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Gethsemane Lutheran Church

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Rebecca LeMenager
Pastor
Brenda "Bunny" Varani
Parish Secretary

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

Gethsemane Gazette

May, 2026

Volume 48, Issue 5

Join us for May Worship and Events!

Senior Sunday, May 17th, 9:00 am

We will be honoring our seniors during the worship service. Please join us and wish them luck in their new adventures with a celebration for the graduates during Coffee An' after worship in the Fellowship Hall.

Also happening during worship will be the presentation of our College Scholarships.

Our Seniors for the class of 2026 are:

<i>Cally Joe Anderson</i>	<i>Ethan Michael Boe</i>
<i>Milee Allison Gianlorenzi</i>	<i>Lennon Olivia Hilde</i>
<i>Emma Kay Lintula</i>	<i>Hallie Rae Pauling</i>
<i>Brady Ryan Peterson</i>	<i>Nolan Michael Peterson</i>
<i>Connor Vernon Saxhaug</i>	<i>Kaija Rose Suihkonen</i>
<i>Elijah Christopher Wedge</i>	



Blessing of the Quilts, May 17th, 9:00 am

Join us as we have a special blessing of the quilts made by our Mission Sewers. Each year the group sends out several boxes of quilts to Lutheran Relief.

The quilts will be displayed on the pews of the church for everyone to see and bless with prayer during the service.

Also, they will be giving a quilt to each of the High School graduates of Gethsemane.



Palm Sunday Service with the Youth Group Leading

Worship
and
the
Sunday
School
Kids
Singing!!



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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Celebrate Pentecost With Us! Outdoor Worship Service & Picnic

Sunday, May 24 at 10am

NEW LOCATION:

Lion's Bulding in Olcott Park

What to Bring:
~A Lawn chair
~Your Own Beverage

We Will Provide:
~The Meal
~Plates and Utensils
~Kids Activities

Gethsemane, Messiah, Our Savior's Lutheran Churches

April Angels

Thank you to the April angels who signed up for their month: Sue Hiltunen, Dana and Tom Hiltunen, David and Renee' Pollock, and our camera operators: Dana Waldron, Joyce Bloomquist, Molly Pemmaraju, and Sam Davidson-Teff. I would also like to thank the members of the congregation who helped out but were not a part of the April angel list: Dan Gallagher, Mike Tuominen, Sheila Vandervort, Gethsemane Youth Group, Dawn Matschiner, Debbie Poderzay, Mary Sterling, Tony Mazzeo, Donna Flannigan, Evie & Rick Kinnunen, Ken & Barb Alaspa. Even without a coordinator for the month, we were still able to get the ministry work done.. It is so amazing to see what can be accomplished when we all pitch in together!!

Blessings to All of you...

Gethsemane Men's Group

The next men's group will be meeting on **Wednesday, May 6th at 6:30 pm** in the Library. Any questions, please call Dan Alto at 847-917-3765.

All Women of Gethsemane

Thursday, May 28th, at 5:00 pm in the Youth Room. We are having a casual get together just to "hang out" with other gals and enjoy visiting, relaxing, and having some laughs.

We meet on the 4th Thursday of each month. No commitments, just bring yourself and your own beverage. Please come. - we'll have a fun time! Hope to see you there!

THIS MONTH'S STAR WORD QUESTION:

(Please discuss this question with someone and/or journal and reflect on it)

As we look towards summer, what is one thing you can do this summer to live out your faith word?



From the Pastor

For thus says the Lord:
I will extend prosperity to her like a river and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream, and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm and bounced on her knees.
As a mother comforts her child,
so I will comfort you;

~Isaiah 66:12-13

From the Pastor

- continued-

Mother's Day is hard as a pastor. Not only because there is always a little guilt that you are celebrating mothers while being away from your own, but also because of all the pit falls around this day. On the surface, it feels pretty straight forward: bring into the worship service a time to celebrating mothers. But below the surface are rocks and hidden logs that can often snag and capsize a boat. Here are just a couple of examples of challenges that I've experienced in my ministry when planning worship:

First, sometimes people are not open to thinking of God as Mother. When using imagery in worship on Mother's Day, sometimes there is resistance to using feminine or "Mother" imagery despite the fact that masculine and "Father" imagery is standard. Perhaps you think that is because "Father" is Biblical. I would challenge that so is "Mother" such as the image of a mother hen who shelters her young under her wings. There are so many images for God: Rock, Refuge, Bread, Shepherd, Dove, Deer, Eagle, Lamp, Fire, Fortress, Sheild, Shadow/shade, Whirlwind... What ones can you think of that I missed? When we expand our imagery of God we expand our understanding of God as well. Because we have certain connotations with certain words, to have many names and images of God can help us find new paths to the Divine.

And second, navigating worship can also be difficult because of the pastoral care aspects. Mother's Day can be difficult for some in many different ways. Some women are dealing with or have dealt with infertility or wanting to be a mother but cannot. There are those who have lost children or had miscarriages. There are both men and women who are grieving the loss of their own mother. And some who are estranged from their mothers, have a difficult or complicated relationship with their moms..

And yet, I believe this day, even with all its pitfalls, is worth celebrating. Let us give thanks for the women in our lives who love and nurture us: Mothers—biological, adopted, foster or mothers of the heart, Stepmoms and Bonus Moms, Aunties and Sisters, coaches and neighbors and friends... we are blessed to have women who guide us and love us into becoming the people God has created us to be. So this Mother's Day, I hope we will all take time to celebrate a mother's love—in all the ways we have that is present in our lives, including the love of God who is Father and Mother to us all.

~Pastor Rebecca

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: Dave Hanson, Nikki Hauff, Madison Grace Brockberg, Pastor Ellen Taube, Jane Erickson, Jennifer Anshus, and Lillian Ferkins.

We continue to pray for;

- ♦ All members who are homebound, in nursing homes, or assisted living.

Prayers of peace and comfort for:

- ♦ Family and friends on the death of Judy Bennick.
- ♦ Family and friends on the death of Helen Niemi

Congratulations!

We celebrate with the Ramfjord's as Jennie Nelson and Ian Ramfjord are joined in Holy Matrimony at Gethsemane Lutheran Church on Saturday, May 16, 2026.

Blessings to the couple on their special day.



Council Highlights

Hope everyone ha a great Easter! On Monday after Easter Sunday, the new doors were installed in the front entrance and hopefully everyone is enjoying them. The property team will meet on Sunday, May 3rd, after church in the Fellowship Hall for a quick meeting to make a plan to see what will done to the doors on each side of new glass doors.

Pastor Rebecca had a busy month with Lenten Services, Holy Week, hospital, nursing home and in home visits. She also spend time on Mission Trip details.

Bruce went over the finance reports, we are still below budget but are hopeful that the Easter giving will help.

Aubree talked a little about the Safe Sanctuary policy, and hopefully will be meeting with Messiah and Our Savior's to get things tied up.

Peace,
Ken Alaspa
Church Council Vice President

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!



Weekly Giving

Giving update: 2026

Month	Actual Income	Budgeted Expenses	Shortfall or Surplus
JAN	16,267	21,085	-4,818
FEB	15,906	21,085	-5,179
MAR	24,504	21,085	3,419
APR	18,065	21,085	-3,020
Y-T-D	74,742	84,340	-9,598

Bruce Kniivila,
Treasurer



Blessings to all who have a Birthday this Month:

- 2: Lisa Krause
- 3: Ashlyn Randall
- 6: Graeme Harvey
- 7: Lani Laakso
- 8: Lee Laakso, Lance Ness, Scarlett Pipkin
- 9: Robert Thomas
- 11: Brant Tiedeman, Lokken Koop, Solveig Koop
- 12: Ben Harvey, Kathleen Horvath, Sydney Spelts
- 13: Orion Del Greco, Marcie Speer
- 14: Giles Friedlieb, Marjory Wood
- 15: Jeffery Hanson
- 17: Leslie Gustafson, Willy Spelts
- 19: Joyce Bloomquist
- 20: Steve Carlson, Dan Gallagher
- 22: Bill Bauman, Dawn Matschiner, Clarence Mattson, Brenda Ryberg
- 23: Dana Hiltunen
- 24: Greg Manninen
- 25: Wendy Krause
- 26: Shelby Karakas
- 27: Lori Ismil, Evie Kinnunen, Tom Krause
- 28: Bethany Harvey
- 30: Steven Ramfjord

Memorial Gifts received during the month of April

In Memory of: Judy Bennick
From: Mary Sterling

Office Closed

Just a reminder that the church office will be closed on Monday, May 25th in observance of Memorial Day.

Take Care and enjoy the holiday!



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

- 5/3: Debra and Glenn Dall
- 5/5: Keith and Laurie Harvey
- 5/5: Cheryl and Matt Seppi
- 5/17: Callyn and Sam Michaels
- 5/18: Jerry Ruml and Mindy Lind-Ruml
- 5/19: Diana and Mike Hauber
- 5/21: Bruce and Ethie Kniivila
- 5/24: Darcy and Mark Norha
- 5/31: Evie and Rick Kinnunen

Remember Your



Celebrating the Anniversary of your Baptism

- 5/1: Jennifer Krenz, Ann Nelson
- 5/2: Ray Erickson
- 5/8: John Anderson, Matthew Koski
- 5/10: Paula Hanson
- 5/12: Ronny Shoden
- 5/15: Larry Roberts
- 5/16: Brad Anderson
- 5/18: Aria Jandrey, Shelley Zeidler
- 5/19: Rhett Baty
- 5/20: Bekah Davidson
- 5/21: Ian Ramfjord
- 5/23: Fran Shimmin
- 5/25: Dominic Pauling
- 5/28: Ellie Gulbranson, Lokken Koop, Solveig Koop
- 5/29: Cindy Bird, Grace Randall
- 5/30: Braden Tiedeman
- 5/??: Penny Stecker

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

Faith Builders (Preschool - grade 6)

The Sunday School children have been busy learning God's word. They will be heading outside to clean up the church yard during Earth week and maybe doing some planting. On Mother's Day, the children will be singing and this will be the last day of Sunday School.

VBS is coming to Gethsemane July 26 - July 29, 2026. Be sure to save the date and hope to see you all there!

Gods Peace,
Pam and Donna

Summer Event!!



**Sunday, July 26th - Wednesday, July 29th
5pm - 8pm**

Gethsemane Lutheran Church

This summer, we will welcome staff from Camp Onomia to lead Vacation Bible School!

The theme verse is "Wear Love" (based on Colossians 3:12-14) and during VBS, youth will explore what it means to "put on" love as part of their identity as God's beloved children.

Through Bible stories, worship, and activities they'll practice Christlike virtues - Kindness, Humbleness, Calmness, Steadfastness, and Forgiveness - discovering how love sustains us, weaves us together, and shapes our witness in the world.



L.I.F.T. Program

Our 1st service project was cleaning and raking at the Angel of Hope Park!



L.I.F.T. Program



Join us for the Spring Session of LIFT!

**3-6th Grade Youth Group
Confirmation**

**Sr. High Youth Group
NEW! Adult Bible Study!!**

All adults are invited to this 5-Week, lectionary based Bible Study. No preparation or homework required! Bring your questions & curiosity!

Schedule

- 6:00pm - 6:30pm: Dinner**
- 6:30pm: Worship with Communion**
- 6:50pm - 8:00pm: Groups**

LIFT Fun Night

All are invited to join the LIFT crew at the LIFT fun night! You do NOT have to have youth in LIFT to join the fun! This is open to all ages!

Date: Wednesday: May 13

Time: 6 pm

Where: Greens on Foreteenth
(110 S 14th Ave W, Virginia, MN 55792)

Cost: Free

Please RSVP by calling the church office



Wedding Renewal**Sam & Callyn Michaels****(and Freyja)** invite you to their vow renewal on Sunday, May 17

at 1pm at the church. Lunch reception directly following. If you plan to attend the lunch, please let them know or call the church so they can plan for food.

**Generosity Team Favor of the Month
May Favor of the Month - VLM SPLASH!**

The waterfront at Voyageurs Lutheran Ministry is one of the most loved places at camp - where campers swim, fish, launch canoes, laugh with friends and experience the joy of God's creation. To keep campers safe and the programs strong, the docks now need to be replaced.

The Generosity Team is asking our church to help VLM! Please consider a monetary donation that we can combine together to help them! \$200 will sponsor one foot of dock - wonder how many feet Gethsemane can sponsor? Please use the special envelopes included in your bulletin, or add your offering to our Noisy Offering on Sunday, May 31st! Thank you so much!!

Your Weekly Offering

To be certain that you are receiving credit for your weekly offering to Gethsemane, please make sure that your offering is in an envelope with your name and amount included. Please do not use last year's offering envelopes as the envelope numbers change from year to year. While we certainly accept any loose offering, your family will get credit for any offering that is clearly designated. All donations made to Gethsemane can be included on your yearly tax return! Thank you!

**Pastor Rebecca Participating in the
2026 Faith Forward Cohort**

Pastor Rebecca has applied and been accepted into the Faith Forward Cohort at Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa. (for more information check out their website: <https://www.grandview.edu/faitH-forward>) This program is made possible by a Lilly grant and is geared specifically to support parents, grandparents and other caring adults pass on the faith to children and youth by encouraging faith formation practices at home. Through this program, we will be offering resources for faith conversations, prayer, reading the Bible together and other ways to grow in faith together as a family. Start looking for resources in the fall!

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 - Melanie and Ryan Peterson

Hello! We are the Peterson family: Ryan, Melanie, Brennan (22) & Brady (18). Our journey here at Gethsemane Church started after we made the decision to return to our roots from years away in Sheboygan, Wisconsin and Lakeville, Minnesota. It was 2010 and our boys were 6 & 2 at the time. We knew we wanted to provide a faith-based environment for our boys to grow up in, and for Ryan and I to reconnect to our faith as well. We made the decision to start attending Gethsemane early on and became official members in 2013! It was a perfect fit for us with many friends and familiar, welcoming faces greeting us each week. Brady began by being baptized here and Brennan was quick to start attending Sunday school.

As I reflect now on all the wonderful opportunities the Gethsemane church has provided for us, I feel so blessed. Both boys literally grew up here. From Sunday school, to the fond reminders of Christmas programs (as we now watch the little ones in current years), attending summer vacation Bible school, then moving into their years of Confirmation and filling roles in church services as acolytes, and taking yearly opportunities to be greeters, ushers, & readers in services. To see them blossom into young men who feel comfortable surrounded by this loving and open church family has truly been the biggest blessing! It's everything we could have hoped for, and it's because of this church that they have come full-circle.

We also give much thanks for the generosity of this church in providing our boys years of opportunity through attending summer day & overnight camps at both Camp Vermilion & Camp Hiawatha (creating lasting friendships), going on overnight retreats, and receiving handmade blankets & college scholarships as they move onto their adult journeys! Brennan has been fortunate to earn his A.A. at Mesabi College and continues his studies in Mathematics at Florida Gulf Coast University in Ft. Myers, Florida. Brady will be looking towards his future as he celebrates his High School graduation next month (and dually receives his A.A. from Minnesota North College). Giving back has been something important (and character building) for us as well. Brady has enjoyed sharing his love of music and his violin by taking part in church services (special thanks to Sue Swanson for being his side-kick), Brennan stepping up as a reader

Generosity Team**- continued-**

(just like his Dad) to gain self-confidence & spending time helping with summer rummage sales (in years past) as well. For me, being on the Offering Team for several years has been a small way to say "thank you" for all we have received.

While sitting down and putting my thoughts on paper seemed a little daunting, this process has reawakened so many beautiful memories! It has been a perfect reminder of just how amazing this ride has been here at Gethsemane with all of you! We look forward to many more years of worshipping, breaking bread, growing in our faith, giving where we can, and sharing peace in this amazing environment with you all!



Grateful. Thankful. Blessed.

Free Community Closet at Our Savior's

A group of volunteers from a variety of churches and the community have come together to keep open the community closet and food room every Wed. from Noon-3pm. **The community closet is located in the West Wing at Our Savior's Lutheran Church.** The food room is also available for folks in need of a meal or two to get through the week.

With the closure of Ruby's Pantry, we have already seen an increase in folks coming for food each week. We would love to have more volunteers make this community ministry continue. If you would like to volunteer to work on a Wednesday, drop off food donations or make a financial contribution you can do so by calling the office at **Our Savior's (218-741-6207)** and Colleen will connect you with the right people! Together we can make a difference in and for our community!

Voyageurs Lutheran Ministry**VLM Camp Employment Opportunities**

VLM is in need of a year round Food Service Director, Summer Kitchen Help, Maintenance Assistant, and Summer Counselors (+18YO).

For more information, visit www.vlmcamps.org/year-round positions.

Summer 2026 Registration Is Now Open

Ready for the best week of summer? Registration for Voyageurs Lutheran Ministry (VLM) Summer 2026 programs at Camp Hiawatha and Camp Vermilion is officially open! We offer amazing Christ centered experiences for all ages: **Traditional Week-Long Programs; Specialty Camps (Canoe Country, Hockey Camp, etc.); Shorter options for young campers; Family Camps.** It's great to be alive in God's great Northwoods! To register and for more Information, visit www.vlmcamps.org.

Camp Vermilion Work Day

Gethsemane Lutheran Church sponsors the Thompson Cabin at Camp Vermilion, and **Saturday May 16th is Camp Vermilion Work Day.** Come as a group or individually. There are plenty of projects for everyone!

Call Camp Vermilion directly to RSVP: 800-331-5148.

SCHEDULE**9:00 - 9:30 am -**

Registration, Coffee & Rolls

9:30 am - 12:30 pm - The work happens!**12:30 pm -** Lunch**1:30 pm -** The work continues if need be!**Camp Vermilion -**

2555 Vermilion Camp Road, Cook, MN.



"Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live."
Marty Haugen - Hymn, All Are Welcome

CONCERT FOR A CAUSE

Our Savior's Lutheran Church
1111 8th St S, Virginia

MONDAY, MAY 11TH AT 6:00PM**FREE Admission - a free will offering will be collected**

Our first annual Concert for a Cause is partnering with Recycled Lives, a nonprofit working in a Guatemala community where residents live around a garbage dump in tin shacks. We are hoping to raise \$6000 to provide a home for a family in need.



This is a typical house built by Recycled Lives

George Croft, voice
Jim De Foe, voice
Anna De Foe, piano
Jen Fredrickson, piano
Al Fredrickson, voice and guitar
Beth Getman, violin
Shannon Gunderson, voice
Kristi Ongalo, voice
Mark Ongalo, organ and piano
MostlyNelson, quartet
Pete Pellinen, voice
and others.

Classic to modern music will be performed.