next week. There is no pastor to cover for me. So, I will come back in case of an emergency.
9. One of the members of St. Mark's family will soon have surgery and asked me to find a host to take care of her for five days after her surgery. I could not find anyone. I called the pastor from her home church, who has the same struggle. She contacted a rehab place to see if they could help her. She is waiting to hear from them. Her friend offered her a chance to stay a few days at her apartment in Appleton, so that is one choice. Also, what might work out is the initial 3-day stay at a local rehab place and then move to her friend's apartment. She does not have money to pay for three to five days. I promised her to bring her case to the church council. Her pastor is raising money to cover the five nights. Can we do the same? I did not make any promises to help her financially. Furthermore, this person needs someone to feed her birds and turtle when she is away from home.

**MSC to accept Pastor's report Pennie Linna/Kim Wallmuller**



**For the month of  
May 2023**

**Given: \$13,230.99**  
**Spent: \$15,780.20**

## Ministry Team Reports:

### Worship and Music Ministry Team—June 12, 2023 ~ Submitted by Judy Hellman

The Worship and Music Ministry Team met on Monday, June 12th. Members present were Pat Westphal, Lois Hill, Joy and Jenny Case, Ardys Seelow, Betty Linna and Judy Hellman.

Devotions were given by Lois Hill. Joy Case volunteered for devotions in July.

Candy bars will be given to all adult men on Father's Day. Joy Case and Mary Ellen Tracey will hand them out. Special music for the summer was discussed. At the present time, four different people have shown interest in performing.

There will be a hymn-sing on the 4th Sunday in June. Judy Hellman will be playing that day. Pat Westphal will coordinate the hymn-sing.

Our clavinova committee gave an update report on the organ/clavinova issue. At the present time, no organ repair person has been found. After visiting Heid Music, we felt that the Model 809 clavinova would be a very suitable unit for our church. It has 12 different organ stops as well as many other instruments. We were given a very reasonable price quote for this unit, which is about \$55,000 cheaper than an organ.

A donation of \$6,000 has been given to replace some of our paraments. We plan to purchase 3-piece altar sets in red, purple and green. We will also purchase a white veil and burse. We will be searching for reasonable prices for these items. We decided several colors could just be dry-cleaned.

Our next meeting will be Monday, July 15th.

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

### Property Ministry Team—June 5, 2023 ~ Submitted by Jason Blank

Members Present: Phyllis Ziemke, Joe Deckers, Sandy Deckers, Jason Blank, Ginny Schieck, Pastor Niveen

Others Present: Laurie Olson, Ellen LaMarche, Jane Arps, and John Olson

Ellen LaMarche was present to talk about the enhancement of the front sign.

### Finance and Stewardship Ministry Team – June 13, 2023 ~ submitted by Laurie Olson

Members Present: Treasurer Mary Jane Hartley, Pennie Linna, Financial Secretary Pat Westphal and Laurie Olson

Members Absent: Pastor Niveen, Jean Memken, and Evie Peterson

Opened with a Prayer.

Reviewed current account balances through end of May 2023. May's giving was \$13,230.99 and expenses were \$15,780.20. Difference was (\$2,549.21).

Total Associated Bank checking has a balance of \$178,523.85 which includes \$56,805.30 allocated to designated accounts and \$121,178.55 for current operating. Additionally, there is \$154,650.43 in the Thrivent money market and \$1,020.28 in Thrivent TIPS account and \$53,848.32 in the ELCA Mission Investment Fund.

After reviewing account balances, the Stewardship & Finance Ministry Team asked Mary Jane to move all dollars in the YOUTH COG & YOUTH TUUG accounts into the YOUTH ACTIVITIES account. It was noted that that COG & TUUG have not been active groups for many years.

A brief discussion took place regarding Laurie Olson stepping down from the church council and replacing Mary Jane Hartley as Treasurer, effective September 1, 2023. This request will be taken to the council on Thursday, June 15, 2023 for their approval.



Pat Wenzel  
Tracy Feldman  
Brett Gawlick  
Ellen LaMarche  
Sarah  
Doug Bedor  
Erin Biese  
Todd Bagley  
Pastor Chuck Flugel  
Jan Bagley  
Mary & Ron Zalewski  
Sara Forrest  
Richie Sczerzen  
Delores Jacobsen  
Tom Krempien

Mary Jane reported that we needed new deposit slip booklets (pre-printed with our account number). Our bank, Associated Bank, informed us that there would be a charge for these booklets, somewhere near \$100. It was decided to go with the free deposit slips that require us to hand write our account number and name on the slips. Additionally, we will make photo copies of the slips to be used, by the counters, as duplicates and attached to the giving envelopes. Pat will write up a notice for the counters.

Discussed funding for those wishing to attend camp this summer, such as the Grandparents' Camp at Crossways. The Bible Camper fund has limited dollars and would not be able to fund requests. It was suggested that an Endowment Grant be written to cover these potential costs.

Laurie reported that a request to assist an individual with medical expenses has come to the church's attention. After a discussion, it was decided to ask the council to approve a call for funds for the *Helping Hands* program, since there currently is zero funds in this account. This program was developed last year as a process to provide financial aid to an individual who is in need on an urgent basis. There is an application for the requestor to complete and is overseen by the Social Ministry Team. Laurie said she had talked with Karen Jordan, from the Social Ministry Team, and she agreed with this plan.

A discussion on establishing an email for the Financial Secretary took place. The email address could be a way for Pat to publish and receive emails from members, regarding their financial statements. It was decided to ask Jean to set up a mailbox for Pat in the narthex to receive communication. Also, Pat will put a note in the newsletter letting members know that if they have a question, regarding their giving, they can put a note in her mailbox or call office and ask her to contact them.

Pat asked if we could consider emailing quarterly giving statements to those who have provided email addresses, to save time and money. End-of-the-year statements would be hardcopies. Our donations program, Church Windows, has this option. The Stewardship & Finance Team discussed this idea. Pat and Laurie will work on putting together a note, to be included with the 2<sup>nd</sup> qtr. statements asking members if they would like to receive 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarterly statements via email, for those with email addresses. They can also verify their email addresses at that time.

We closed the meeting at 7:40 pm with the Lord's Prayer.

### **Social Ministry Team, May 8, 2023 ~ Submitted by Karen Jordan**

Members present: Gwen Hoehne, Pat Thompson, Karen Jordan, Phyllis Ziemke, and Jane Arps

We received a request from someone asking for a donation from the Helping Hands account. A form was sent to the person requesting information, but that has not been received.

One of our members needs help paying electric and water bills after the recent death of the spouse. Social Ministry will use money from the Food Pantry Account to cover those bills. The Food Pantry Account will be reimbursed from a grant from the Appleton Conference. It was also decided to use funds from Helping Hands account.

Graduation arrangements were discussed concerning refreshments and flowers. Karen has sent each graduate a form to provide information about their future plans.

A person in our St. Mark's family will have surgery in June. Pastor Niveen is asking for someone to offer their home for first three days of recovery.

Our next meeting will be in September or October.

**Connections committee:** Mary Jane shared the strong impact of the trip to Milwaukee.

**MSC to accept ministry team reports Mary Jane Hartley/Sherri Denney**

### **Unfinished Business items**

1. Update on Digital Sign: Jason talked to the congregation about the process of the sign donation and a board with the selection design is on display in Fellowship Hall.
2. Small Group Gatherings: All groups have been invited and moderators have been assigned. The group gatherings are part of the Ministry Site Profile's Mutual Expectations.
3. Vacation Bible School: Representatives from all churches met. We are hosting at St Mark's.

## New Business Items

**Organ/Clavinova Presentation:** Pat and Judy came to share information about the organ. Our current organ is a digital organ built in 1975. This is pre-computer chip. The initial cost of looking at the organ is \$500-\$800. A Clavinova to meet our needs is estimated at \$10,334. We need set-up and speaker update, which brings the total cost estimate to \$13,000. The Clavinova has the capacity to layer music sounds of a variety of instruments. The Clavinova can be played and recorded within the instrument. Pat Westfall is willing to contribute to pay up to \$1,000.00 to bring in Mark Snyder for repairs. The council has recommended education for the congregation on what a Clavinova is and the sounds it produces.

**Helping Hands Request:** Social Ministry reviews and grants requests. We have a current need for a friend of the congregation and the fund has been depleted. We will talk to the congregation and ask for funds to replenish funds.  
**MSC to talk to the congregation to replenish funds Dawn Jones/Pennie Linna.**

**Ministry Team Covenant:** A covenant was shared with the council. This is to be shared in meetings to lay ground rules for productive communication at meetings.  
**MSC to approve covenant to be shared at ministry team meetings Sherri Denney/Jason Blank.**

**Treasurer Position:** Mary Jane has been doing this job for many years. Mary Jane is stepping down at this time and asking for volunteers to take her place. Thank you Mary Jane for all your hard work.  
**MSC to accept Mary Jane's resignation/retirement Sherri Denney/Kim Wallmuller.**

**Laurie's resignation from council.** Laurie is resigning her position to cover the Treasurer position, until a replacement can be found. Start date September 1, 2023.  
**MSC to accept Laurie's council resignation Sherri Denney/Kim Wallmuller.**

Pennie has agreed to step up to the position of council president. She is currently the vice president.  
**MSC by Sherri Denney/Pastor Niveen to approve Pennie Linna to complete the term of president (Sept. till 2024 annual meeting).**

Based on the St. Mark's constitution, we do not need to fill the vacant council position at this time. We will still have needed voting council members, to satisfy the numbers specified in the constitution. Discussion of pros and cons was shared. This can be addressed again in February.

**MSC to nominate Jason as Vice President from September 1 to the 2024 annual meeting with the understanding that Jason will not automatically become president Ryan Blank/Sherri Denney.**

Adjourn: **MSC to adjourn Pennie Linna/Sherri Denney.**

Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

*Respectfully submitted by Dawn Jones, Secretary*

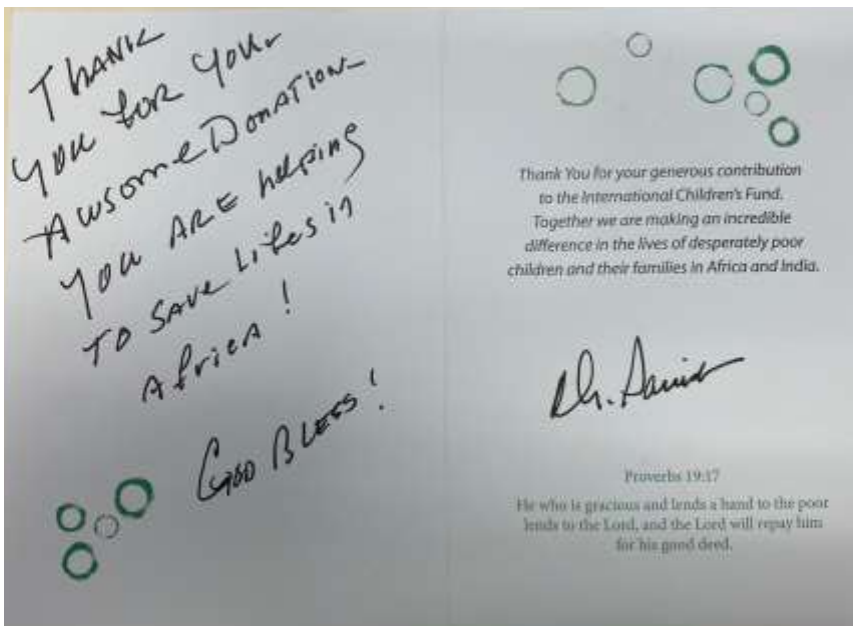
## We Get Mail

Dear St. Mark's,

We are so grateful for your support of the Hope Clinic. Thank you for your generous gift to help us help those in need in our community. We are very blessed by your support

Sincerely,

*Hope Clinic*



## Good News from the Worship & Music Ministry Team



We have found someone to service our electronic organ!!! On June 20<sup>th</sup>, the serviceman spent hours with our Allen organ. Felts were replaced; keys adjusted as possible; electronic boards checked; audio contacts cleared of corrosion. His verdict is that it is in good condition. It needs to be serviced more frequently (every 2-3 years). (Ask Laurie about the dust in it.) However, we need to keep in mind that if anything significant fails with the electronic boards, they cannot be repaired or replaced as they are no longer available. He also remarked that if the speakers do not have cracks, they are good-to-go for the immediate future. Thanks to Laurie Olson and Ginny Schieck for climbing the ladder and removing the “fronts” to check out the speakers. The serviceman confirmed that they “look great.” Our organ will sound much improved when it is next played which will likely be the end of July. This is a prayer answered. (We do need organists to play. Anyone have any suggestions?)

The news about the current piano (Clavinova®) is not as positive. Although the repairman does service Clavinovas, if this was his church, he would put the high cost of repair toward purchasing a new one. The Worship & Music Ministry Team will be presenting further information in a group setting during fellowship for those interested in hearing more. This presentation will occur the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July when we hope to kick off our fund-raising.

Finally, the always present question of costs. Although, the organ repair costs were not in the budget, they were covered by a benefactor. A donation fund for a new Clavinova® has been created. More information about contributing will be presented at the July 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting and in the Sunday bulletins going forward.—Pat Westphal

*Pictured to the right are Joy and Jenny Case holding the BIG check that shows we collected \$670 for Bunk Beds for Guatemala during our May “Mission of the Month.” collection. Thank you all for donating to this very worthwhile organization. Joy and Jenny come in each month to create our “Mission of the Month” bulletin board in the narthex. Thank you both for your service!*







# Wednesday Quilting Group

The Mission of the Month for July is our own Wednesday Morning Quilting Group. These faithful servants gather each week to make quilts that are given to Lutheran World Relief and then sent all over the world to people in need. The money you donate will be used to purchase thread, batting, and other quilting supplies to produce these quilts. If you would like to donate to support this very worthwhile mission, please check the "Mission" column on your giving envelopes and put them in the fish bowl when you attend worship anytime in July. You can also contribute electronically through VANCO.



## Where did LWR Quilts Go in 2022?

The chart on the right shows where all the quilts that were donated to Lutheran World Relief went last year. As you can see, that quilting ministry reaches every corner of the world. Many thanks to the loving hands that create these quilts, especially those from St. Mark's, including Ardys Seelow, Karen Jordan, Fern Fuhrmann, Pat Westphal, Sherry Winter (all pictured above) and Jan Gray and Joan Frahm. Thank you for your continued dedication to the very important ministry!

Country	Number of Quilts
Angola	18,480
Armenia	12,375
Burkina Faso	14,760
Djibouti	10,080
Georgia	36,960
Guatemala	7,200
Haiti	8,640
Jordan	7,260
Lebanon	16,180
Mali	22,440
Niger	11,160
Peru	15,840
Poland	11,520
Sierra Leone	10,800
South Sudan	3,630
Tanzania	7,920
Ukraine	6,072

A group of WELCA members from the East Central Synod of Wisconsin, including several members from St. Mark's, attended worship at Greater Galilee Missionary Baptist Church (GGMBC) in Milwaukee and visited the African American Holocaust Museum on Sunday, June 11, 2023. The goal of the trip was to learn more about our brothers and sisters who have been marginalized for hundreds of years and to begin relationships which may lead to more partnerships or exchanges in the future and continue the work of healing. Attending from St. Mark's were Mary Jane Hartley, LaVerne Arndt, Lois Kemp, Sherri Denney, and Sharyn Gawlick.



*Enjoying lunch at a soul food restaurant.*



*The Greater Galilee Missionary Baptist Church*

## Our Sunday Servants

Date	Assisting Minister	Reader	Greeters	Ushers	Counters
July 2	Pat Westphal	Jeff Tharp	Linda Anderson LaVerne Arndt	Phyllis Ziemke Emil Leppiaho	Jeff Tharp Kim Wallmuller Pat Westphal
July 9	Sherri Denney	LaVerne Arndt	Chuck Baumgartner Jean Memken	Tom Wenzel Doug Hesser	Jane Arps Ellen LaMarche Emil Leppiaho
July 16	Bruce Grundman	Jenny Case	The Blank Family	Doug Sebstead Nancy Bricco	Gwen Hoehne Doug Sebstead Renie Sebstead
July 23	Judy Hellman	Sherry Denney	Nancy Bricco Karen Jordan	Jeff Tharp Bruce Grundman	Bruce Grundman Lois Kemp Judy Olson
July 30	Jean Memken	Tara Dieck	Joy and Jenny Case	Ginny Schieck Judy Fowler	Laurie Olson Dawn Jones Judie Hilliker

### Communion Assistants:

July 2—Chuck Baumgartner, Sherri Denney, Bruce Grundman, Mary Jane Hartley, Jean Memken  
 July 16—Judy Hellman, Gwen Hoehne, Pennie Linna, Laurie Olson, Ginny Schieck

Altar Guild: Ginny Schieck

There is still time to sign up to go on this wonderful field trip to the Oneida Nation Museum in De Pere. We get a tour of the museum and a chance to explore the various exhibits that show the traditions, customs, and history of the Oneida people. Sign up on the sheet in the narthex this week!

What: Trip to the Oneida Nation Museum in De Pere, Wisconsin

Date: Monday, July 10

Time: 10:00 am

Meeting Point: St. Mark's Lutheran Church



Save the date for Neenah-Menasha Intertribal Powwow Saturday, September 16, 2023, 1:00 pm--4:00 pm. Shattuck Park 240 East Wisconsin Avenue Neenah, WI, 54956.

## Our Evening with the Fox Valley Islamic Society

Last month, a group from St. Mark's spent a wonderful evening sharing fellowship and food with the members of the Fox Valley Islamic Society. Currently, this group gathers throughout the week in a small building on Kappell Drive in Neenah. However, they are in the process of building a mosque on Marathon Avenue, not far from their current home, and they gave us a tour of their new facilities which are quite impressive.

One of the first interesting things to note about the current Islamic worship center is that there are separate entryways for the men and women. I was the first one of our group to get there, and one of the men directed me to take my food for the potluck to the basement. He pointed to the closest door which **was the men's entrance so I went in that way and took my food to the basement where they have kitchen facilities and tables for dining.** I went back out the way I came in, but after that, I noticed the **"Men" and "Women" signs on the doors, and made sure I entered through the women's door for the rest of the evening.**

Our evening started with a short worship service. For this, the men and women are separated into two different rooms. The women gathered in a side room while the men worshipped in the main room from which the worship leader conducted the service. When the service started, the women members of the society gathered in a line at the front of our room and stood throughout the service. At appointed times during the service, they would kneel and then press their faces to the floor, and then stand again. The service was in Arabic, so we could not understand it, and most of it was chanted. It was not a long service, only about 15 minutes. The women who participated were dressed very modestly, some with long flowing dresses and they all wore the traditional hijabs covering their hair and neckline. As female visitors, we were asked to cover our heads as well, and everyone who entered the rooms for worship had to remove their shoes. There were racks to hold the shoes right by the door.

After the service was over, we made our way to the construction site of the new mosque where many other members of the Islamic Society were gathered to go on the tour of the facilities with us. The new mosque is more than twice as big as their current gathering place, and has an impressive façade with the traditional four onion-domed minarets at each corner of the building. The worship area is a large open room in the center of the building. It has a big balcony, and they explained the men would worship on the ground floor and the women in the balcony. This allows for the separation of the genders, but the

*(Continued on page 12)*

## Our Evening with the Fox Valley Islamic Society

(Continued from page 11)

women will now be able to actually see the worship leaders which will be nice. There are also rooms on the main level for offices, meeting spaces, and restrooms with foot washing facilities. Although the building is not completed, it will definitely be an impressive and comfortable place of worship when it is finished.

After the tour and group pictures, we headed back to the current Islamic Center where even more members of the Islamic Society had gathered and we once again went to our separate rooms, taking our shoes off and the women covering their heads. Leaders of the Islamic Society gave a short presentation on **the five pillars of Islam and the six main beliefs of the religion.** Although I couldn't see the speakers, I found their presentation very interesting. After they finished, they invited Pastor Niveen to speak, and she stood at the front of the room where the women gathered. In all, that was a very enlightening part of the evening.

Then it was time to eat! While we were touring the mosque, those that stayed behind set out all the food so when we returned we could eat. Once again, the sexes were separated with the men eating on the main level of the building and the women in the basement. There were a lot of women, so the whole basement was full and noisy with lots of conversation. The food was amazing – many new and tasty **Middle Eastern and African dishes as well as some familiar foods that our St. Mark's members brought.** In addition, there was take-out pizza, which really surprised me, but it was a popular choice, especially for the children that were there. There was such an abundance of food, that after the meal was over, they brought out carry out plates and each woman filled one plate up with food to take home. I thought that was a very nice tradition.

It was really wonderful to meet and get to know our Islamic neighbors here in Neenah. They were such gracious hosts and hostesses, and I think we found many ways that we were alike rather than different. I was talking to one of the women of their society and I said she would have to come and visit us at St. Mark's and she seemed very excited at the prospect of getting together again. I hope that we can return their hospitality sometime in the future. Check out the pictures below from our evening. — Jean Memken



*Group Shot! Posing with our guests from the Islamic Center in front of their new mosque.*



*The new mosque—an impressive building!*

*Below: Our hostesses had some interesting shoe styles!*



*Some of our members during our tour of the mosque.*



**VBS** FREE

ELCA

Sponsored by:  
Gloria Dei,  
Our Savior's, St.  
Mark's, and St. Paul  
Lutheran Churches

**OPERATION RESTORATION**  
MENDING GOD'S WORLD

Open to age 3 thru 5th grade

A restoration theme that inspires everyone to be menders of God's world. Daily themes kids understand: feed, heal, forgive, pray, & rest.

**July 31 - August 3, 2023**  
9:00 am - Noon Early drop-off will be available beginning at 7:30 AM

**HOST SITE: St. Mark's Lutheran**  
**140 S. GREEN BAY RD., NEENAH**

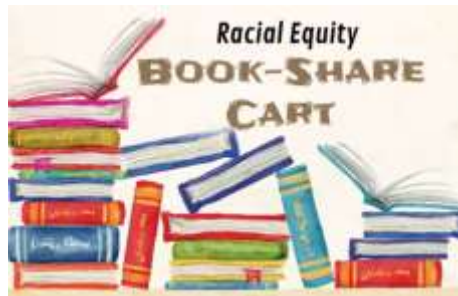
Snacks & drinks will be provided.

Sign up to attend or volunteer by contacting the church office at 920-725-2828  
office@stmarksneenah.org

## VBS Needs You!

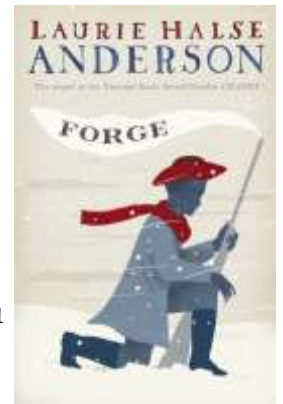
The VBS Planning Committee met with some members from the other ELCA Neenah churches and continued the planning process for Vacation Bible School at St. Mark's. It was an enthusiastic meeting and everyone seemed excited about helping with VBS this year.

Speaking of helping, now we really need to have some volunteers to help out each day of VBS. There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex, asking what days you might be able to help and what you can help with. We have leaders for each of the activity centers, but they will need extra hands to help with those activities. We also need volunteers to manage the classes (shepherd them from one activity to the next) and snack helpers, and someone to tend the registration desk each day. Please sign up and let us know what days you can help and what you would like to help with. All volunteers get a free t-shirt! Please help us and sign up as soon as possible.



*Forge* is the second book in the trilogy by Laura Halse Anderson centering on the lives of two slave children during the American Revolution. This book chronicles the story of Curzon Smith, a runaway, who enlists in the Colonial Army after he and Isabel (the main character in *Chains*) have become separated. Curzon comes across a skirmish on the outskirts of Valley Forge and after rescuing Ebenezer Woodruff from being killed by a redcoat, Curzon is introduced to Eben's uncle, Caleb, and joins the American army. A vivid description of the

terrible New England cold, the lack of food and other provisions, the construction of huts, marching in bare feet...all in the brutal cold of a New England winter make for a memorable read. Bigotry and intolerance are also present in the camp. When Caleb mistakenly cleaves his ankle while chopping down trees for the huts, a bigot named Burns and his goons attack Curzon and steal his boots during the night. When a blizzard strikes the camp, it brings along with it members of the Continental Congress, Curzon's former slaveowner, Bellingham, Isabel (from the first book), and a new wrinkle in the slave servant, Gideon. The story is filled with adventure, appalling descriptions of participation in Washington's army, and is vividly told. You will find *Forge* on the Racial Equity book cart by the kitchen door in the narthex. A great summer read with a level for middle school readers. — Pat Westphal



## FILTHY FUN KIDS RUN



**We could still use a few more  
volunteers for this event!**

**Held on Saturday, July 15**

**O'Hauser Park, Neenah**

**7:00 am—Noon**

### **15-20 Volunteers Needed**

**Needed for registration, parking, obstacle  
course stations, etc. All volunteers receive a  
t-shirt (and ice cream!!).**

**Sign-up Sheet is on the table  
in the church narthex.**

**You will have a blast!!!**

## **Linwood House Concert Schedule**

Come to Linwood House this summer for some great music. Here's the schedule. Bring a lawn chair!

Sunday, July 16, 2:00 pm—Talk of the Town  
New Orleans Jazz

Sunday, August 13, 2:00 pm—Elvis John

Sunday, September 24, 2:00 pm—Voices of Peace Gospel  
Group



In the next couple of weeks, financial statements will be coming out. With the changeover from Fern to Pat as our financial secretary, we are hoping things will transition smoothly. If you have any questions about your statement, you can direct to Pat either by calling the church office OR by putting a note in Pat's mailbox near the office door and she will get back to you quickly. Thank you for your patience. Looking ahead, we are studying the possibility of sending statements to interested members via email next year in efforts to reduce our paper consumption and to save money. The end-of-the-year statement would still be a hard copy for everyone.

## **St. Mark's Lutheran Church**

**140 S. Green Bay Road**

**Neenah, WI 54956**

