

August 2025



The Messenger



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Laurie Olson,
Treasurer

Pat Westphal,
Financial Secretary



Sunday School 8:45 am
(September-May, every
other Sunday)

Adult Forum
Sundays 9:00 am

Worship
Sundays 10:00 am
(Holy Communion on 1st
and 3rd Sundays)
August 13 and 20 6:30 pm

Bible Study
Thursdays 1:30 pm

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 140 S. Green Bay Rd, Neenah, WI 54956
Phone: 920-725-2828
Website: stmarksneenah.org E-mail: office@stmarksneenah.org

Persecution of Christians in the World: A Call to Prayer and Reflection

In recent times, our Christian siblings have endured unimaginable suffering due to their unwavering faith in Christ. One heartbreaking example occurred on Sunday, July 28, 2025, when terrorists attacked a Catholic church in Congo, entering during a time of prayer and worship and targeting the gathered congregation. In a devastating act of violence, 38 innocent lives were taken, and in another nearby town, 5 more Christians were murdered. Such attacks are heartbreaking, yet they are part of a larger pattern of persecution that continues to unfold in various parts of the world.

The persecution of Christians is not a new phenomenon. From age to age, the faithful have faced oppression, hatred, and violence simply because of their belief in Jesus Christ. The Bible speaks clearly about this reality. In the book of Revelation, the apostle John writes to the churches, acknowledging their struggles but also encouraging them to endure, knowing that victory is assured through Christ. Revelation 2:10 says, *"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."*

This passage reflects the enduring truth that persecution is a part of the Christian journey. Throughout history, from the early martyrs of the Church to present-day victims of religious violence, believers have faced immense challenges. The apostle Paul, too, speaks of the suffering that accompanies following Christ in Philippians 1:29: *"For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake."* Jesus Himself warned His disciples in John 15:20, *"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you."* Persecution, therefore, is not a new or unique occurrence—it is a continuous reality for Christians around the world.

However, Jesus also provides comfort in the midst of these trials. In John 16:33, He reassures us, saying, *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."* Despite the immense suffering that Christians face, we are reminded that Jesus has already won the victory over sin, death, and the world.

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*From the
Pastor's
Desk*

Pastor's Message

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In the face of such persecution, it is crucial for us as a Church to respond with compassion and solidarity. As Christians, we must continually pray for our siblings who face violence and oppression for their faith in Congo, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and other places where Christians are persecuted.

At the same time, let us also give thanks for the relative peace we enjoy in countries like the United States, where, though we may face challenges in expressing our faith publicly, we are not subjected to the violent persecution that many of our global family members experience.

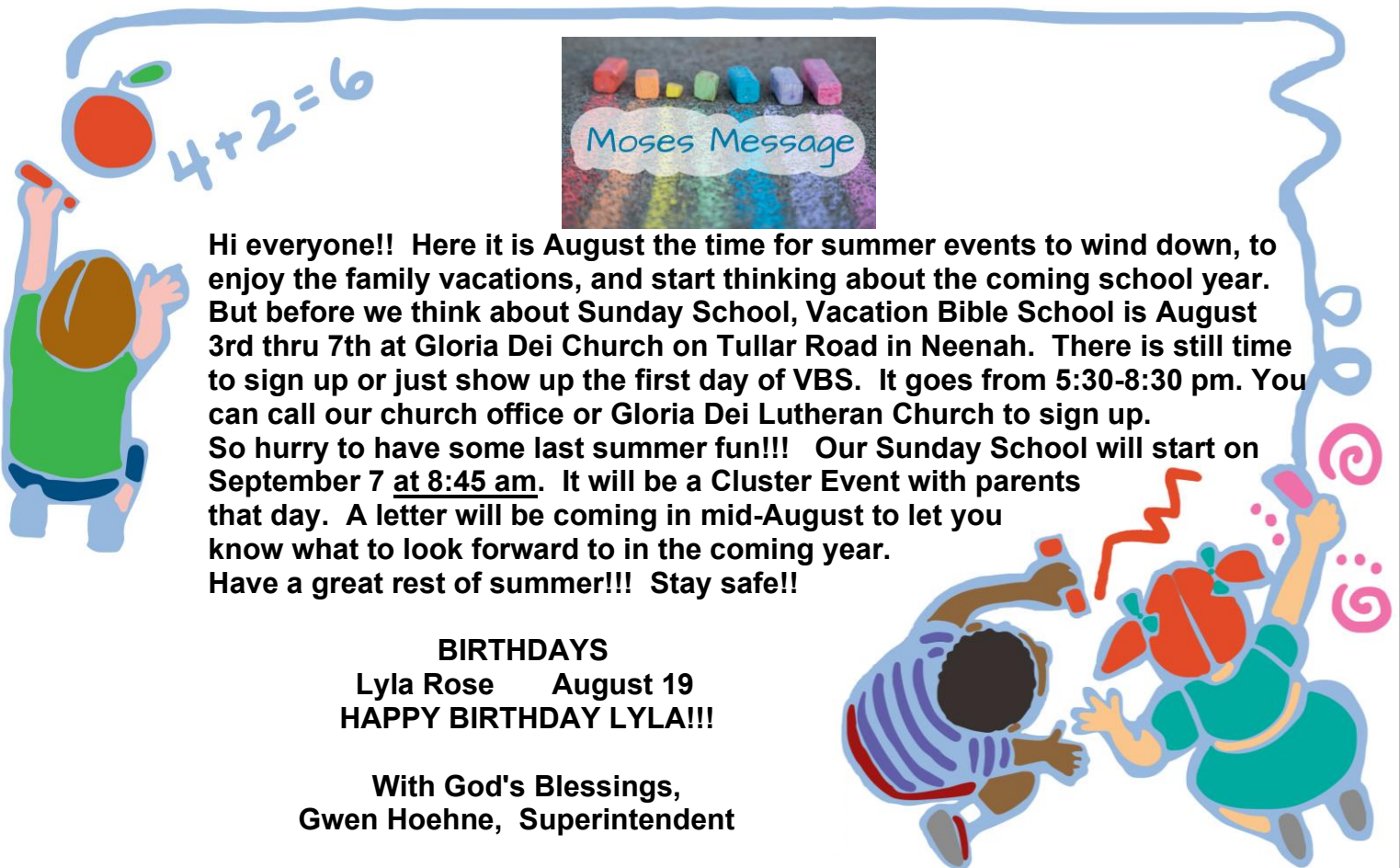
In conclusion, the persecution of Christians remains a painful reality in our world today. As believers, we know that Jesus has overcome the world, and we are called to remain steadfast in our faith, no matter the trials we face.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You for the hope and peace You offer, even in the midst of persecution. We lift up our brothers and sisters who are suffering for their faith, especially those in Congo, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and all parts of the world where Christians are oppressed. May they feel Your presence and strength as they endure hardship. We ask that You continue to protect them and provide for their needs. Thank You for the peace we enjoy, and may we never take it for granted. Help us to remain faithful in our own walk with You, always remembering that You have overcome the world. Amen.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Dr. Niveen Ibrahim Sarra, Ph.D



Hi everyone!! Here it is August the time for summer events to wind down, to enjoy the family vacations, and start thinking about the coming school year. But before we think about Sunday School, Vacation Bible School is August 3rd thru 7th at Gloria Dei Church on Tullar Road in Neenah. There is still time to sign up or just show up the first day of VBS. It goes from 5:30-8:30 pm. You can call our church office or Gloria Dei Lutheran Church to sign up. So hurry to have some last summer fun!!! Our Sunday School will start on September 7 at 8:45 am. It will be a Cluster Event with parents that day. A letter will be coming in mid-August to let you know what to look forward to in the coming year. Have a great rest of summer!!! Stay safe!!

BIRTHDAYS
Lyla Rose August 19
HAPPY BIRTHDAY LYLA!!!

With God's Blessings,
Gwen Hoehne, Superintendent

Reflections from Pine Ridge **A Journey of Witness, Compassion, and Hope**

Linda and Joe Rehorst shared powerful reflections from their mission trip to the Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center in South Dakota, a ministry supported by the ELCA.



A pivotal moment was their encounter with Basil, a 92-year-old Native American veteran. Despite the injustice that his ancestors faced by the US government, he engaged in military service. Basil recounted the traumatic history of Native communities—children taken to boarding schools where they lost their language, identity, and were often abused. His message of forgiveness was profound: healing could only come by letting go of hate, even amidst the current crises of addiction and suicide.

Linda and Joe witnessed firsthand the deep cycles of poverty and addiction plaguing the reservation. Grandparents often care for grandchildren because parents struggle with substance abuse. Many elders forgo nursing care to preserve their benefits and keep their families intact. Though a well-equipped nursing home exists, most elders remain at home, prioritizing family stability over their health.

They also met Virgil, a 44-year-old Native man educated at Berkeley, who returned to teach sustainable gardening and assist the elderly. He shared personal pain, including the loss of a child to suicide, but continues to mentor youth and model resilience. His story embodied hope and the importance of returning educated leaders to the community.

Challenges on the reservation are immense. Although alcohol is banned, drugs are accessible through cartels, and addiction rates remain high. Employment is limited, and drug screening prevents many from securing jobs. Economic reliance on federal aid from 19th-century treaties remains a stark reality. According to the treaty, the government was obligated to provide food through the seventh generation. Now that the seventh generation has arrived, there is growing concern within the community about the potential loss of this government aid.

Yet, spiritual strength endures. Native songs, smudging rituals, and prayers in the Lakota language continue to sustain the people's identity and faith. Linda and Joe were deeply moved by the community's commitment to cultural and spiritual practices, even after centuries of forced assimilation.

The legacy of injustice remains visible. Boarding schools that stripped children of their heritage operated well into the 1970s. While no abuse continues today, the presence of a Catholic school on the reservation stirred personal emotions for Linda.

Their trip was not a mission of service, but a journey of emergence that included listening, learning, and spiritual awakening. It deepened their awareness of systemic injustice, and the strength of a people determined to survive with dignity and faith.

Corruption and inadequate justice continue to plague Native communities. Linda and Joe heard from a courageous woman working with Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). She explained how tribal law offers limited authority, and federal agents cannot intervene due to historic treaties. As a result, crimes often go unpunished. Some perpetrators of murder received sentences as short as three months before returning to the community. Despite facing threats, she persists in her mission to bring justice and healing to grieving families.

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Reflections from Pine Ridge

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A spiritual highlight of the trip was the visit to Wounded Knee, site of the 1890 massacre of over 200 Lakota men, women, and children. As their guide shared the story in Lakota, the sky darkened, and wind howled. Thunder struck vertically as they stood around the mass grave, sensing a sacred presence. Later, at the Reconciliation Center, they created dreamcatchers and reflected on the experience, many moved to tears.



The Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center provides essential services. To encourage independence, it offers one meal daily and job opportunities. Children enjoy weekly gatherings with crafts and treats. Pastor Dan, along with staff like Tony and Abraham, help run the ministry. Abraham, once a student from Florida, left college to serve the community and founded the homeless shelter. Though attacked several times, he completed his education and now manages daily operations with commitment and compassion.

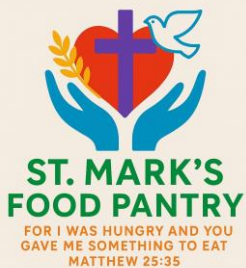
Linda and Joe also encountered powerful Native art. One disabled artist paints buffalo representing the four races and sacred directions. His work reflects Lakota theology and the story of White Buffalo Woman—a symbol of divine instruction, peace, and unity. They purchased his artwork to support his livelihood and raise awareness in their own community.

Despite systemic obstacles, the Rehorns found signs of hope. People like Virgil, Tony, and Abraham embody change through education, mentorship, and service. The nursing home is a dignified space for elders, and the Reconciliation Center is a beacon of care and resilience. Progress is slow but present, fueled by the dedication of a few faithful individuals.

The experience left a lasting emotional and spiritual impact on Linda and Joe. They returned with a deeper understanding of injustice and a renewed desire to advocate and support the community. They recognized that healing requires more than charity—it demands education, cultural respect, trauma-informed care, and long-term relationships grounded in trust. Most importantly, their trip reshaped their understanding of mission. True service begins with listening, humility, and walking alongside others with empathy and solidarity.



Submitted by Rev. Sarra



The Food Pantry has been very busy, as it seems to be most of the time. In June we had 70 families shopping to feed **211 family members**. Thanks for all your support. We had a blessing in July. Fox Communities Credit Union sponsored a cereal drive. We were selected as one of the 22 Food Pantries to benefit. We were overwhelmed to find out we would receive 500 boxes of cereal. **Thank you Fox Communities Credit Union!** We live in a very supportive area and we recognize our greatest supporters are our church community. This month we need paper towels, Hamburger Helper, and Kool-Aid. – *Karen Jordan*

Don't forget! Food Pantry Sunday is always the first Sunday of every month! Please give what you can to support this ministry of our church.

**St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Church Council Minutes
July 17, 2025**

Called to order: President Dawn Jones called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

No members were absent.

Devotions: Laurie, Devotions for September: Joe Rehorst

MSC to approve minutes of 06/19/25 by Tom Frantz/Tammie Kersten.

Thank Yous: Fox Cities Communities Credit Union for 500 cereal boxes for the Food Pantry- Laurie will write it. Tammie noticed more youth activities around the church and Filthy Fun Run, thanked Laurie.

Did You Know? Dawn will reach out to Joy Case to write about the history of St. Mark's for the September newsletter. Pastor will talk more about the relationship with the church, ELCA and how we are not a church in isolation in the August newsletter. Tammie will write about SCRIP this October newsletter.

Financial Reports: Total in checking account \$237,950.06. Building Fund \$34,544.10. \$30,000 will be transferred into the parking lot fund from the current checking and building fund. Giving versus spending Difference for June is \$6,756.18. Year to date giving vs. spending difference is \$2,605.55. Hospitality funds are used to buy plates for fellowship, etc. It was noted that the synod has not sent the invoice for Pastor's salary/benefits.

MSC to approve financial report from Jason Blank/Tom Frantz.

Pastor's Report ~ *Pastor Niveen Sarras*

1. CPR Training

On June 23, 2025, I completed CPR training to ensure I am equipped to respond to emergencies both within and outside the church setting.

2. Pastoral Care

I met with several church members throughout the month, providing individual spiritual care and support.

3. Bible Study Leadership

I have continued to lead Bible study every Sunday morning, offering theological insight and fostering meaningful discussion among participants.

4. Planning for "God's Work. Our Hands."

I coordinated with my ELCA Neenah colleagues to prepare for the *God's Work. Our Hands.* project scheduled for September 7, 2025. We will partner with **Sleep in Heavenly Peace**, a volunteer-driven nonprofit that builds and delivers beds to children in need to ensure no child sleeps on the floor. Each participating church will contribute \$1,250. Additionally, Rev. Tabitha will apply for a grant from our synod to help fund this important ministry.



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5. Worship at CopperStone

On July 7, 2025, I led worship at **CopperStone Assisted Living**, sharing the Word and Holy Communion with residents.

6. Midweek Devotions and Worship

On Wednesday, July 9, I led a devotional gathering at the Fellowship Hall with a few church members. This devotion replaced our midweek service. Our next midweek worship service is scheduled for Wednesday, July 23, at 6:30 p.m.

7. Upcoming Events – August 2025

The first week of August will be filled with two significant commitments:

- **Catholic Biblical Conference** (August 3–5): I will attend this annual conference virtually to continue my theological and pastoral development.
- **Vacation Bible School** (August 3–7): I will participate in VBS at Gloria Dei Church. The program begins at 5:30 p.m. each evening.

I continue to give thanks for the opportunity to serve and walk alongside this congregation in faith, worship, and mission.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Niveen Ibrahim Sarra

MSC to approve Pastor's report from Joe Rehorst/Emily Christofilis.

Ministry Team Reports:

Christian Education Ministry Team—No meeting scheduled last month ~ *Submitted by Gwen Hoehne*

Property Ministry Team—July 7, 2025 ~ *Submitted by Jason Blank*

Attendees: Bruce Grundman, Phyllis Ziemke, Ginny Schieck, Joe Rehorst, Jason Blank, John Olson, and Laurie Olson

- We approved a quote to replace all the light bulbs in the church.
- We agreed to move forward with the installation of production style lighting for the chancel. We will be contacting a lighting professional to determine what our needs are for this type of lighting.
- We are still waiting for a call from the parking lot installation company.
- The leak on the chimney has been fixed.
- The gutters have been fixed.
- Additional flowers and a tree have been planted near the garage.
- Some of the boards on the floor in the courtyard have been replaced.
- The left front air conditioner needs to be recharged. The air coming from it is not very cold.
- The water leak detectors have been installed in the basement.
- We should have our seasonal weeds sprayed this month.
- There will be no Property Team Meeting in August.

Jason thanked Joe for being a good steward to the church with the work on obtaining quotes for the changing of the lighting from incandescent to LED. Joe will be doing the changeover. Ton Frantz will be looking at the lighting in the chancel area and refocus where needed and make recommendations for any additional lights.

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We discussed when the parking lot project will start. We still do not have a date set, but discussions are occurring. Hoping for August. We also discussed painting the basketball court lines in the parking lot.

Racial Equity Ministry Team—July 8, 2025 – Submitted by Laurie Olson

Members Present: Pat Westphal, Dawn Jones, Pastor Niveen, Mary Jane Hartley, Barb Girod, and Laurie Olson

Others Present: Braydin Messing, Linda Rehorst, and Joe Rehorst.

Pastor Niveen opened the meeting with a prayer.

Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center Trip

Those who traveled to Pine Ridge (Dawn, Mary Jane, Braydin, Linda, and Joe) gave the team a brief overview on their experience: They expressed that it was a “life-changing experience,” shared personal stories, they were awed by the landscape, the Center’s focus on employing the people rather than having volunteers take over—it’s about collaboration, not charity, the breaking of stereotypes, etc.

Dara videoed their experience and interviewed members who went on the trip – this video will be a part of a presentation to our church, at a later date. Dawn will contact Dara & come up with a date for the presentation-looking at a Sunday after worship. It was suggested we invite the other Neenah ELCA churches.

Mary Jane noted that she bought three books in SD, relating to Native Americans. After reading the books, she will donate to the Book Cart.

Barb has a video that she will also be donating to the Book Cart.

Discussed the *Lemon Tree* book study: The study will be Saturday, October 4 from 10 – noon with a coffee time from 9:30 – 10:00 AM. Laurie will do a flyer and sign-up form for newsletter and narthex and post on Facebook.

Barb mentioned that she would like to find watermelon bracelets/pins to handout to book study attendees. We will make Lemon Squares for a snack.

Books have been purchased and are available for participants or they can check out the book at the library.

Adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Next meeting will be August 12 at 6:30 PM.

Social Ministry Team—No meeting this month ~ Submitted by Karen Jordan

Worship and Music Ministry Team—June 24, 2025 ~ Submitted Judy Hellman

The worship and Music Ministry Team met on Tuesday, June 24th. Members present were Mary Jane Hartley, Ardys Seelow, Pat Westphal, Joy Case, Jenny Case, Pastor Niveen, and Judy Hellman.

Devotions were given by Jenny Case. Pat Westphal volunteered for devotion in July.

We discussed the mid-week vespers services. They will be July 9th and 23rd and August 13th and 20th. St. Paul Lutheran Church will be invited to join us. The services will be in the Fellowship Hall. Mary Jane and Pat will purchase ice cream for refreshments.

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Our Ministry Team will be serving ice cream sundaes on Sunday, July 27th. There will be several ice cream flavors as well as a variety of toppings.

Our next meeting will be Monday, July 21st at 10:30 am.

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Youth Ministry Team—July 13, 2025 ~ Submitted by Laurie Olson

Members Present: JT Rose, Pastor Niveen, Laurie Olson, Nancy Rose, Jeff Tharp, Sherri Denney, and Ginny Schieck

Members Absent: Jenny Case & Joe Rose

Prayer: Sherri Denney

Business for Consideration

Youth Mental Health Worship:

Nancey Rose, along with 5 others from St. Mark's, attended a *Youth Menal Health First Aid* at St. Paul's, Neenah on May 31. Nancy thought it was very beneficial.

Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center in South Dakota Update:

The immersion trip to Pine Ridge went well. A presentation is beign planned during an upcoming fellowship hour. Pastor Dara is working on a video, to include in the presentation.

Sidewalk Chalk Night:

Attendance was small, but those who attended had a great time. The sidewalk chalk messages are still visible, and many have commented on how much they loved the designs and messages.

Mural on wall in Fellowship Hall:

Pastor Niveen will contact those youth who were creating a design and we will then move forward with setting up supplies and painting dates.

Synod Youth Ministry Calendar of Events:

Reviewed the October events: Corn Maze Palooza at Porter's Patch, Bonduel will be October 4. The team thought this was a fun event for us to participate in. Laurie will post a SAVE THE DATE on Facebook and publicize once more information is available. There is also a Feeding America, Appleton service project in October – no additional information is available. For Youth Workers (Youth Ministry Team members) there are some opportunities: On August 21-23 at Imago Dei Village, Clintonville there is a Youth Worker Retreat – Laurie asked that if any one in interested in attending to let her know ASAP. There is also a Youth Worker Dinner on October 23 at Our Savior's Lutheran, Neenah. Laurie and Sherri were interested at this time – others are considering. We will continue to talk about these events at future meetings.

Go-Karting at Badger Sports in Appleton was talked about and planned. We have set the date for Saturday, July 26 from 1-3 pm. Open to all kids/youth with 10 & under needing a parent/guardian. It was noted that to be able to ride the go-karts alone, kids need to be 54" or taller. We will ask that each participant pay \$5 toward the event. Laurie will investigate further costs and determine how much then will be covered by the Youth Activities fund. The deadline to register is July 24th. Meet at church by 12:15 pm to carpool.

*Please be
Praying for...*

Ellen LaMarche
Sarah L.
Richie Sczerzen
Odeh Sarras
Janet Travis

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God's Work Our Hands Sunday – September 7

Talked about the possibility of teaming up with the other Neenah ELCA churches for a Sleep in Heavenly Peace bunk bed build on the morning of September 7. This is still in the works & would be in place of the Linwood service work. St. Mark's will continue to offer activities after church in our fellowship hall.

Bible Camper Fund:

Nancy asked about funding raising for Bible Camper fund. She suggested doing another car wash. We will talk about this further at our next meeting, along with other ideas.

Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Next meeting: Sunday, August 17 at 11:15 AM.

Connections Ministry Team—No Report

Finance and Stewardship Ministry Team—July 15, 2025 ~ Submitted by Laurie Olson

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

Opened with a Prayer.

Reviewed current account balances through end of June 2025. June's giving to current monthly expenses was \$13,318.44 giving and expenses of \$6,562.26. The difference was \$6,756.18. Laurie noted that we have not received the invoice for Pastor's June salary/benefits which is \$8,000+.

Year-to-date: Spending=\$81,853.94 and Giving=\$84,459.49 with a net of \$2,605.55.

Total Associated Bank checking has a balance of \$237,950.06 which includes \$129,992.29 allocated to designated accounts and \$107,957.77 for current operating. Additionally, \$171,911.13 in the Thrivent money market and \$1,038.77 in Thrivent TIPS account and \$57,298.52 in the ELCA Mission Investment Fund.

The 2nd quarter financial statements have been provided to members by Financial Secretary Pat Westphal. Statements have been in the narthex for pick up. The remaining statements will be mailed out.

Laurie noted that the council discussed emphasis on connecting passions/talents to ministry as a goal. We reviewed examples of resources to use as part of this year's stewardship program. The stewardship program will be discussed at our August meeting, including setting the date for Stewardship Sunday. Team members were asked to research ideas/themes for this year's program.

Laurie has suggested that Finance & Stewardship establish a Gift Acceptance Policy, to assist in the accepting, acknowledging, what type of gifts, use, approving, etc. Examples were reviewed. Laurie will draft a policy with further discussion at August's meeting.

Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Next regular meeting is August 18, 2025, at 6:30 PM.

Endowment Ministry Team ~ Submitted by Jean Memken

The Endowment Ministry Team received an application for funding (\$1,250) from Pennie Linna and the 8 other individuals who went to the Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center earlier this month. They requested funds to help pay for the trip. They put the application in the Endowment Team mailbox, but did not inform me that it was

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there, and I really don't look in those boxes except when it is time to distribute a Council Packet, so I didn't see it until mid-June, right before the team was getting ready to leave. I consulted with Treasurer Laurie Olson, and she said the money could be approved after the trip had taken place as the individuals going on the trip had a church credit card they will use for gas and food costs as well as any other expenses, and the grant, if approved, could be used to pay those credit charges.

Getting the Endowment Ministry Team together to discuss this proposal quickly was problematic, so I contacted members and explained the grant request to the other team members and asked for their input. We unanimously voted to approve the request.

Current balance of the Endowment Fund as of June 30, 2025 is \$200,551.96, earning \$2,725.66 over the last month.

MSC to accept ministry team reports Tammie Kersten/Joe Rehorst.

New Business:

God's Work Our Hands: As part of "God's Work Our Hands" (September 7th), St. Mark's has been invited to participate in a "Sleep in Heavenly Peace" bunk bed build with other Neenah ELCA churches. This event will take the place of a project at Linwood Place. (Looking to do a project later in the fall at Linwood Place.) Pastor Tabitha from Gloria Dei is still working out details, including obtaining a grant. Each participating church will need to cover the cost of supplies for five bunk beds at a cost of \$1,250. The Sleep in Heavenly Peace organization is responsible for distributing the beds. After the discussion, it was decided we will use SCRIP money to cover the cost. Tammie oversees the RaiseRight/SCRIP program and is agreement with the use of SCRIP funds. **MSC to use SCRIP funds to cover the cost of the supplies by Dawn Jones/Tammie Kersten.**

Acceptance for Donations: Ellen LaMarche and Karrington Hartley. Ellen LaMarche has agreed to fund the cost of the LED lighting and technology needs. Karrington Hartley is funding a bike rack in honor of her mom, Jane Hartley. **MSC to accept these gifts from Ellen and Karrington by Jason Blank/Dawn Jones.**

Laurie noted the Finance & Stewardship Team is developing an Acceptance of Gift Policy/Procedure which will include how gifts are accepted, approved, acknowledged, etc.

Fellowship Hall Mural:

Sophia Kersten has sketched a design for a mural project for the west wall in the Fellowship Hall. This is a project of the Youth Ministry Team with supplies covered by the Youth Activity Fund. As we move forward, a date(s) will be set to work on the project. All youth will be invited to be a part of the painting project. Hoping to get this done in the next couple weeks. The council reviewed Sophia's sketch.

MSC to approve Fellowship Hall mural design Emily Christofilis/JT Rose.

ESTHER Support Letter: Dawn informed the council that misinformation has been given to ESTHER, regarding St. Mark's support of their agency and mission. To clear up this misinformation, a letter will be sent to ESTHER Fox Valley confirming St. Mark's continued participation and support.

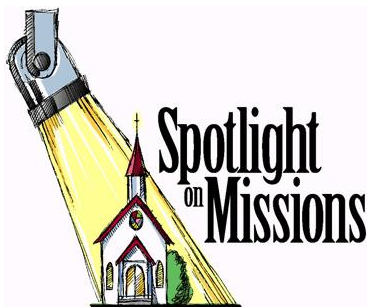
MSC to approve the letter of support of ESTHER by Dawn Jones/JT Rose.

Covenant for Ministry Teams & Council: An additional statement has been added to the Covenant for Ministry Teams & Council document, which was originally approved in 2023. The addition states: "All who show interest in serving are to be welcomed and included, as each person brings unique gifts to the ministry of God." A memo will go out to all ministry teams informing them of this addition and the importance of finding a place for all who wish to participate.

MSC to approve Jason Blank/JT Rose.

NO AUGUST MEETING- Next meeting will be September 18.

Closed with the Lord's Prayer.



Orphan Grain Train +



The Mission of the Month for August is the Orphan Grain Train. Orphan Grain Train is a 501c3 Nonprofit Christian volunteer network that shares personal and material resources with needy people in America and around the world. Orphan Grain Train volunteers gather donations of clothing, medical supplies, food, Christian literature, and other aid to meet real needs. The Orphan Grain Train movement is a loving response to Jesus Christ's example as a servant and His love for us.

Since 1992, Orphan Grain Train's 27 regional locations have delivered more than 60.3 million fortified-rice meals and 5,066 shipments of humanitarian aid to needy people in several states and 73 countries on 5 continents. Orphan Grain Train built a mobile structure for St. John's Lutheran



Church in Pilger, NE after their church was demolished by an F4 tornado. OGT has delivered more than 16 containers of aid and food into Ukraine since the start of the invasion in 2022. We continue to serve many families affected by tornadoes and flooding in Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina by providing building materials, food, and a volunteer village. All this would not be possible if it wasn't for our dedicated and generous donors and volunteers. Please give generously to this worthwhile organization!



St. Mark's Racial Equity Team presents...

Book Study



The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East
by Sandy Tolan

All are
Welcome!

The tale of a simple act of faith between two young people - one Israeli, one Palestinian - that symbolizes the hope for peace in the Middle East.

Celebrating the Joy of Faith through Love & Service.

Saturday, October 4th, 2025

Coffee/Tea: 9:30 AM

Book Study: 10:00 AM - Noon

Books will be provided at no cost to all participants or available at the public library. Sign up at church or by calling or emailing the office no later than September 30. office@stmarksneenah.org or 920-725-2828



An Evening of Folk Dance, Food & Justice *Move Together, Rise Together*

Monday, August 18, 2025 - 5:00pm - 7:30pm

Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship,
2600 E. Philip Ln, Appleton

Join ESTHER and the **Folk Dancers of the Fox Valley** on *August 18* for a joyful evening of connection, movement, and purpose! People of all abilities are welcome. Learn or enjoy watching simple, fun folk dances from around the world—no experience needed—and enjoy a delicious spread of fresh sandwiches and sides. Also, consider participating in our 50/50 Raffle.

All proceeds support ESTHER's community organizing for racial equity, justice system reform, and affordable housing. We will not be having a fall banquet fundraiser this year. This is one of the events that will take its place.

Ticket Price: \$25 (Kids under 12 free!) Register Here

Let's dance, dine, and rise together for justice.

5 pm: Doors Open, 5:30 pm: Meal, 6:15: Program, 6:30 - 7:30 pm: Dancing

Come solo, with friends, or bring the whole family—everyone's welcome! Recharge, refresh, renew!
RSVP or Questions? 920-843-8083



Recently, Jean Memken reached out to me by email to ask if I would write a few words for the Messenger to let everyone know what Laurie and I have been doing these last few years. After retiring, I resisted any inquiries to do supply preaching for several months. Since then, I have been supply preaching once or twice a month at various ELCA churches close to home. As you know, there are not enough pastors available to fill all the pastoral vacancies in our churches. That is why I was especially happy when I heard Pastor Niveen had accepted a call to St. Mark's Church.

Laurie continues to work part-time as the manager of the Habitat for Humanity Restore in Shawano. They are open to the public on Thursdays and Fridays, and on Saturday morning, but somehow, Laurie manages to find things to do there six days a week. If you are ever in Shawano, stop in and demand to see the manager and say "hi" to Laurie. I also help at the store doing various chores, but I am not there nearly as often.

We now have four grandchildren, three girls and one boy. Our three adult children each live about a two-hour drive from Laurie and me, but we try to see them and our grandkids as often as we can. I play basketball once or twice a week and I plant a big garden each year. The garden keeps me busy all summer and keeps Laurie busy at the time of harvest. We also enjoy travelling. Two years ago, we traveled to France where we spent several days in Paris, but also travelled to the coast of Normandy where we visited Omaha beach and the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial in Colleville-Sur-Mer. Visiting the cemetery there was a very moving experience. In June of this year, we spent several days in Portugal on a Douro River cruise.

One highlight of my retirement has been getting involved with the Box in the Wood Theatre in Shawano. I have acted in a few plays and have helped with the set construction on several others. Hopefully, Laurie and I will get back to St. Mark's sometime soon for a Sunday morning visit. Until then we will continue to enjoy keeping tabs on the activities there through St. Mark's Facebook posts.

God be with you until we meet again,
Pastor Bob and Laurie



GIVE NOW

Scan the code and give to support the ministry of St. Mark's Lutheran Church.
Thank you.

Questions of Faith - A Free Public Lecture

What can history teach us about Christian Citizenship?
Where do faith and civic responsibility meet in an age of division and uncertainty?
How should Christians navigate their roles as citizens of this world and followers of Christ?

Free Public Lecture - Wednesday, August 13

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Culver Family Welcome Center, UW – Oshkosh

Speakers: Dr. Michael Rutz, Professor History at UW-Oshkosh

Dr. Garwood Anderson, Lumen Fellow for Biblical Studies

Sponsored by the SL Brown Foundation



Our Sunday Servants

Date	Assisting Minister	Reader	Greeters	Ushers	Counters
August 3	Pat Westphal	Gwen Hoehne	Rosemary Cermak Chuck Baumgartner	J. T. Rose Jeff Tharp	Jeff Tharp Kim Wallmuller Fern Fuhrmann Lorrie Wood
August 10	Pennie Linna	J.T. Rose	The Clifford Family	Doug Sebestead Phyllis Ziemke	Pat Westphal Jason Blank Jenny Blank
August 17	Emily Christofilis	Jeff Tharp	Bruce Grundman Judie Hilliker	Linda Anderson Nancy Maslow	Gwen Hoehne Doug Sebestead Renie Sebestead
August 24	Judy Hellman	Jeri Travis	John & Laurie Olson Shaun Johnson	Lois Kemp LaVerne Arndt	Bruce Grundman Lois Kemp Linda Anderson
August 31	Bruce Grundman	Pat Westphal	Pennie Linna Jeff Tharp	Nancy Bricco Rosemary Cermak	Dom Christofilis Dawn Jones Judie Hilliker

Communion Assistants:

August 3 – (Intinction) – Mary Jane Hartley, Judy Hellman, and Gwen Hoehne

August 17 – (Intinction) – Pennie Linna, Jean Memken, and Laurie Olson

Altar Guild: Jean Memken

SAVE THE DATE



God's work. Our hands.



September 7, 2025

Watch for further information in
August on Facebook & at church.

ALL ARE WELCOME TO

WORSHIP

in the

PARK

SMITH PARK
MENASHA

August 31, 2025
9:30 am

hosted by Neenah ELCA churches
Gloria Dei, Our Savior, St. Mark's
and St. Paul Lutheran Churches

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
140 S. Green Bay Road
Neenah, WI 54956

