



NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
VIRGINIA, MN
55792
PERMIT NO. 57

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Gethsemane Lutheran Church

901 Fourth Street South
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

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

Buddy Backpacks

We came together to make a difference for children in our community who need food support. The many volunteers that showed up on a cold and snowy night to help fill backpacks were so appreciated!

This was a simple but powerful way to show care and compassion—and it was a great opportunity for friends, families, and groups to serve together. Every backpack filled means a child won't go hungry.

Thank you to Messiah and Peace for helping us pack just under 2,000 lunches in just an hour!



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

Inside this issue:

- Nurturing Faith 2
- From the Pastor 2
- Christian Education, L.I.F.T. 3
- Service in our Congregation 4
- Service in Community and World 5
- People of Gethsemane 6
- Congregational Support 7
- Prayer Wall 7
- Buddy Backpack 8



Gethsemane Gazette

February, 2026 Volume 48, Issue 2

Join us for February Worship and Events!

Soup Suppers and Worship Services During Lent Ash Wednesday Service:

Wednesday, February 18—6:30pm in the Sanctuary
An evening service with the disposition of ashes but no communion will take place in the sanctuary. This is a solemn service that marks the beginning of our Lenten journey to the cross. We will NOT be having a soup supper that night, but meals will start the following week.

Lenten Soup Suppers and Table Worship Services with Faith Talks

Wednesdays Feb 25, March 4, 11, 18 & 25—Soup Dinner at 6pm, Worship at 6:30pm.

Join us for a simple meal of soup and bread and a short, informal worship service around tables in the Fellowship Hall. Back by popular demand, we will eat together and then in our short worship service, lay members of the church will share a "Faith Talk" in lieu of a sermon. Join us for just one or all of them, both for dinner and the service or just one or the other as your schedule allows. No need to RSVP, just come!

You Can Help!

Pastor Rebecca is looking for groups who would be willing to prepare, serve and clean up after the soup supper on any Wednesday and lay people willing to share their faith story during worship (other and February 25th as Bill Bauman will be doing the faith talk and the choir the meal). If you can help in any way, please connect with Pastor Rebecca. Thank you!

Friends of the Virginia Public Library Fundraiser Event

The Friends of the Virginia Public Library are hosting Ink & Ivory, stories told in piano duets and performed by Bailey Conger and Marjorie Miller. This is a fundraiser event to continue the vital support, resources and promotion the Friends of the Library provide to the Virginia Public Library.

Ink & Ivory will be presented on **Thursday, February 12, 2026, at Gethsemane Lutheran Church starting at 5pm.** Admission will be a free will money donation at the door. Bailey and Marjorie will play approximately a dozen piano duets plus share interesting backstories beforehand about each piece. These duets are taken from movies and musical theatre productions that began as books. The evening will start with appetizers, refreshments and a silent auction and will then proceed to the concert.

Friends of the Virginia Public Library
Fundraiser Event
Ink and Ivory
Stories Told in Duet
Performed by Bailey Conger and Marjorie Miller
Thursday, February 12 at 5:00 pm
Gethsemane Lutheran Church
901 4th St S Virginia, MN



Appetizers and refreshments with concert to follow
Free will donation and silent auction proceeds will benefit
The Virginia Public Library. CASH/CHECK ONLY



January Angels

Much thanks and appreciation to the following who so kindly helped with Angel duties in January: Tony Mazzeo, Dan Gallagher, Pam Fields, Tanya and Steve Carlson, Dana Waldron, L.I.F.T volunteers, members of the Church Council and my husband, Bennet Bloomquist. Also, a big thanks to our wonderful secretary, Bunny, who always helps with a smile! In gratitude.

Joyce Bloomquist
January Angel Coordinator

All Women of Gethsemane

Thursday, February 26th, at 5:30 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!

Fellowship and Generosity Teams

Join the Fellowship and Generosity committee on February 15 for Caring Cards and Happy Hearts. During coffee an you will have the opportunity to send a card to someone you’ve missed, want to congratulate, thinking about them or just want to say hi. We will provide the cards and stamps. We will also have some valentine fun, cookie decorating and great goodies! All are welcome!

THIS MONTH’S STAR WORD QUESTION:

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

What was your initial reaction when you saw your star word. Why might this be a good word for you this year?



From the Pastor

“We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.” ~2 Corinthians 4:10-12

I remember vividly being about 10 and a struggle I had on Ash Wednesday. We had gone to church for the service and on my forehead was that ashy cross. My mom asked if I wanted to stop at the library which was open until 8pm. I have always been a reader and loved nothing more than stopping for a huge armful of books, but I was at the age when you first start getting self-conscious about everything. I didn’t want everyone to stare at the dark cross on my forehead. And yet somehow I also sensed that I shouldn’t just rub it off. What to do?!

What is this ash on our foreheads and why is this a thing? On Ash Wednesday, the ashes are often from last year’s palms from Palm Sunday. For us, at Gethsemane, our Sunday School kids collected and burned the palms and collected the ashes that we will use this year. The ashes on our forehead are a visible and tangible sign of the season of Lent. We are reminded of our mortality and complete dependence on God. And dating back to the Old Testament times, ashes were a symbol or repentance and turning away from sin and once more orientating ourselves to Christ.

And so I hope whether you come to Ash Wednesday service and have literal ashes placed upon your forehead or if you just symbolically remember that we are from dust and to dust we shall return, that you will take time during Lent to turn from those things that distract and draw you away from God. I hope you turn to God in prayer and worship and other spiritual practices. For Christ is calling us to follow him to the cross. For it is only through death that we come to know resurrection. It is only through the dark night of the tomb that we can experience the joy of Easter morning.

I look forward to journeying to the cross with you this Lent.

Pastor Rebecca

Prayer Wall

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

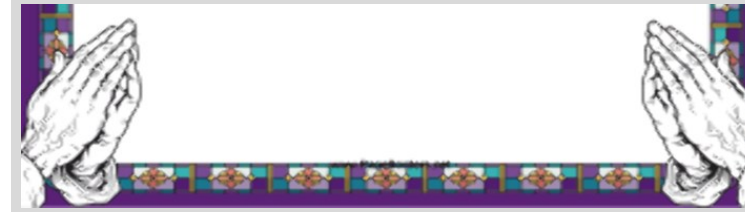
- ♦ The innocents suffering in the war in Israel/Palestine; those displaced from their homes in Gaza; those suffering in Ukraine, Lebanon, and Sudan. We pray for those in need of strength and healing: Pastor Ellen Taube, Jane Erickson Jennifer Anshus, and Lillian Ferkins.

We continue to pray for;

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

Prayers of peace and comfort for:

- ♦ Family and friends on the death of John Rova (Pastor Marion’s husband)
- ♦ Family and friends on the death of Judy Mazzeo
- ♦ Family and friends on the death of Fran Shimmin



Annual Meeting of the Congregation was held on Sunday, January 25, 2026

2026 Returning Council Members:

- Bennet Bloomquist, President
- Bruce Kniivila, Treasurer
- Laurie Harvey, member at large
- Pam Fields, member at large
- Sam Michaels, member at large

2026 Newly Nominated Council Members:

- Mayme Barber, member at large
- Matthew Bothwell, member at large
- Aubree Schiller, member at large
- Julie Spiering, member at large
- Ken Alaspa, member at large

2026 Synod Assembly Delegates:

- Gail Wieman and Dawn Matschiner

2026 Nominating Committee: According to our constitution, this committee shall consist of outgoing members of the Congregational Council, elected for a term of one year.

- Sheila Davidson
- Mary Horan
- Donna Flannigan
- Debbie Poderzay

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

December giving was quite strong, averaging \$7,321 per week. This helped minimize the shortfall of \$17,767 for the total year 2025. Several QCD contributions were received, which can benefit the donors by reducing their income taxes,

As discussed and approved at the Annual Meeting on 1/25/2026, the Annual Budget for 2026 shows budgeted expenditures of \$252,983 for the total year, or \$4,865 per week. We are facing a challenge for 2026.. January giving is averaging \$3,661 per week, which is \$1,204 per week short of the budget. You are encouraged to continue using the very helpful QCD method of contributing. And of course, all donations are helpful and welcome. Stay warm..

Bruce Kniivila, Treasurer





Blessings to all who have a Birthday this Month

- 1: Aria Janrey, Sam Michaels
- 4: Richard Vandervort, Clayton Zeidler
- 5: Eila Isaacson, Mary Sterling
- 6: Darcy Norha, Juliana Pauling
- 9: Jaleen O'Connor
- 10: Brennan Peterson
- 11: Alexa Ismil, William Kamnikar, Cindy Lustig, Matt Seppi
- 13: Brad Anderson
- 14: Emmi Aluni
- 16: Jason Ramfjord
- 17: Russ Wallner, Jillian Zeidler
- 19: Judith Mazzeo
- 20: Joyce Giblin
- 21: Delilah Jensen, Mark Norha, Olivia Rumpl
- 23: Beth Emery, Trevor Ranisate
- 24: Georgene Tomazin
- 25: Lennon Hilde
- 26: Erik Wedge
- 27: Christine Lehtinen

Memorial Gifts received during the month of January

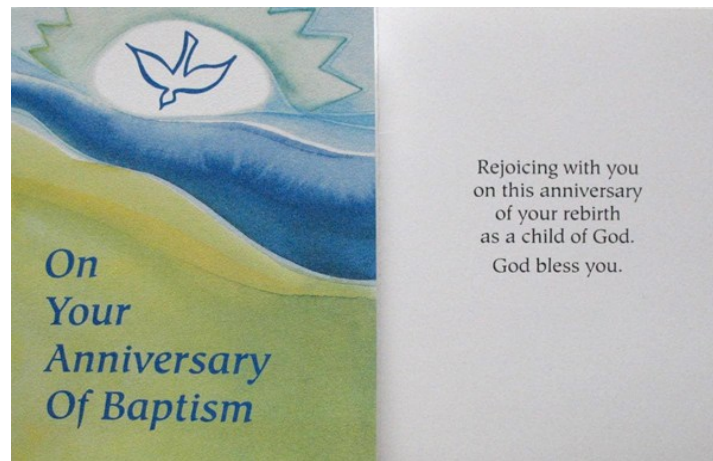
| | |
|----------------------|---|
| In Memory of: | From: |
| Judy Mazzeo | Richard & Sheila Vandervort |
| Fran Shimmin | Laurie & Keith Harvey, Dan & Patty Briski, Bunny Varani, Barb & Ken Alaspa, Martha Mannes, Debbie Fremling & Brad Hamilton, Sandra & Jack Radovich, Julie Phaneuf Hill, Terry & Claire Ruper, Mary Sterling, Richard & Sheila Vandervort, Sue & Tom Hiltunen, Laurie & Betty Ann Laakso |

Happy Anniversary



Look who's celebrating their Anniversary for February, enjoy your Special Day!

- 2/2 Brent and Lisa Marchetti
- 2/12 Dawn and Robert Thomas
- 2/14 Sue and Tom Hiltunen



Celebrating the Anniversary of your Baptism

- 2/1: Kimmy Christenson, Nancy Richter
- 2/8: Derek Jorgenson, Joely Roberts
- 2/14: Nicholas Richards
- 2/20: Michael Alto
- 2/21: Andrew Alto
- 2/22: Eric Krenz, Riley Krenz
- 2/23: Jeremy Waldron
- 2/28: Troy Ness
- 2/29: Lance Ness
- 2/??: Seth Hauber

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



Winter L.I.F.T. Schedule

- January 7
- January 14
- January 21
- January 28
- February 4
- February 11
- February 22nd Fun Day

Living in Faith Together, the shared faith formation program between Gethsemane, Our Savior's, and Messiah, resumes **January 7th** at Gethsemane Lutheran Church!!

- Elementary Youth Group Grades 3-6
- Confirmation Grades 7 & 8 (and some 9th)
- Senior High Youth Group

The Winter "All Church" session will be on January 7th. This interactive session kicks off our winter theme of Who is my neighbor? Our NEMN Synod Bishop, Amy Odgren will be leading us as we explore Who is the ELCA? Who is Synod? and Who is my neighbor? Registration is LIVE for those that are joining LIFT for the first time this year. (If you registered in the fall you do not need to register again.)

Register Here: <https://forms.gle/aHRqdEyDcBypU69w8> OR use QR code



LIFT REMINDER:

Due to an event at Gethsemane on Thursday, Feb 12, the last LIFT session (February 11th) will be held at Our Savior's instead of Gethsemane.

Faith Builders (Preschool - grade 6)

Sunday school has had the chance to learn a little more about the life of Moses. We will be changing our focus in February. Ash Wednesday is coming -February 18th. Remember making ashes with Gail? That also means we will be studying the crucifixion and preparing for Palm Sunday participation. Hope to see you there!

Pam and Donna

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

Upcoming...

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.

OTHER MISSION TRIP FUNDRAISERS

Stay tuned for upcoming LIFT Mission Trip Fundraisers coming soon:
Sarma Sale: The youth will be selling delicious sarmas! They are perfect for dinner or freeze well. More details soon!
Noodle sale: Ever had Nana's Noodles? The youth will be helping make noodles and will be selling them as another mission trip fundraiser! These noodles are delicious in soups with sauce or all on their own. More details to come!

Yappy Bracelets and Keychains

We still have a few Yappy Bracelets and Keychains available. They are \$15.00 each and available in the church office. Please talk with Pastor Rebecca.

Look for the poster introducing all the LIFT youth going on the Mission Trip

We will soon have a poster up with pictures, names and a short blurb of each person going on the mission trip. We will let you know once it is up and where to find it!

Men's Group First Planning Meeting

Gethsemane Church – Library, Date Feb. 4, 2026

Time: 6:30 pm.

Dan Alto will chair the first meeting to work with the men's group to determine our path forward. At the first meeting bring topics that you would like to discuss at future meetings. We will determine future meeting logistics like dates and times and select our first topics of discussion. We should select a name for our men's group. One I thought of is Journeyman. I thought this would reflect our journeys though life and faith.

Foster Care Closet Corner

We are excited to report that we were able to help some of our St. Louis County social workers this month! It was wonderful to have them walk through the closet and take some very needed supplies!! We will let you know when we might need some more supplies. Thank you!!

Snow Shoveling

We are looking for volunteers to help shovel snow away from the entrances of the building & the food pantry. Snow shovels & 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.

Thank You Gabe and Kai Meehan, and Mark Olson who volunteered for the month of January! Your help was greatly appreciated. Any questions, please call Bennet Bloomquist at 218-780-8357.

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 is you think you'll have a card for us to use!

Range Transitional Housing

Many heartfelt thanks to the generosity of those who fulfilled the Range Transitional Housing Christmas "needs and wishes," you never fail to provide. Thank you to all who "dressed the hat and mitten tree" with warm donations. And thank you all for being such wondrous blessings to so many, Cindy.

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 – Evie and Rick Kinnunen

Rick and I share a history here at Gethsemane having been confirmed here. It is here where our paths diverged but we have each grown in our faith and our love of the Lord. Fast forward a few decades. We came together again with our marriage here at Gethsemane in 2014 and blended our families. We make our home on Clear Lake in Britt.

In the summer we are busy with lake activities, golf and gardening. Winter will find us at Curl Mesabi, curling and volunteering. We love to travel and have been blessed to have been to many amazing places.

We are grateful for the love and support of this wonderful church family. Through the blessings and the challenges we have faced, we have felt God's loving arms around surround us here. We have been active members of our church community, serving on council and on many other committees. Special kudos to Rick for being chief Lutefisk cooker for the past several years. He would love to train an apprentice! We hope to continue to serve as we are called for many years.



Congregations Caring

Support Wildlife, Biodiversity, and Beauty Where You Live!

Faithful Earth Keepers is partnering with Hope Community Presbyterian Church to host a forum on **Saturday, February 7 at 1pm** on how we can all make a difference. We'll watch a video presentation by entomologist, Dr. Doug Tallamy, on how even small efforts can have big impacts for wildlife and pollinator populations.

Then we'll hear from Dan Schutte from Shoreview Natives in Two Harbors on the how-to's of creating small or large native plant habitat on your property. Even if you don't own property, you can help with conservation efforts in your community! We hope to see you on February 7th!

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!

OSLC Mid-week Lent Soup Supper & Worship
 Soup at 5:30 pm
 Worship at 6:15 pm
 Wednesdays: Feb. 25, Mar. 4, 11, 18, 25

88th Annual **Laskiainen** Finnish Sliding Festival

SATURDAY & SUNDAY FEBRUARY 7-8, 2026
 LOON LAKE COMMUNITY CENTER
 3816 HIGHWAY 100, AURORA, MN 55705

Join us for two days of fun with artisans, vendors, official Laskiainen gear, horse-drawn carriage rides, dog sleds, and epic hill sliding!

PREFERRED SLEDS:
 Plastic or wood toboggans!
NO SAUCERS OR METAL SLEDS
 SLIDE AT YOUR OWN RISK

| Saturday, February 7th | Sunday, February 8th |
|--|---|
| 7:30 am Ethnic Kropsua Breakfast | 7:30 am Palo Fire Dept Pancake Feed |
| 9am to 4pm Artisans & Demonstrations In Laskiainen Tradition | 9:30 am Ecumenical Worship Service |
| Laskiainen Shoppe | 9am to 4pm Artisans & Demonstrations In Laskiainen Tradition |
| Finnish Breads Bakery | Laskiainen Shoppe |
| Museum | Finnish Breads Bakery |
| 10am to 3pm Old Co-op Theatre | Museum |
| 10 am to 5pm Youth Basketball Games | 11:00 am Pea Soup Dinner |
| 12:00 pm Majakka Finnish Stew | 1:00 pm STAGE SHOW: Hauliwood Dreams with Steve Solkela & friends |
| 6:00 pm Old Timers Basketball Games | 2-4 pm Queen's Reception |
| 7:30 pm Laskiainen Lakers Basketball Game | |

Scan for more info!

SATURDAY & SUNDAY FEBRUARY 7-8, 2026

Voyageurs Lutheran Ministry, Annual Meeting

Please Join Us for Important Updates on Future Plans, Board Elections, Fellowship, and more.. **Saturday, February 21st, 2026, 10:00 am at Messiah Lutheran Church , 8590 Enterprise Dr S. Mountain Iron, MN 55768**

North St. Louis County Habitat for Humanity Annual Dinner and Fundraiser

Thursday, February 26; 5 pm social hour, 6 pm dinner
 Mountain Iron Community Center

Live Music/Blueberry chutney chicken dinner/Prizes
 Tickets: \$50 per person. Only 200 seats available!
 Call 218-749-8910 to RSVP by February 13th.

The highlight of the evening will be a keynote speech by Maria High, a Habitat homeowner who will share how Habitat has led to stability, civic engagement, and greater confidence.