



DECEMBER 2025

SAVING GRACE

LUTHERAN CHURCH

OUR JOURNEY

A newsletter for members and friends of Saving Grace Lutheran Church



“Established in the Holy Scriptures,
our mission is to make Jesus Christ
known to all as the One True Savior;
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

The Season of Advent

CHRISTMAS EVE

SERVICES

Wednesday, December 24th

Family Service 4pm



Candlelight Service 8pm

CHRISTMAS DAY

WORSHIP

Thursday, December 25th



10:00 AM



Events & News for December 2025

SAVING GRACE CHRISTMAS PARTY

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13
4:00 PM

Dinner provided

RSVP & sign-up in the Narthex to
set-up, clean-up, and bring snacks!

Advent Worship & Luncheon

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16

Worship at 11:00 AM
Meal to follow

RSVP in Narthex
All are welcome!



Join us for:

*a family style Spaghetti Dinner
Christmas Games, Music and more!
Sign-up in the Narthex!*

Advent Wreath Candle Lighting & Reading

Sign up to read and light the Advent
Wreath at worship services!

Sign-up sheet & readings in Narthex



Now taking orders for POINSETTIAS for Advent!

Purchase a poinsettia plant for \$10
in remembrance or honor of a loved one.
Fill out a form at the front desk in turn
in to the VISUAL mail box.

7th ANNUAL

Covered With Love

Dedicated to

**FEED MY PEOPLE
FOOD BANK**

and

**CHIPPEWA VALLEY
STREET MINISTRY**

Taking donations of non-
perishable and canned goods

Blankets & hot cocoa (in packets)

Collection will end December 17

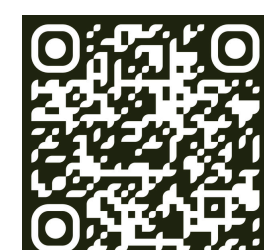
Thank you for helping Nevaeh support our community!



Have you picked up your
Advent devotional
yet?

Copies available online and in the Narthex

As we prepare for the
birth of Christ, read a
daily devotional with us!



A message from Pastor David Irgens

¹But now ***thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.*** ²***When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.*** ³***For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.*** ⁴***Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.*** ⁵***Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you.*** (Isaiah 43:1-5)

A very famous, respected, and revered British surgeon, Lord Moynihan of Leeds, was operating before a group of distinguished surgeons from around the world. One of the surgeons asked how he could do the operation apparently unperturbed by the others in the room. Lord Moynihan replied, “Well, it is like this: there are just three people in the theater when I operate--the patient and myself.” “But that is only two; who is the third?” And Moynihan replied quietly: “God.”

We place our trust in a lot of people in our lives. Sometimes we think that God is dependent upon us, but He isn't. He can do all things. Although God has chosen to use us in His plan, we are called to submit to His will and serve Him. So, Saint Augustine encouraged people to pray constantly, because God will be working with us. Shaping us, guiding us, leading us through life. That's what I love about the famous, respected and revered British surgeon Lord Moynihan. He understood that he needed God to be with him while he operated, the patient wasn't in his hands alone, but he and the patient were in God's hands. ***“With God all things are possible.” (Matt. 19:26)*** We know that with Jesus Christ, no matter the situation, ***“I can do all things through him (Christ) who strengthens me.” (Phil. 4:13)***

Our theme for this Advent and Christmas is “Coming Home.” It seems that whenever I'd come home for Christmas, the busyness of the world seemed to pause. There was a familiarity with home. It's the one place where we feel safe and among those who know us best. The old adage is true, ***“Blood is thicker than water.”*** It's the one place we don't have to put on a façade. They're family and they know everything about us. That means we don't have to pretend, we can just be ourselves. While family at their best are supportive, at their worst they can be judgmental, but God is beyond that. The Apostle Paul reminds us, ***“But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” (Romans 8:8)*** He loved us even when we were dead in our sin. The Lord God Almighty is holy and we cannot approach him without the forgiveness we receive through faith in Jesus Christ, but God is also the one who has paid the price for our salvation.

He loves us, even though he knows all of our fears, weaknesses, and reservations. He promises that we can be assured of His gracious companionship through the most difficult of times, He doesn't walk away in times of testing, He walks with us through the waters and the fire. ***“You are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you.” (Isaiah 43:4)*** He showed his love for us with a plan so divine only a few recognized it and that was only because God revealed it to them. Mary and Martha, the shepherds, the wisemen, Simion and Anna, and others couldn't see Jesus for who He really is.

“⁶ For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” (Isaiah 8:6-7)

Emmanuel, “God with us.” This is the one who says, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” (Heb. 13:6, Deut. 31:6, Josh. 1:5, 1 Chr. 28:20, 1 Kings 8:57, Ps. 37:28, Ps. 94:14, Ps. 23, Ps. 9:10, Is. 41:10, Is. 42:16) Since God has promised all this, why should we ever be afraid. The Lord is faithful! He leads and guides us and brings us home.

Blessed Advent and Merry Christmas!

In Christ Jesus our Lord who reminds us, “I am with you always to the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:20)

Pastor David Irgens

A message from Pastor Dan Doran

*Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel
Shall come to you,
O Israel!*

We celebrate Emmanuel, “God with us,” during the Advent season. As you read in our Advent devotionals, “The truth is, we are all runaways that God has pursued in Christ. The incarnation is God refusing to let what he has created live apart from him.”¹ In Jesus, God has “moved into the neighborhood,” he’s “taken up residence on our couches,” he has made his home with the people who at one time rejected him.

And although we await Christ’s return, it doesn’t mean that God has become far off or distant. It’s quite the opposite. The movement of God throughout the entire Bible is closer and closer to his people. Because Christ accomplished his God appointed mission, we now have an even closer relationship with God the Father and the Son through the Spirit.

Just like God moved into the neighborhood in Nazareth and Bethlehem, God has moved into the neighborhood here in Eau Claire. His address: YOUR HEART! “Do you now know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16) You might be surprised to hear that we never got finished building the church...

The physical building might be completed, but the work that God is doing in each one of us as his holy temple continues! Paul talks about this reflecting on the congregation in Corinth, “According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.” (1 Cor. 3:10)

I joke with Jamie whenever our baby cries, “The king is requesting his meal now. The peasants have been appointed to prepare it and serve him!” Maybe I’m only partly joking...this baby has become a defining factor for our schedules, our to-dos, and our entire lives. Joshua’s dwelling has transformed our lives. In the same way, the Spirit’s indwelling will continue to shape and transform our lives, individually and as a congregation.

God is actively at work through the ministry of his Word to continually renovate his holy temple, the very people who attend Saving Grace Lutheran Church. And what’s God vision for the renovation? That Christ and his cross would be ever more at the center of our lives, individually and as a congregation, That we would love God and love our neighbors. That we would produce the Fruit of the Spirit as we enjoy our life-giving connection to Jesus. That we would let our light shine so that others might see it and glorify our Father in heaven. That we would be ambassadors for Christ spreading the message of peace through the blood of His cross.

God has made his home with us through the indwelling Holy Spirit. This was accomplished by the one who was called Emmanuel, “God with us.” Rejoice! And take time to celebrate this wonderful miracle with us during the season of Advent and invite God to continue his renovating work in our lives.

Happy Advent and Merry Christmas,
Pastor Dan

¹ 32, *Coming Home For Christmas: Advent in Isaiah*.

The Righteous Shall Live by Faith

Katherine Altreuter

Holidays like Advent and Easter always sneak up on me. The celebrations, the music, the worship, and all of the other festivities that come with our Savior's birth, death, and resurrection tend to be a whirlwind on top of everything else we may already have going on. As we wrap up our Thanksgiving dinners, it's time to put up the Christmas tree, go shopping for loved ones, and figure out how we're going to make it to all the parties planned over the next 25 days. So no wonder I'm scrambling to make Christmas cards to get out on time!

All of these things that come with the Advent season are wonderful, of course. I love seeing people's lights in our neighborhood and helping my father with his nativity scene that we built for his front yard. I love picking out gifts for friends and family, excited to see their reactions when they open it on Christmas Day. But what I certainly love most about this time of year is the whole reason why there is any Christmas at all: Emmanuel, God with us.

For many, Christmas is a commercialized figure who brings gifts to those who were good and coal for those who were bad. "Here's your red wagon for doing what you parents said!" "No gift for the kid who pushed his sister down in the snow." As parents, I can see how Santa Claus became a tool to convince children to be on their best behavior with a "reward" at the end of the year.

But the real Christmas "reward" has nothing to do with Santa's judgment of our behavior. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel," Paul writes, "for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith'" (Romans 1:16-17). As imperfect beings, we are going to sin (or in Santa terms, get put on the naughty list). There is nothing righteous in lying, being angry, retaliating, or judging others, but there is also nothing righteous in being a "good person" without abiding in faith. Abraham, known for his favor with God, was not righteous for following the law and obeying God at every hardship, but for having faith while he did so! "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness'" (Rm 4:2-3). Santa judges the children based on their works alone, but "the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law...the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith" (Rm 3:21-25).

There is no Christmas without our Savior. We have all these secular traditions and celebrations at this time of year, but it is the faith we have in Christ that keeps the promise we have been gifted from God. Today's society celebrates the Advent season with "How much money can you spend?" as if it's a competition to see who can consume the most. Consumerism is not eternal. Centering Christmas around the lusts of the flesh dishonors the gift of life that God has so graciously given us. "Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever" (Rm 1:24-25).

All of that to say, yes, spread Christmas cheer! Join with friends and family in celebration over fellowship, and share your love to them through gifts that you know they would enjoy receiving. Bless those in need, like those we support through our mission outreach. Worship with our church family, as we welcome Emmanuel, God with us, the greatest gift of them all.

May your faith be strengthened this Advent season, as we cherish the promise made to us all, believers and nonbelievers, that Emmanuel has come!

Merry Christmas,
Katherine Altreuter

Exploring Our Past: Where History & Faith Flow Together

by Nikki Jackson

Bringing New Life in Advent's Light – the Story of Gurine Gaustad

During Advent, we light the candles each week, purchase gifts for loved ones, gear up for concerts, and donate to those in need. But most importantly, we prepare our hearts for the celebration of the birth of our Savior, Jesus—who came to us as a humble, vulnerable baby.

In this season of anticipation, I cannot help but think of a woman who not only gave daily thanks for the birth of our Lord, but also welcomed into the world more than 5,000 children: Eau Claire's first midwife, Gurine (also Corrine) Gulleson Gaustad.

Born around 1863 in M'osen, Norway, Gurine graduated from the School of Midwifery in Oslo in 1883, during which time she met and married surgical attendant John Gaustad. Hearing of the need for medical professionals in Eau Claire, the Gaustads immigrated here around 1886.

Upon their arrival, they found the town in great need—doctors were scarce, and medical equipment and supplies were limited. Gurine quickly became indispensable, both in treating patients and in delivering babies. Four years later, the Sisters of Saint Francis opened Sacred Heart Hospital, and Gurine was relieved. Residents could now receive more organized and safer medical care, allowing her to focus on her midwifery practice.

Over the next fifty years, Gurine delivered 5,033 babies. She was often described as “the busiest person in town,” and her work extended across the Chippewa Valley—even as far north as Hayward, Wisconsin.

She once recalled a stormy winter night when she was urgently needed in the town of Union. Thirty neighboring farmers shoveled the roads so she could pass. On another occasion, her hired rig became stuck for hours in deep snow on the way to Lake Hallie. Her driver had to return to Eau Claire to fetch a sleigh to navigate the snow-covered roads.

Between her demanding practice, caring for her husband, two daughters, and four sons, and running her household with the help of two hired women, Gurine carried a heavy load. Reflecting on her endurance, she said:

“If I had been as delicate as some women who grow now, it would have been impossible, but being well and strong helped me.

A lifelong Lutheran, Gurine belonged to First Lutheran Church on Eau Claire's west side—a congregation whose roots would, in time, give rise to both Grace Lutheran and later Saving Grace. *If churches were trees, First Lutheran would be the sturdy trunk, Grace Lutheran the first strong branch, and Saving Grace a second-generation branch growing outward in faith.*

This picture of deep roots and new growth beautifully mirrors the Advent promise of the **Tree of Jesse**, the prophecy that God would bring new life and hope through a long-established lineage:

*“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.”*

— **Isaiah 11:1**

Just as God's story grows from one faithful branch to the next, so has the faith of our congregation—shaped by generations of believers like Gurine Gaustad, who grounded her life's work in trust and perseverance.

In 1949, when asked what advice she might give young people, she said:

“So many are not interested in religion as we were. As the years go by, they will feel they have lost much if they don't hold to church. Many things change, but God will never change. He is always the One they can go to when storms come, as we know they will.”

As we anticipate this Advent season, let us remember Jesus, His sacrifice for us, and the eternal comfort of a God who remains unchanging amid the storms of life—just as Gurine Gaustad relied on her faith throughout her remarkable life of service. Merry Christmas!!!

“Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her.”

— *Luke 1:45*

MISSION OUTREACH

SHARING GOD’S GIFTS

In November, monthly gifts went to Starfish Kids, Ephrem, Binder Family, Sweatshirts & Hoodies for Pastor Mike Henry, Trinity Equestrian Center *Veteran’s Day Gift*, Samaritan’s Purse *Shoebox shipping*, Lutheran World Relief *Hurricane Melissa Relief*.

We have started a collection of old and new devotional books *Our Daily Bread & Christ in Our Home*, we want to use them for future projects. We have a basket on our Mission Outreach table for them.

We would like to invite you to our Mission Outreach table in the fellowship hall. We have notes, newsletters, and volunteer information from groups and organizations Saving Grace supports. We are always open to ideas and suggestions *use the new Lockbox* for Missions from our congregation. Call one of our mission committee members of email office@saving-gracechurch.com.

Mission Outreach next meeting will be on Monday, December 1, 2025, at 5:00pm.

Memorial & Honorary Gifts

In memory of my parents, Bev & Don Erickson
to the General Operating Fund
Don Erickson

In memory of Margaret Crandell, who would
have been 100 yrs old on November 22nd
to the General Operating Fund
Mark & Pam Crandell

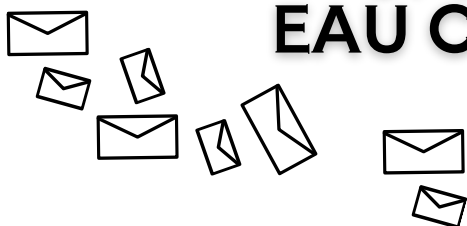
In memory of Jan Thompson
to the Music Fund
Katherine & Michael Altreuter

In memory of my parents, Leonard & Alta Loken,
long-time members of Grace Lutheran Church
to Debt Reduction
Mark C. Olsen

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DISTRIBUTIONS OR OTHER GIFTS BEING MAILED TO THE CHURCH:

Please remember to remind your representative about the address change!

SAVING GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
3735 JEFFERS RD
EAU CLAIRE, WI 54703



This will allow the distribution and gifts to be added into the 2025 statements.

Reception for Kayla Shoemaker

Saving Grace staff would like to honor and thank Kayla Shoemaker for her many, many years of ministry with us as she is leaving our congregation.

Please join us for a reception following the

Saturday, December 27th
3:00 PM service

to celebrate Kayla’s time with us and to wish her well in her future endeavors!

Welcome our New Members!

Delvin & Kelley Balts
Mellissa Kolpien

Remember to pick up their contact information from the office to add to your directory

FOR *Goodness* SAKE

Thank you for your interest in **For Goodness Sake**, a vision that Eau Claire can end homelessness through innovation, collaboration, and effectiveness in our services. The results from grants are gathered and reported annually to our investors and begins a community investment cycle. This vision invites creative and innovative responses to how we serve neighbors who experience homelessness. We focus on success and change the way Eau Claire responds to people experiencing homelessness.

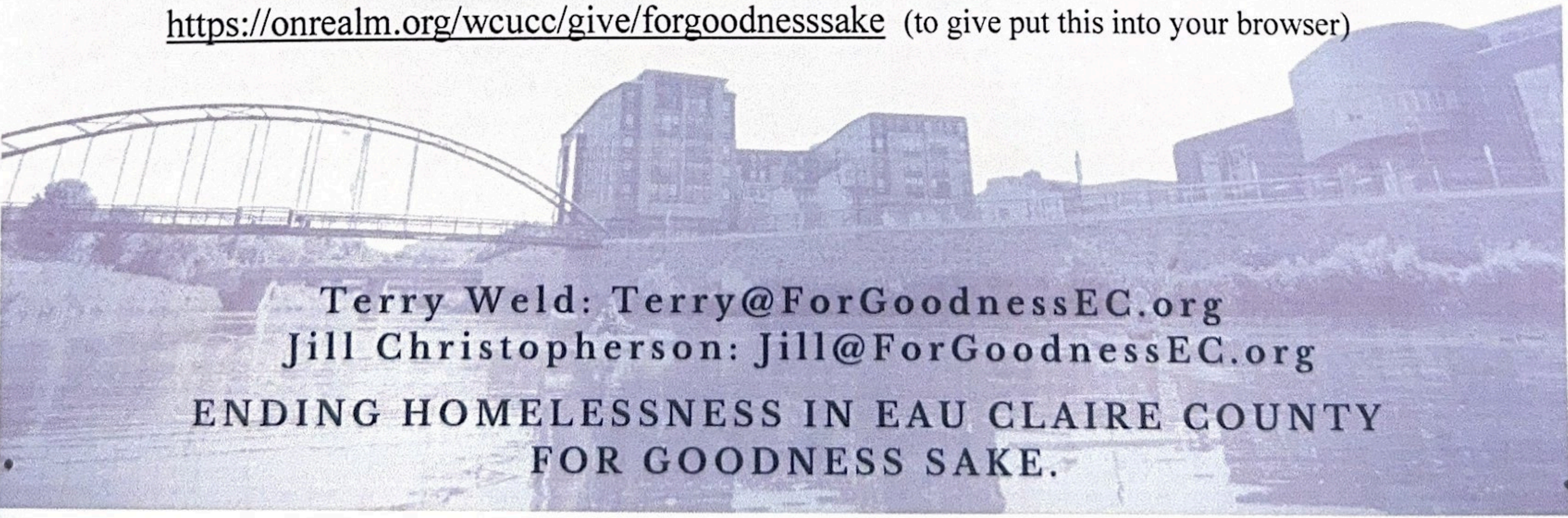
Eau Claire needs accurate comprehensive data about who lives on the street in our community; what their physical and mental health needs are. When we have accurate information, we are able to support and stabilize people experiencing homelessness instead of blaming them for their illnesses. Good data allows us to be creative and innovative in finding, forming and dispatching services that stabilize individuals and families. Our community wants to see interventions that help our neighbors and not watch individuals needlessly suffer and cycle through crisis programs. Generous FOR GOODNESS SAKE funding will focus on creative solutions, use good information and stabilize individuals and families in crisis.

You may find it surprising that the dominant funders for services for people experiencing homelessness, federal, state and county grants, do not require outcome reports. These funders specify services and prohibit other services or support. Grantees only report that they did what was required, not how effective it was. FOR GOODNESS SAKE requires applicants to provide measures of success and evaluates the grant based on those measures. Results that support our vision that people experiencing homelessness are moved toward stability and invites agencies to be creative, collaborative and effective in their work will be funded. Their successes transform lives and our community.

As FOR GOODNESS SAKE shares this vision of ending homelessness within the community, people are confused about how things will change. To be clear, this is money raised from public and private resources. Agencies and service providers will apply for grants. Community resources may come alongside providers if necessary to identify creative, innovative ways for better or greater service implementation. We can only impact agencies who use our fund, but For Goodness Sake wants to raise enough money to fund all great ideas. Agencies and people experiencing homelessness should not wait years to have a solution funded.

DONATE TO FOR GOODNESS SAKE: We are a 501c3 charitable organization and your gift is tax deductible. Use this link to donate to For Goodness Sake under the Wisconsin Foundation UCC who oversees investments to the For Goodness Sake Fund. We are also able to receive IRA disbursements, let us know of your interest. For Goodness Sake is not a religious organization.

<https://onrealm.org/wcucc/give/forgoodnesssake> (to give put this into your browser)



Terry Weld: Terry@ForGoodnessEC.org
Jill Christopherson: Jill@ForGoodnessEC.org

**ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN EAU CLAIRE COUNTY
FOR GOODNESS SAKE.**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

These aren't our people! WI Balance of State, Continuum of Care oversees funds for programs that serve individuals experiencing homelessness and provides these statistics. 80% of those served in emergency shelter, street outreach or transitional housing in the city of Eau Claire *are* from Eau Claire, Trempealeau, Buffalo and Jackson Counties. 10% come more widely from rural WI counties that surround Eau Claire and have not accessed services. 5% of people experiencing homelessness in Eau Claire come from further away. After exiting emergency programs, 81% stayed in Eau Claire. Data supports that 81% of the Homeless services are for *our* people. Providing services gathers data that Eau Claire could use to create agreements and to seek reimbursement for services from counties that do not fund their own homeless services.

People want to be homeless! Homelessness is a complicated issue. We may imagine that homelessness results from poor planning or unwillingness to take care of ones' self. It is more serious than that and affecting the entire family. Dual diagnosis of mental health issues covered by substance abuse predominate in jail populations. The Brain Injury Association of WI surveyed people in jails, homeless and domestic abuse shelters for symptoms of traumatic brain injury. In one of these surveys, symptoms of an undiagnosed brain injury was present in as many as 92% of the guests. There are *many* emergencies that force people onto the street. When one considers that many individuals who have difficulty with decision making and behavior control have a serious undiagnosed health issue, that is not a choice. The only way off the street is stable housing with supportive services.

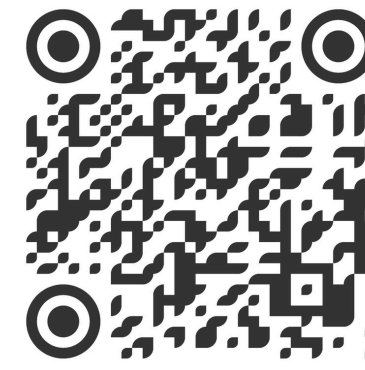
Does Eau Claire have enough housing? Eau Claire will continue to build housing of all types. And For Goodness Sake would increase funds for services that are effective and fund new ideas, things that have never been tried before. The fastest way to open more housing is to create housing out of what is already available. Many people experiencing homelessness do work, but because of rental history or low income are simply ineligible for *current* vacancies. The Master Lease is successful in Milwaukee so it is not a new idea, but it has limited use in Eau Claire. An agency may apply to For Goodness Sake for funds to create a "master lease". The agency would survey landlords to volunteer apartments for the master lease. The agency would hold apartments under the master lease to house people. To the landlord, the master lease *is* the tenant. The master lease places the tenant, provides support services on site, places them in another apartment if necessary, and repairs any potential damages to the apartment; all at the expense of the agency holding the master lease. This would open housing from landlords who would not otherwise participate.

Preventing Homelessness is less expensive! The costs to assist someone from the street or out of the jail into stable housing is more expensive than stabilizing families and young adults. Children in families on the street experience trauma. Youth aging out of Foster Care are vulnerable adults who deserve concentrated intervention for stable housing and life skills. Funds that you invest can be used to pay expenses that would force a person or family out of their home, reducing the number of community members spiraling into more complicated support.



**Keep up with current
events, live-
streaming, and more
on our Facebook
page!**

[https://www.facebook.com/
SGLChurchEC](https://www.facebook.com/SGLChurchEC)



OUR WORSHIP SCHEDULE

SATURDAY (FM 107.1)

3pm | Traditional

SUNDAY (LIVE-STREAMED)

8:30am | Traditional

10:30am | Contemporary

Church Council

Michelle Otto, President

Patty Dundas, Vice President

Pam Bee, Treasurer

Michelle Volz, Secretary

**Council Members: Mary Schneider, Ruth Hofland,
Steve Wright, Carol Pickhardt, Brian Hagen,
Patrick Bartholomew, Barb Clark**

Staff

Pastor David Irgens, Senior Pastor

Pastor Dan Doran, Associate Pastor

Katherine Altreuter, Office Administrator & Music Director

Cheryl Eberhardt, Education Director



SAVING GRACE
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday | 9am - 4pm

(715) 514 - 3552

www.saving-gracechurch.com

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