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**Gethsemane Lutheran Church**

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 Virginia, MN 55792  
 Phone: 218-741-4961  
 Email: [gelc@gelc.info](mailto: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](http://www.gelc.info)

# Help us pack Buddy Backpacks!

4:30-6 pm  
 Wednesday January 21st  
 United Way of NE MN (608 East Drive, Chisholm MN)

Call the church office at 218-741-4961 to sign up!



United Way of NE MN's program feeds 900+ local children at-risk of hunger every weekend and holiday break of the school year. The organization requires all volunteers for Buddy Backpacks be 12+ and requests volunteers wear comfortable shoes.

# Gethsemane Gazette

January, 2026 Volume 48, Issue 1

Gethsemane Lutheran  
 Church  
 Virginia, Minnesota  
[www.gelc.info](http://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

**Join us for January Worship and Events!**

**Annual Report Assembled January 15th**

Volunteers are once again needed to help assemble the annual report on Thursday, Jan. 15th at 9:30 am in the Youth Room. The more people we have to help, the faster this job will get completed.

What a wonderful way to help out the church, and as always, your help is greatly appreciated. Thank you!!

## Annual Report



**Gethsemane Annual Meeting  
 Sunday, January 25th at 10:15 am  
 in the Sanctuary**

All confirmed members of the church are asked to attend our annual meeting of the Congregation.

The report can be picked up in the Narthex starting on Sunday, January 18th. We hope to see you all there!



**Inside this issue:**

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**Here are some pictures from the Sunday School Christmas Program!**



### December Angels

Despite such a busy month, we are so blessed with such wonderful Angels in December! Thank you so much to Ron Picek, Lee & Lisa Laakso, Abby Toivari, Dana Waldron, Melanie & Ryan Peterson, Hannah & Sam Davidson-Teff, Sheryl Kochevar, Mike Tuominen, David Lind, Tom & Cindy Lee, Nancy Rosewall, Joyce Bloomquist, Brenda Ryberg, Dan Gallagher, Tony Mazzeo, Julie Spiering, Richard & Sheila Vandervort, Mandy Brunfelt and Donna Flannigan. We couldn't do it without all of you! Thank you December Angels!

Sheila Davidson  
December Angel Coordinator

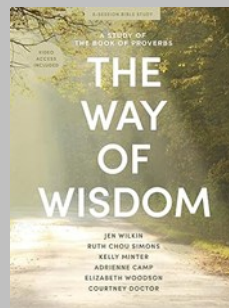
### All Women of Gethsemane

Thursday, January 22nd, 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!

### Winter Women's Bible Study

Starting on Tuesday, January 20th at 5:00 pm, we will begin a new Women's Bible Study, "The Way of Wisdom." We will be studying the book of Proverbs, where we will learn about godly wisdom, the true riches of God's instruction and how we can believe these ancient words in our modern world. Please order the workbook on Amazon.com and join us in the new year! We'd love to see you!



### New Member Class

We will be having new members join on Sunday, January 28th during worship just in time for the Congregational meeting directly following worship that Sunday!

We will be having a new member class the week of January 18th (date and time to be determined). If you are interested in joining Gethsemane or hearing more about membership, please talk with Pastor Rebecca or call the church office.



### From the Pastor

"They set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east until it stopped over the place where the child was." Matthew 2:9.

In our reading for Epiphany, we hear that the Magi followed the star to find the Christ child. In recent years, many churches have made "star words" a part of their Epiphany tradition. On Epiphany, we too will be passing out stars with a word on it. If you were not in worship on Sunday, January 4, there are stars available on the table in the narthex and you are encouraged to take one.

This word, much like the star guided the Magi, is to guide you in the year to come. And yet so many times, the star is left on the counter until eventually it is scooped up with junk mail and other detritus that piles up and thrown out or recycled. So this year to remind you to continue your star word practice, each newsletter will have a star word question. Look for it each month!

May we continue to follow Christ and be open to hearing his calling in our every day life. Happy Epiphany!]

Pastor Rebecca

#### THIS MONTH'S STAR WORD QUESTION:

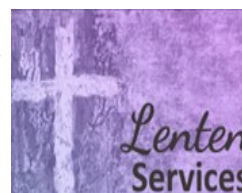
(Please talk with others at church about this question)

What is your star word and why might this word be important this year?



### Lenten Services

Need your input on Lenten Services. It's hard to believe but Lent is a month and a half away. We need your input about Lenten Services. There will be an insert in the Sunday Bulletin, please consider filling it out and returning it. If you would like it sent to you electronically, please contact 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: 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.

Prayers of peace and comfort for:

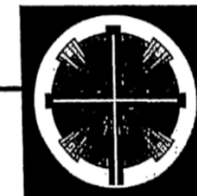
- ♦ Family and friends on the death of John Rova (Pastor Marion's husband)

### Weekly Giving

Total giving has remained high in December so far. Strong regular giving, additional seasonal giving, and a Qualified Charitable Distribution contribution combined, resulting in an average of \$7,295 per week, which is \$3,081 per week more than what is needed to meet our budgeted expenses.

Bruce Kniivila, Treasurer

### Journeyman



#### First Planning Meeting

Gethsemane Church  
Date: January or February  
Time: TBD ( 30 minutes to 1 hour)

- 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.

Sign up at church, call or email Dan Alto if interested (847-917-3765) danalto52@yahoo.com

**Proverbs 16:9** The human mind plans the way, but the LORD directs the steps.

Dan Alto

### 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](http://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!



### Forming a Gethsemane Men's Group

This is not intended to be a bible study group, but a men's discussion and sharing topics important to them in their journey through life. Potential topics may include the following;

- Sharing our gifts and talents
- Mentorship
- Parenting
- Finance & Investments
- Relationships
- Health
- Skill Development
- Succession Planning
- Sports
- Faith
- Growing the Church
- Bible topic discussion
- Favorite grilling and smoker recipes



**Blessings to all who have a Birthday this Month**

- 2: Casey Aluni, Jean Collins, Amy Dragon
- 4: Aiden Marchetti, Jordan Miller
- 5: Kash Suihkonen
- 6: Jeannine Bauman
- 7: Mandy Brunfelt
- 11: Patty Davidson
- 13: Jim Pauling
- 14: Ben Brunfelt
- 15: Larry Roberts
- 16: Matti Koski, Grace Randall
- 17: Tori Wallner
- 19: Jayne Scott, Gina Anderson
- 21: Ronny Shoden
- 22: Mary Horan
- 24: Connie Christenson, Steven Starkovich
- 25: Sylvie Dragon
- 26: Garrett Reid, Grant Reid
- 27: Jeremy Waldron
- 28: Paul Ranisate, Abby Toivari
- 29: Austin Kalisch

**Ways to Worship**

**In the Sanctuary - 9 am, Sundays**

We are worshipping in-person in our sanctuary. Please assess your own health as you consider attending worship in person. We are now receiving communion at the altar using bread and wine/grape juice. Gluten free is also available. We practice an open table, meaning all believers are welcome to partake.

**Facebook Livestream**

We will continue to livestream our worship on our Facebook page at 9 am on Sundays. The video will be available throughout the rest of the week as well.

**Local Public Access TV** (one week behind)

Worship is still available on TV, on Channel 5 (Mediacom).

**The schedule is:**

- Mondays – 7:30 pm
- Tuesdays – 4:00 pm
- Wednesdays – 10:00 am
- Fridays – 10:00 am
- Sundays – 7:45 am



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

- 1/5 Kyle and Sarah Lamppa
- 1/14 Jeffery and Paula Hanson
- 1/25 Richard and Sheila Vandervort



**Celebrating the Anniversary of your Baptism**

- 1/1: James Stanhope
- 1/2: Nathan Spiering
- 1/7: Danee' Haenke
- 1/8: Beth Collins, Jennifer Tiedeman
- 1/9: Gail Waldron
- 1/11: David Koski
- 1/12: Matt Seppi Jr.
- 1/17: Sarah Davidson
- 1/22: Robert Koski
- 1/25: Ron Reiersen
- 1/26: David Pollock
- 1/30: Daniel Hilmas, Darren Hilmas, Genevieve Zeidler

**\*\*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 22<sup>nd</sup> Fun Day

Living in Faith Together, the shared faith formation program between Gethsemane, Our Savior's, and Messiah, resumes **January 7<sup>th</sup>** 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

**L.I.F.T. Wednesday Evening Schedule**

- 6:00-6:30pm Dinner (All are welcome!)
- 6:30-6:45pm Worship with Holy Communion
- 6:45-7:50pm Youth Group & Confirmation
- 7:50-8:00pm Closing and Announcements



**Youth Silent Auction**

Thank you to everyone who supported the Mission Trip Silent Auction and quilt drawing. Because of your very generous donations and exuberant bidding, the youth were able to raise about \$1,500!

**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...**

**All of January – Superbowl Sub Sale:** Starting on Sunday, Jan 4 through Sunday, January 25, the youth will be selling Subs! The price for the Subs will be \$9. Pick up will be Superbowl Sunday after worship!

**Monday, Jan 5 – Sunday, Jan 25th, T-Shirt & Sweatshirt Sale:**

The Youth are selling T-shirts and sweatshirts through Barber Graphics (Thank you, Mayme!) They have an online store where you can order directly. Please look for the flyers in the bulletins or on the table in the Narthex or on Sundays, they will have a laptop to help you place your order if you need assistance. (Just bring your credit card) You will be emailed when to pick up your merchandise at the Barber Graphics store downtown.

**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!

**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.

### 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!!

### 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.

Thank You Mark Olson, who volunteered for a week in December! Your help was greatly appreciated...

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



### Range Transitional Housing

Once again, we sponsored Families of Range Transitional Housing to provide fulfillment of Christmas wishes. As you know, Gethsemane is revered as a sponsor who fulfills wishes for ALL of the recipients on the provided lists. What a wonderful thing that is to do. Thank you so very much for being blessings to so many.

Cindy

### Hat and Mitten Tree

Bring your gently used or new hats and mittens to the tree in the Narthex to donate towards Range Transitional Housing. The tree will stay up through the end of January.

### Generosity Team

You may remember back to February 2023 - the smell of chocolate was lingering through the church as Schokolade wrapped up. Spearheaded by Dan Karlin, Gethsemane raised \$1400 for Kiva, a nonprofit with a mission to give micro loans to entrepreneurs trying to do something good for themselves and their families.

Although you may have thought the chocolate was the fun part, next the generosity team logged into [Kiva.org](https://www.kiva.org) where the real fun began. We explored the different sectors these businesses were covering, we clicked from country to country where people were asking for loans, and then - we began funding the wonderful ideas these individuals had to help their families on the road to financial stability.

What began as \$1400 has now had an economic impact of over \$4000! Gethsemane's funds have helped 91 small businesses in 32 countries around the world. These loans have helped entrepreneurs with ventures in agriculture, clothing, education, health, service, arts, construction, food, manufacturing, and retail.

Lenders can send notes as their projects get underway or the loans get paid back. Here is one that we received in September- *Zebunisso used the loan purposefully to purchase a new sewing machine. Thanks to the loan, she was able to enhance her tailoring business by improving productivity and quality.*

*This support has given her the opportunity to expand her services, increase her income, and provide better for her family. Zebunisso expresses her sincere gratitude for your kindness, trust, and continuous support.*

So while you may have forgotten about your "chocolate change," it has gone on and helped so many families. As always thank you for your kindness, and generosity (and love of chocolate!).

**GENEROSITY**  
TEAM

### 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!

**BOOK**  
**SIGNING**  
& MEET AND GREET



**"Thus Far"**  
Poetry by Darlys Jacobson

January . 20th . 2026  
Starts . 3:00 pm  
Reading . 4:00 pm

MEET DARLYS  
AND GET YOUR OWN  
COPY SIGNED  
Books will be available for purchase



534 12th St South - use alley entrance  
Virginia MN

[redpenpoetry2@gmail.com](mailto:redpenpoetry2@gmail.com)

rsvp - [vandervort@mchsi.com](mailto:vandervort@mchsi.com) or 218.780.0019 (leave a message)

### 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 7! And you're also welcome to attend the next **Faithful Earth Keepers meeting on Monday, January 26 at 10am at Hope Community Presbyterian Church.**

### 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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

### 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**