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Gethsemane Lutheran Church

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 Virginia, MN 55792
 Phone: 218-741-4961
 Email: gelc@gelc.info
 Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 9 am to 4 pm

Rebecca LeMenager
 Pastor
Brenda "Bunny" Varani
 Parish Secretary

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Come and see us on the web!
www.gelc.info

Clean Up Crew

A great big thank you to an awesome crew of Richard Vandervort, Tom Lee, Bruce Kniivila Dan Alto, and Rick Kinnunen! Our heartfelt thanks to this crew for the great clean up they provided along the creek on our north parking lot. Your willingness to share your skills and hard work - at no charge - is a wonderful example of selfless service and faith in action. Because of your generosity, our church grounds are now a more welcoming and peaceful place for all who visit. Thank You!



Gethsemane Lutheran Church
 Virginia, Minnesota
www.gelc.info

Mission Statement
 To draw all people to Christ, nurture faith, and fulfill our calling to serve

Vision for Gethsemane
 A vibrant place of worship, learning and service, where every person is passionate about their belonging and their ministry

Marks of Discipleship
 Pray daily
 Study Scriptures diligently
 Worship weekly
 Encourage Faith in Others
 Serve for the sake of others
 Give freely

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Gethsemane Gazette

December, 2025 Volume 47, Issue 12

Join us for December Worship and Events!

LUTEFISK & MEATBALL DINNER

Everyone is invited to a LUTEFISK & MEATBALL DINNER on **Tuesday, December 2, 2025, from 3:00 – 7:00 pm** at Gethsemane Lutheran Church.

Come and enjoy a delicious dinner of Lutefisk with drawn butter and cream sauce, handcrafted meatballs with potatoes and gravy, vegetables and beet pickles, lefse and bread, and cupcakes with coffee and milk.

Take outs are available. Pre-orders are encouraged. Tickets are on sale at the door: Adults \$20.00, Children 6-12 \$8.00, and Children 5 and under free!

For more information, call Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Virginia at: 218-741-4961.

DURING LUTEFISK DINNER: SILENT AUCTION BY THE YOUTH

Advent Service of Remembrance

An Advent Service of Remembrance and Hope will be held at Gethsemane on **Wednesday, December 17, 6:30 p.m.**

This service is a time to get away from the rush to Christmas, to share the meaning of Christmas, remembrance of loved ones and the hope we have, as we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus, God's Son.

Sometimes this service is called Blue Christmas or The Longest Night. We will share music, prayers, and times of silence. This time of year is difficult for many of us and it is good to be together, finding hope and comfort in knowing we are not alone. Come and share this time of quiet and fellowship.



Please Join Us for Our Christmas Eve Services at Gethsemane

on Wednesday, December 24th

3:30 and 5:30 pm
 Live Streaming on Facebook at 3:30 pm.
 33:30 p



November Angels

November Thanks!

The angels that appear amongst all of our months are such a blessing to our church. We couldn't do what we do each month without them. Thank you for our November angels - the Reid family, Sue Swanson, Barb Alaspa, Dan Gallagher & Tony Mazzeo, Nancy Eichholz, Donna Flannigan, the Generosity Team, Bruce & Ethie Kniivila, Dan & Andrea Alto, Pam Burgess, the Zeidler family, Debbie Poderzay, Sam Davidson-Teff, Joyce Bloomquist and Dawn Matschiner. You are all very appreciated - thank you!

Sheila Davidson
November Angel Coordinator

All Women of Gethsemane

Thursday, December 18, at 5:30 pm in the Youth Room. This is a week early, as the 4th Thursday of December is Christmas. We continue to have our casual monthly get together just to "hang out" with other gals, enjoy visiting, relax, and have some laughs.

No commitments, just bring yourself and your own beverage. Please come. - we always have a fun time! Hope to see you there!

Pastor Rebecca is Helping Cover Pastor Laura's Maternity Leave

Pastor Rebecca and Pastor Liz from Our Saviors will be covering Pastor Laura's Maternity leave starting on Monday November 3 through the end of January. Sigurd Sisu Mills Anderson was born at 1:46 am on November 3rd. Our thoughts and prayers are with Pastor Laura, Bjorn and the baby.

Advent Starts Sunday November 30

The first Sunday of Advent starts on November 30th. This year, different groups of the church will be highlighted as advent wreath candle lighters! We hope you will be in church with us each Sunday of Advent as we learn more about some of the groups in our church.



'Tis the season to give back

CHRISTMAS GIVING!

SALVATION ARMY BELL RINGING
Sign up in the church office for Monday, December 15th!
Super One North

PINE MILL COURT CHRISTMAS ASSISTANCE
We have been asked to help five families in need of help for various children's Christmas gifts.
(Make sure to drop off gifts by 12/18)
Please see bulletin board in the narthex!

BILL'S HOUSE CHRISTMAS ASSISTANCE
We will be purchasing various items for Christmas gift bags for their residents. Feel free to donate for this worthwhile cause to help our neighbors!

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR RANGE TRANSITIONAL HOUSING
We again look forward to helping a local person or family in need of help. Please see bulletin board in the narthex!

HAT AND MITTEN TREE
Bring your gently used or new hats & mittens to the tree in the narthex to donate towards Range Transitional Housing!

Bandages for Global Health Ministries: 2,400 bandages were rolled and ripped during Vacation Bible School, Women's Bible Study, and God's work. Our hands. Sunday.

The bandages were delivered to St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Aurora to be rolled down and sent to Central African Republic through Global Health Ministries.

Mission hospitals and rural clinics have little or no access to clean water so sterilization is difficult to have enough clean bandages for daily needs, and the bandages that we rolled help meet this need. Most of the bandages are used for wound care including burns, but can also be used at hospitals and clinics where resources are scarce, like holding an IV in place, and tying up broken surgical lights.

Big thanks for a job well done. Their hearts will be filled with love because of all your work.

With much appreciation,

Sue Benassi

Prayer Wall

In your daily prayers, pray God's blessings for:

- ♦ The innocents suffering in the war in Israel/Palestine; those displaced from their homes in Gaza; those suffering in Ukraine, Lebanon, and Sudan. We pray for those in need of strength and healing: Bernie Christiansen, Betty Ann Laakso, Jane Erickson Jennifer Anshus, Judy Mazzeo, and Lillian Ferkins.

We continue to pray for;

- ♦ Judy Bennick and Fran Shimmin.
- ♦ All members who are homebound, in nursing homes, or assisted living.



Council Highlights

Pastor Rebecca stated the first unit of LIFT has been completed, the second unit will begin January 7th at Gethsemane. She also informed us that during Advent this year some of our Ministry Teams will assist in the lighting of the candles. Lent begins the 2nd week of February next year and it was decided that Pastor Rebecca will survey the congregation on ideas for the services.

Pam and Donna are planning the kids Sunday school Christmas program which will be on December 14th during our worship service.

Bennet has received one estimate on remodeling the south entrance doors, we will wait for an additional estimate before a decision is made. He also let us know there is a sign-up sheet for snow shoveling on the bulletin board.

The Generosity Team is organizing Christmas giving to the Salvation Army, Bill's House, Range Transitional Housing, and Pine Mill Court. They are hoping to once again do Buddy Backpacks in January.

The Fellowship Team has planned more fun trivia games during coffee' an in December.

Bruce outlined and gave information on the proposed 2026 budget. It was voted on to be presented at the annual meeting in January for review.

Giving through the Vanco App

Gethsemane offers several ways to contribute to spreading God's Word. One of them is through the Vanco app called "Vanco Mobile." Download the Vanco app from your App Store on your mobile device. If you're new to Vanco, you'll need to create a free account. Once set up, logging in and making electronic donations will take only a few minutes.

For more information, please contact Vanco at 800-675-7430 or visit their website at www.vanco.com/vm.

Thank you for using Vanco. We hope this simplifies your giving. If you encounter any difficulties, please reach out to Vanco or the church office.

QR Code for Giving at Gethsemane:

When you are reading our monthly newsletter or the Sunday morning bulletin, you will see our QR giving code.

Simply take out your phone, scan the code, put in your password, select how much you want to give for the month, and press done. It's as easy as that and takes less than a minute!



Sheila has made updates to the Constitution; this will also be presented at the annual meeting.

At our meeting on November 11th it was decided I would contact the company that installed our new church roof to set a date for the final inspection, which has not been done. It was scheduled for November 17th. When completed they will be paid the balance of the project.

We currently have commitments from three people to join the Congregational Council in 2026. If you have an interest or questions about possibly serving your congregation in this capacity please talk to any Council member.

There will not be a council meeting in December. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of you.

Peace and Blessings 🙏
Mary Horan, Congregation President

Weekly Giving

Overall total giving for the first half of November has increased significantly and is quite generous. Total giving has averaged \$6,181 per week, as compared to \$4,214 per week needed to meet budgeted expenses

Bruce Kniivila, Treasurer



Blessings to all who have a Birthday this Month

- 2: Debbie Poderzay
- 3: Rollie Seppala
- 6: Eila Ivonen, Nicholas Richards
- 7: Lillian Rosandich
- 9: Rahmy Johnson
- 10: Linda Friedlieb, Genevieve Zeidler
- 12: Jesse Bennet, Kathy Seppala
- 13: Beth Collins, Sawyer Leslie
- 14: Natalie Lamppa
- 16: Richard Rude
- 17: Chris Ismil, Troy Ness
- 20: Madison Krause
- 21: Brady Peterson
- 22: Melanie Peterson
- 24: Gail Erickson, Jeff Peterson
- 26: Gail Waldron, Makayla Waldron
- 27: Jeffrey Lind, Nancy Rosewall, Jerry Rumpl
- 28: Mikko Meinzer
- 29: Debra Dall, Tyler Emery, Eric Krenz, Jennifer Krenz
- 31: Ray Erickson, Sheila Vandervort

Memorial Gifts received during the month of November

In Memory of: Ruth Koski
From: Pat Duginski, Kris & Tom Olsen, Douglas & Mary Erickson



Look who's celebrating their Anniversary for the Month of December, enjoy your Special Day!

- 12/5 Marcie Speer and Donald Walker
- 12/12 Dale and Gail Erickson
- 12/14 Chad and Kathy Seppala
- 12/19 Gary and Linda Friedlieb
- 12/24 Debra and Steve Manninen



Celebrating the Anniversary of your Baptism

- 12/4: Leslie Gustafson
- 12/5: Steven Starkovich
- 12/6: Linda Friedlieb
- 12/10: Deron Davidson, Haidyn Seppi
- 12/11: Bruce Nevala, Mindy Lind-Rumpl
- 12/12: Kaleb Dickinson
- 12/14: Sharlyn Dahl, Tomina Koop, Faye Roche
- 12/15: Wendy Krause
- 12/24: Madison Walters
- 12/26: Tyler Krenz
- 12/28: Debbie Poderzay, Kathy Seppala
- 12/29: Debbie McCormick
- 12/30: Sawyer Leslie, Hallie Pauling
- 12/??: Sam Davidson-Teff

****If we have left you out, we need your help to know! Call the office to update your information****

Faith Builders

(PreK - grade 6)

The Sunday School children did a really fun project with Gail Wieman. We burned our palms from Palm Sunday by using a fire proof container. After the palms were cooled, the children crushed them and put them thru a wire strainer. Then they added some Myrrh to the ashes. Pastor Rebecca will be using them for Ash Wednesday next year.

The children are working hard on their songs and parts for the Christmas Program It will be on **December 14th** during the church service. There will be No Sunday School on December 21st and December 28th. We will see you in the New Year on January 4, 2026. From Dust you came and from Dust you shall return (Genesis 3:19).



Pam and Donna

Fall Unit of LIFT is done! BUT there are lots of ways you can continue to grow!



Our first unit of LIFT has ended. We will not resume until Wed., January 7 when our Winter Unit begins at Gethsemane. Until then, please keep the following dates in mind:

- Wed. Dec 3 @630pm: Advent Spiral Service at Messiah Lutheran Church
- Wed. Dec 10 @630pm: Visual Arts Advent Service at Our Savior's
- Wed. Dec 17 @630pm: Blue Christmas Service at Gethsemane
- Wed. Dec 24 @3:30pm & 5:30pm: Christmas Eve Services at Gethsemane
- Thurs. Dec 25 @10am: Christmas Day service at Messiah (led by Pastor Rebecca)

All Youth are encouraged to attend these services as their schedule allows.

Youth Mission/Service Trip 2026!

LIFT is headed to The Dwelling in Winston-Salem North Carolina in July of 2026! You do not have to be part of LIFT to participate in this trip! You just need to join in the fundraising and planning. If you are a high schooler, YOU are invited to be a part of this exciting, life-changing, faith-building, transformative experience! For more information, stay tuned to social media, the LIFT Team Reach App, newsletters and bulletins or you can talk with Pastor Rebecca.

Mission Trip Fundraising Activities NOVEMBER:

Friday, Nov 28 (morning) - Black Friday Hot Chocolate Sale: We hope to be out at a local store on Black Friday! More details will be announced on Sunday, Nov 23rd if this is happening!

Starting Soon! Apparel Sale: We will be selling T-Shirts and/or Sweatshirts in time for Christmas (hopefully!). More details about the design and how to order will be coming soon!

DECEMBER

Tuesday, Dec 2 - Lutefisk Dinner: The youth are helping with the Lutefisk dinner at Gethsemane on Dec. 2: 3-7pm at Gethsemane (Tickets are \$20- Adults, \$8.00 children 6-12, Free for kids under 5!)
Tuesday, Dec 2 - Silent Auction: In conjunction with the Lutefisk Dinner, the youth will be holding a silent Auction. If you would be willing to donate items, gift certificates, a basket, etc., please contact pastor Rebecca! **Please make sure items are dropped off at the Gethsemane church before Thanksgiving or on Friday, Nov 28 between 10am-2pm.** (Otherwise the office is closed.)

Sun Dec 21 - Gift Wrapping: Bring your gifts to church and during the service our youth will wrap them for you! Your wrapped gifts will be ready for you to pick up after the service! Suggested donation: \$5.00/gift. Please get to church early to ensure your gifts are ready to be wrapped!
 9:00am Gethsemane
 9:30am Our Savior's
 11:00am Messiah

We are looking for donations of wrapping paper, tape, boxes, bows & gift tags! If you would like to donate any of these items, please drop them off at any church office!

Upcoming...

All of January - Superbowl Sub and Chili Sales: Starting on Sunday, Jan 4 through Sunday, January 25, the youth will be selling Subs and Chili! Pick up will be Superbowl Sunday after worship!

Feb 21-22 Bake-a-thon-and Coffee an': The youth will be staying up all night baking! They will be baking communion bread and yummy treats! They will be asking if you might pledge their bake-a-thon and then support their coffee an' (and bake sale) at all three churches on Sunday, Feb 22.

If you have an idea for a Mission Trip Fundraiser, want to help or need more details, please talk with any of our incredible youth or their equally incredible parents! Thank you for all you do to support our youth!

Foster Care Closet Corner

As a new addition to our newsletter, remember to check out this "corner" each month! We are very excited to be opening our FCC for the St. Louis County foster care program to utilize and help equip our local foster care families. Thank you to everyone who so graciously donated very needed children's supplies already. If you'd like to see our closet in person, please reach out to someone in the Generosity Team!

Bell Ringing -

The Generosity Team is organizing a Gethsemane Bell Ringing Day and we need your help! We need volunteers for one-hour shifts (so easy!) at the Super One North location (not South this year) on Monday, December 15th. Please sign up in the church office, show up for your shift, and ring that bell - it's that easy! You can do this by yourself or with a small group of 2-4 people. One hour time slots are available from 10:00 am - 6:00 pm. **The 4 pm to 5 pm slot is already filled.** Please sign up sooner than later - we need to fill the day! Thank you Gethsemane!



Instant Church Directory

If you are NOT included in our Instant Church Directory and would like to be, please contact the church office and we will make sure you are included! We want YOU included!

Snow Shoveling

Winter season is upon us. We are looking for volunteers to help shovel snow away from the entrances of the building and the food pantry. Snow shovels and a snow blower are available or you can bring your own. Sign up for a week, maybe two, or possibly an entire month. If this is something you might be interested in doing to serve the church, there will be a sign-up sheet (monthly calendar) on the bulletin board, or call the church office and we can get you signed up.

If you have any questions, please call Bennet Bloomquist at 218-780-8357.



Generosity Team

Welcome to our edition of "Gethsemane Gifts!" Each month we will recognize the gifts of generosity that we have experienced from our very own Gethsemane Family. We will focus on one member of our church who has experienced a time of support, love, and/or generosity from other members of our church.

This month please welcome – 2025 Confirmands

Our names are **Garrett and Grant Reid**. We have been attending Gethsemane since we were little. Through confirmation and Sunday school experiences, we have been deeply blessed by Gethsemane's community. These moments have strengthened our faith, deepened our understanding of God's love, and connected us to a supportive group of believers who continually encourage us in our spiritual journey. We have experienced countless moments of support, love, and generosity—from Sunday school and confirmation teachers offering encouragement when we struggled to understand a lesson, to classmates praying with us during difficult times, to the entire church community coming together to celebrate our milestones. Each of these acts of kindness has strengthened our faith and shown us the power of fellowship and the importance of uplifting one another in God's love.

Hey, this is **Genevieve Zeidler**. Some moments when I've felt blessed by generosity is every Wednesday. Every Wednesday, whether you are a confirmation student, confirmand, if you attend one of the churches that is a part of the L.I.F.T. program, or if you are in the area and need something to eat, there is a warm homemade meal. I find it very generous for members of the church to give up time in their day to make sure people are fed, taking time to plan, prepare, and cook the meal.

Ada Boe: "Gethsemane has helped me with my faith journey a lot. The whole church has been so welcoming and I have learned so much more about God."



Qualified Charitable Distribution:

If you are at least 70-1/2 years of age, you can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your IRA, payable directly to a charity, such as Gethsemane Lutheran Church. This tax-free transfer provides benefits to the charity, and to you - the donor. Please consider discussing this with your financial institution or your financial advisor soon, so that you can receive this income tax benefit for the year in which you make your contribution. More information is available at www.irs.gov.

Hold Those Thrivent Cards in Reserve!

In January of 2026, LIFT will be at Gethsemane and VBS is at Gethsemane this summer as well. We are going to be looking for some Thrivent cards to help pay for food! As you start to think about how you want to spend your Thrivent dollars in 2026, we hope you might have Gethsemane on your list! Please talk with Pastor Rebecca if you think you'll have a card for us to use!

Advent Spiral Service

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

6:30 pm

Messiah Lutheran Church

A meditative, peace filled evening of music, reading, prayer, and the lighting of candles in a spiral of evergreen boughs.

Lutefisk & Meatball Dinner at Trinity Lutheran Church

231 Second Street SE, Cook MN 55723.
218-666-5965

Join Trinity Lutheran Church on **Saturday, December 6th at 4:00 - 6:00 pm** for their annual Community Lutefisk & Meatball Dinner. Menu includes: lutefisk, meatballs, potatoes & gravy, green beans, rutabagas, lefse, homemade bread, cranberries, pickled herring, kranssekake, cookies, and more! It is open to the public and all are welcome.

Meal cost is \$25 per adult. \$10 per youth (10-17). Free 10 and under. Take-out meals available. Net proceeds will be donated to the Cook Food Shelf.

Join us for the Annual Choralaires Christmas Concerts

Friday, December 5th, 6:00 pm
Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Virginia

Sunday, December 7th, 2:00 pm
Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Virginia



Visual Arts Advent Service at Our Savior's

Wednesday, December 10th at 6:30pm:

ADVENT SERVICE OPPORTUNITY We are seeking art works to be displayed in our worship space for our service on **December 10 at 6:30**. This will be a contemplative hour for folks to get away from the rush of Christmas planning and shopping to pray and meditate to the accompaniment of visual art and music. If you have paintings, photographs, or other visual art that you believe would enhance our worship space in this hour, please contact **Anna De Foe at amdefoe@msn.com**. We hope to hear from you!

Sunday, Dec. 14th, 3:00 pm at Gethsemane



Other Worship Opportunities on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Messiah, 8592 Enterprise Dr So, Mountain Iron
Christmas Eve, December 24th at 6:00 pm
Christmas Day, December 25th at 10:00 am
Our Savior's, 1111 8th Street South, Virginia
Christmas Eve, December 24th at 4:00 pm

