

JANUARY 2026



SAVING GRACE

LUTHERAN CHURCH

OUR JOURNEY

A newsletter for members and friends of Saving Grace Lutheran Church



Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ

“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.”

Happy New Year!

The Epiphany
OF OUR LORD



Events & News for January 2026

FAITH FOR LIFE: THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF LUTHER'S CATECHISM

THURSDAYS AT 5:00 PM
STARTING JANUARY 8

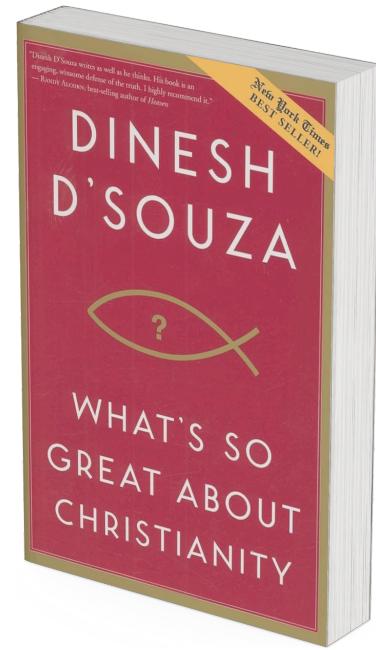
CLASS LED BY PASTOR DAVID IRGENS

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

a class on apologetics

SUNDAYS AT 9:30AM
starting January 11th

LED BY PASTOR KEN KUZIEJ



We're taking donations of
**HATS, MITTENS,
SCARVES, & OTHER
WINTER
ACCESSORIES**
for those in need in our
community!



Please drop off in Narthex (in the box or on table)

Time to pick up your POINSETTIAS

If you purchased a poinsettia plant, please feel
free to pick up Saturday afternoon, Sunday
morning, or during the week:

Mon. - Thur. 9am - 4pm

7th ANNUAL Covered With Love

With the help of John Ruesch, we
dropped off 850 lbs of food to
Feed My People Food Bank.

To the Chippewa Valley Street Ministry:
584 pairs of hand warmers, 58 blankets,
4 scarves, 180 hand warmers, 108 pairs of
socks, 1 hat, 2 backpacks, 27 pairs of
gloves, 2 pairs of boots, and 1 camp chair.

Thank you for your donations!

Bazaar News

The Bazaar Ladies are back! The holidays are over, and we're ready to get back to work on craft projects. Our group is made up of Saving Grace women who enjoy making craft items, baking, or helping with our annual bazaar. We meet every Monday from 1-3:30pm in the Fellowship Hall at Church.

Our first meeting of 2026 will be on
Monday, January 5, at 1:00pm.

Anyone who is interested in making crafts is welcome! Please bring your ideas, imaginations, and potential projects. We look forward to having you join us for an afternoon of fun and fellowship each week!

All Member Breakfast



Saturday, January 24
8:00 AM

A message from Pastor David Irgens

⁹ **"Pray then in this way:**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ **Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

¹¹ **Give us this day our daily bread.**

¹² **And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

¹³ **And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.**

¹⁴ **For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you;**

¹⁵ **but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

(Matthew 6:9-15)

Wouldn't it be great to see the world through the eyes of a child? To see the mystery and amazement of all that takes place around them. On Christmas Eve, a 5-year-old boy named Skip came up to me and said, "Hey, the 'church button' does not work!" with his hands in the air and a look on his face like "What's happening around here?" His father explained to me that the handicap button didn't work on the handicap accessible door. So I told Skip, "Let me see what I can do, maybe I can fix it." Skip went running down the hallway with his father following behind. I looked at the door setting. It was set in the "off" position instead of the "activated" position. So in a fraction of a second I flipped the switch and it worked. It was not a big deal, so easy to do and hardly worth even mentioning it. But Skip seemed so disappointed when he realized the "church button" didn't work. When I saw him a few minutes later I said to him, "I think it's working now, do you want to check it? "It's working? Yeah, I'll check it," he said. So I watched him as he did. He pressed the "church button" and the door opened. He let out a yell, "Yay! Yay! Yay! It works! It works! It works!" For a moment, nothing else mattered in the whole world! It was the best thing that could have ever happened and it happened to a little 5-year-old boy. It was utterly amazing to see his pure joy and excitement. Wouldn't it be great to have the same amazement and wonder when you prayed to God?

When we say, "Our Father in Heaven," we invoke God's very presence in our lives. Not that God is at our beck and call, rather we utter His name and call upon Him to be with us and listen to our prayers. When we say "Father in Heaven," the "Heaven" we refer to is not "the dynamic center of divine omnipotence and omnipresence that escapes our spatially restricted conceptions." (Lord's Prayer, Commentary on Luther's Catechism, Albrecht Peters, p. 5, Concordia Publishing House, St Louis, 2011.) Rather, "God's presence in sublime holiness as well as the proximity of grace applied to us." (ibid) **When we pray, 'Our Father who art in heaven' we call upon God in His holiness not limited by time or space, we call upon God in His holiness to be with us and apply His grace to us.** That is, God breaks into our world and listens to our prayers, precisely because He loves us as our Heavenly Father, as a perfect Father would. Because of Christ's forgiveness, Christ's righteousness is attributed to us. He sees us as holy, because Jesus has made us holy through His sacrifice for our sins and Christ's righteousness is imputed upon us.

Martin Luther wrote in the Large Catechism, "**For whenever a good Christian prays, 'Dear Father, thy will be done,' God replies from on high, 'Yes, dear child, it shall indeed be done in spite of the devil and all the world.'**" (The Book of Concord, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1959. p 424.32) **What I hear is a child in the background yelling, "Yay! Yay! Yay! It works! It works! It works!"**

Oh, that we could see the world through the eyes of a child when we come to the Lord God Almighty in prayer! We'll be looking at that in "Faith for Life: The Practical Application of Luther's Catechism." Thursdays at 5:00 pm starting January 8th.

God has blessed us in so many ways. God bless you in this new year as you see those blessings unfold before you.

In Christ,

Pastor David Irgens

A message from Pastor Dan Doran

I have been using this monthly newsletter article as a way to study a little bit more about the Holy Spirit. We started back in August and through the end of the year we've talked about the Holy Spirit as our constant companion, that the Spirit helps us understand God's Word, the Spirit transforms our hearts, and the Spirit has made his home with us. At the beginning of the new year, we are reminded that the Spirit is the one that gives us a calm, certain confidence that we are children of God.

¹⁵*For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ--if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.*

-Romans 8:15-17

Our identity as children of God is where we start and where we end up with God in this life. I've heard many members, whose own children now have grandchildren of their own, say, "They never stop being your children." No matter how old they grow and no matter how many children or even grandchildren they have, they never stop being your children.

There's a great parenting model out there from an organization called Connected Families.¹ It's a tool that helps parents mirror the relationship they have with God, their Heavenly Father, with their own children. Children grow best when they feel safe, when they know that they are loved, when they are confident of their ability, and responsible for their actions.



Well, no matter how old we get, we never stop being God's children. And, it's the Holy Spirit that bears witness to our Spirit that we are, in fact, children of God! Life will sometimes cause us to question our position before God. Often, we search for an answer in our own heart or mind. We look for a feeling or we try to come up with a reasonable outcome as something to point to and say, "That's how I know God loves me." Thankfully, we have better news than that. We don't defend our position before God. Instead, the Holy Spirit assures us of our position before God. We can't find an answer in ourselves. Instead, we turn and cry to the one who is our Father, Savior, and Friend. In him, we find eternal safety, unconditional love, purpose, and meaning.

Happy New Year!
Pastor Dan

¹ Accessed on 12/23/25. <https://connectedfamilies.org/about/framework/>

The New Year in Christ

“And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.”

1 John 3:23-24

At the start of each new year, many people all around the world declare their New Year's resolutions: how will they change their old ways in order to better themselves for this coming year. Some people make plans to diet and lose weight, while others want to work on cutting back on spending, or finally kicking that bad habit they've been talking about for years. More often than not, there is a desire to change ourselves physically, so that we appear better in front of others. But what about spiritually?

God calls us throughout the Bible to take a good look at ourselves inwardly. How do we practice the instructions He has given us? The Ten Commandments are often cited as an easy set of rules to follow because they are plainly laid before us in the Old Testament: “I am the Lord your God...you shall have no other gods before me, you shall not make for yourself a carved image...you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain...observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy...honor your father and your mother...you shall not murder, and you shall not commit adultery, and you shall not steal, and you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, and you shall not covet...anything that is your neighbor's” (Deut. 5:6-21). We've heard these many times and might have even memorized them in Sunday School. This is a great starting place for all the things we can do outwardly, but there's more to God's instructions than just the Ten Commandments.

Paul writes, “For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God” (Romans 2:28-29). We can follow all the rules and do all the actions that are commanded of us, but have we done the necessary work inside of us to respond to God's call? Are we faithful? Do we repent for our sins? Have we picked up the yoke of Christ instead of the earthly one we've chosen for ourselves?

When you sit down and analyze how your past year went and how you would like to improve for the future, think about what God has commanded of us: to abide, to rejoice in our sufferings, and to crucify our old self “in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin” (Romans 6:6).

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.
Romans 12:12

May this new year bring blessings upon you as we strive to better ourselves in Christ.

Happy New Year,
Katherine Altreuter

Exploring Our Past: Where History & Faith Flow Together

by Nikki Jackson

The Ness House and the Gift of Welcome

As we move into a New Year, I find myself reflecting on the past year – especially the kindness and hospitality shown to me and my husband here at Saving Grace, throughout the Chippewa Valley, and even during our travels. At times, the history of this region collides with the present in surprising ways. One such moment came through my exploration of the Ness House.

In Eau Claire's earliest decades, travelers had no shortage of lodging options. By the late 1800s, they could choose from nearly a dozen "houses" – as hotels were then called – such as the Kneer House, on the corner where Olson's Ice Cream now stands, or the Galloway House, which once occupied the site of the parking ramp next to the Lismore. Beyond the city limits, however, accommodations were far fewer. Just twelve miles southwest, in Caryville, there was only one option: the Ness House.

Will Ness of Caryville was a true jack-of-all-trades – farmer, tinkerer, sewing-machine salesman – and in 1889, he added "hotel keeper" to that list when he purchased Caryville's only lodging house. He must have brought genuine warmth to the role, because the *Eau Claire Daily Leader* noted, "Will Ness keeps a real good hotel and the travelers all rush for his place."

Will married his neighbor, Minnie Talford, and together they raised four daughters. Two eventually moved away, but Joy* and Ruby stayed close to home. Ruby, in particular, remained in the six-bedroom house all her life while working at Armour Meat Company in Eau Claire. In a 1985 *Leader-Telegram* interview, 84-year-old Ruby reflected:

"It never was a boarding house. My mother would serve food to people who wanted it, and if someone needed a place to sleep, they could stay. But it wasn't really a hotel."

Over the years, the home gradually shifted from hotel to family residence, particularly after Will began working as a rural mail carrier, covering a 28-mile route by horse and buggy. Still, Minnie continued extending hospitality to anyone who needed it, echoing the words of Hebrews 13:2: *Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.*

Earlier this year, while researching for a social media post for the Chippewa Valley Museum, I went to verify the location of the Ness House – and this is when past and present collided. I had expected only to snap a quick photo of the exterior of this now-private residence; instead, the current owners warmly welcomed me inside – a kindness that instantly reminded me of the Ness family's legacy. Well-versed in the home's history, they led me on a tour and were especially eager to show me the door to their son's room. There, just visible beneath layers of old paint, was the faint outline of a number "2" – a quiet reminder of a time when weary travelers were welcomed and found rest in this home.

As we've just concluded the Advent Season and celebrated Christmas, I find myself reflecting on how the hospitality of the Ness family and the current owners gently contrasts with Mary and Joseph's experience in Bethlehem. Luke tells it simply:

"While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son...and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:6-7

That small phrase – no room at the inn – invites many questions. Was the unnamed innkeeper turning them away, or offering the only shelter he had left? It also prompts me to consider my own willingness to give – or receive – hospitality. Am I someone who makes room? Do I allow myself to welcome others? Do I extend warmth as freely as it has been extended to me?

As we begin the New Year, I am reminded that the One born in that humble place – Jesus, our Savior – is the One who offers us grace upon grace. Ultimately, He is the One we are called to make room for. May we create space for Him in our hearts, our homes, and our daily lives, so that His grace shapes the way we extend kindness, generosity, and welcome to others.

Happy New Year!

**Side note: Some of you may remember Arnie's Ski and Garden Center, which stood for decades at the intersection of Harding Avenue and Rudolph Road. That business was owned and operated for 35 years by Arnie and Lois Domer. Lois was the daughter of Joy (Ness) and Ralph Shaker making her Will and Minnie (Talford) Ness' granddaughter.*

MISSION OUTREACH

SHARING GOD'S GIFTS

In December, monthly gifts went to Starfish Kids, Ephrem, Binder Family, Wreaths Across America, and Frieberg Family.

We decided to help the Frieberg family. We learned about Simon Frieberg through members of our congregation. Simon is a little boy with Down Syndrome (Trisomy 21), who at this stage in his life needs extra therapies to help him learn to walk independently, self-feed, and to speak. Our gift will support therapies not covered by insurance.

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, January 5, 2026, at 5:00pm.

Poinsettias for Christmas

In memory of Joel Ellis

Rita Ellis

In honor of the Kallenbach & Petersen families

Sandy & Dean Kallenbach

In memory of Dick Sparks

Nancy Sparks

**In memory of those we have lost
and hold in our hearts**

Bob & Kathi Tollefson

**In honor of our grandchildren: Jameson, Jayden,
Josie, & Elayna**

Paul & Patty Dundas

**In memory of John & Marion Lunderville;
in honor of Don & Darlene Granger**

Jon & Kay Granger

In memory of Helen Anderson

Jason, Brenda, Dale, & Ashton Stahlbusch & Duane Anderson

**In memory of our parents, Mr. & Mrs. Lepien
and Mr. & Mrs. Reynolds**

Karen & Reagan Reynolds

In honor of Kris Squier

Matt Squier

In memory of parents, Evelyn & Dick Chappell

Sue Hutchinson

In honor of family

Delma Howell

**In memory of Stan & Alice Semingson;
in honor of Vicki Semingson**

Rick Semingson

In memory of David Lorentz

Kathy Lorentz, Nathan, Stuart, Jessi, & families

In memory of Bill & Lorey Weir and Al & Lil Cunningham

Sandy Cunningham

In memory of Robert Hofkes & Charles Hofkes

Luann Hofkes

In memory of Dean & Jackie Kiraly

Karen Johnson

**In memory of Dennis Seidling and
Ralph & Delores Zimmerman**

Steve & Michelle Ganzer

In memory of family members

Pete & Renae Hestekin

In memory of Nancy's parents, Fern & Erv Keilholz

Nancy & Dan Gunderson

In memory of parents & siblings

Cheryl Thorson

In memory of loved ones, in honor of family

Stan & Jean Brettingen

In memory of parents & sisters, in honor of family

Virginia L. Wright

**In memory of parents & siblings,
in honor of grandchildren**

George & Sandy Nelson

In memory of our parents

Alice Severson

In memory of Jack Furtney

Roger & Kris Wiltgen

**In memory of Donna's grandmother, mother, &
daughter; in memory of Richard's mother, sister, &
Margaret Crandell**

Donna & Richard Kokemoor

In honor of grand- and great-grandchildren

Bob & Bea Frazee

In memory of Milton & Cornelia Peterson

Suzanne Pardue, children, & grandchildren

In memory of David Cramer

Cynthia Cramer

In memory of Carolyne Kuziej and John & Nita Kuziej

Ken Kuziej & Melissa Kuziej Winder

In memory of our parents

John & Betsy Ruesch

In memory of Larrie & Ben Olson and Russ Spencer

Chuck & Kim Olson

For debt reduction

Chet & Kathy Berkey; Sara Hartwig

Memorial & Honorary Gifts

In honor of Pastor David Irgens & family,

Pastor Dan Doran & family

to the General Operating Fund

Dan & Nancy Gunderson

In memory of Jerry Schmidt

to TV Ministry

George & Sandy Nelson

to Debt Reduction

Brenda Marlow

to the General Operating Fund

Rosemary Schmidt, Renae Hestekin

In memory of Joel Carlsen

to the General Operating Fund

David Stokes

In memory of parents, Wayne & Velma Rosman,
sister, Rosalie Rosman, & brother, LeRoy Rosman

to TV Ministry

Gerri & Kenneth Schulner

In memory of parents, Bev & Don Erickson

to the General Operating Fund

Don Erickson

In honor of family: Katie, Madi, Kyle, Whitley, & Benson

to the General Operating Fund

Kevin & Nancy Balash

In memory of Jeanne Janssen & Dana Janssen

to the General Operating Fund

Shawn & Jennie Anderson

In memory of Kenneth Boigenzahn

to the General Operating Fund

Audrey Boigenzahn

In memory of Dan Gordon

to the General Operating Fund

Marie Gordon

In memory of Borg & Ray Marley

to the General Operating Fund

Jacqueline Joanis

In memory of David Cramer

to the General Operating Fund

Cindy Cramer

In memory of Mike Sullivan

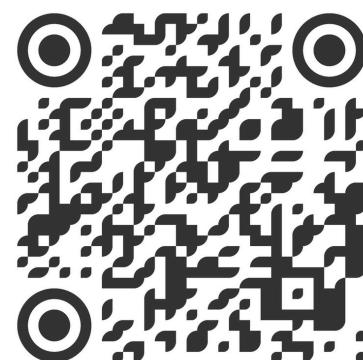
to the General Operating Fund

Katie Sullivan



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
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