



# Circuit Rider

## February 2026

[www.lakestreetumc.org](http://www.lakestreetumc.org)

### On Faith for the Sake of Morality

Pastor Jerry

What is the point of morality? I'm not joking. This is a serious question. But let me come back to it in a moment.

I'm reading a new book by Notre Dame sociologist Christian Smith, which reports on a multi-year study of both those who have drifted away from Christianity and those who have remained committed to it. One of the questions his survey team asked people was, "What are the positive things about religion? When religion is good, what does it do?"

The results are fascinating. He lists the top six answers, and none of them are specifically religious. All are helpful tools for navigating society and the ups and downs of life. They include: psychological positivity, providing community, offering adult role models, developing interpersonal skills, encouraging moderation, and promoting national solidarity. But the number one good thing that religion provides – acknowledged by both the religious and the non-religious – is that it teaches morality, especially to children. For most people, Smith says, this is far and away the most important benefit of the church, enough that many think of it as the church's *primary* purpose.

Now this will not be a surprise to anyone who's been around church. We are all familiar with the pattern of a family dropping the kids off for Sunday School, to get some moral polish, then driving back to pick them up when class is done. Even more familiar is the pattern of a family attending church faithfully as long as they are raising their children, then disappearing as soon as the kids leave home. We church leaders often moan about these patterns, but they make perfect sense if, as people told Smith, the church's primary purpose is to teach morality to children.

Another important note about this purpose emerges from Smith's survey. He stresses that people see moral instruction as the purpose of religion in general, not just the church, and any religious community will do: synagogue, mosque, temple, whatever. All religions teach basically the same good morals: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, don't be selfish, share, and the like. In fact, you can even get those same lessons from many non-religious organizations: scouts, fraternal societies, organized team sports, and so on. Thus, as Smith puts it: "This essentially means that, in the view of most Americans, the most important task religion specializes in – making people good – is not something that requires religion" (Smith, *Why Religion Went Obsolete*, 47).

Clearly, something has gone wrong here, but what can we do? We in the church do, in fact, teach morality to children (and youth and adults), and we're not going to stop. Both the Old and New Testaments of our Bible spend a significant amount of time giving guidance for moral behavior. Still, you can't

*(Continued on page 3)*

**"CHRIST FOLLOWERS LIVING GOD'S LOVE"**

**SUNDAY SCHEDULE**

**9:00 AM WORSHIP**  
IN-PERSON,  
BY RADIO (AM 880  
OR 106.3 FM @  
10:05AM), AND ON  
FACEBOOK AND  
YOUTUBE

STAY CONNECTED THROUGH OUR WEEKLY **LAKE STREET CONNECTIONS** NEWSLETTER SENT OUT VIA EMAIL AND FACEBOOK EVERY THURSDAY AFTERNOON.

VISIT **LAKESTREETUMC.ORG** TO SIGN UP OR SEND AN EMAIL TO COMMUNICATIONS @LAKESTREETUMC.ORG

LAKE STREET UMC IS ONE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES OF CHIPPEWA VALLEY: ALTOONA, ANSON, AUGUSTA, BLOOMER, CADOTT, CHAPEL HEIGHTS, HALLIE, HOLCOMBE, HOPE, JIM FALLS, LAKE STREET, NEW AUBURN, PLEASANT VALLEY, STANLEY, THORP, TRINITY, & ZION.



**Jerry Morris**  
*Pastor*

**Laurie Van Beek**  
*Friends at the Lake and  
Children's Ministry Director*

**Ellen Prellwitz**  
*Administrative Secretary*

**Kathy Amundson-Forsberg**  
*Ellesi Director; Interim  
Chancel Choir Director*

**Evan Rognholt**  
*Handbell and Ensemble  
Director*

**Ben Kittilstad**  
*Worship pianist and choir  
accompanist*

**Edna Sahs**  
*Organist*

**Jennifer Blakeley-Mode**  
*Finance Clerk*

**Aaron Athas**  
*Communications  
Facilitator*

**Joel Carr**  
*Custodian*

**Daniel Klingensmith, Derek  
Brost, Per Forsberg, Greg  
Wallace**  
*Worship Technology*

### **OFFICE HOURS**

**Monday and Wednesday**  
9:00 am - 4:30 pm  
**Tuesday and Thursday**  
9:00 am - 1:00 pm

## **A COMMUNITY OF WORSHIP**

*We seek to be a community of expectant, God-centered worship, through word and sacrament and God's gift of music – offering together our utmost for God's highest.*

### **Worship Services in February**

#### **Sermon Series: Gettin' Saved**

#### **Saturday-Sunday, Jan. 31- Feb. 1. 4th Sunday after Epiphany**

Living Room Worship: Available @ 6:00pm Saturday, Lake Street  
Facebook page

Worship: 9:00am with Communion.\* Livestreamed on Facebook and  
YouTube. Radio broadcast 10:05 on AM 880 and 106.3 FM.

Sermon: "Gettin' Saved: Companions on a Journey"

Scripture: Philippians 3:7-16

#### **Saturday-Sunday, February 7-8. 4th Sunday after the Epiphany**

Living Room Worship: Available @ 6:00pm Saturday, Lake Street  
Facebook page

Worship: 9:00am. Livestreamed on Facebook and YouTube. Radio  
broadcast 10:05 on AM 880 and 106.3 FM.

Sermon: "Gettin' Saved: Beautiful on the Mountain"

Scripture: Romans 10:14-17

#### **Saturday-Sunday, February 14-15. Transfiguration Sunday**

Living Room Worship: Available @ 6:00pm Saturday, Lake Street  
Facebook page

Worship: 9:00am. Livestreamed on Facebook and YouTube. Radio  
broadcast 10:05 on AM 880 and 106.3 FM.

Sermon: "Mountain Tops" Lay Speaker Len Larsen preaching

Scripture: TBA

#### **Wednesday, February 18. Ash Wednesday**

Sermon: Rev. Jen Barnet

Scripture: TBA

12:15pm at Lake Street United Methodist Church

6:30pm at Hope United Methodist Church

### **The Opposite of Sin**

#### **Saturday-Sunday, February 21-22. 1st Sunday of Lent**

Living Room Worship: Available @ 6:00pm Saturday, Lake Street  
Facebook page

Worship: 9:00am. Livestreamed on Facebook and YouTube. Radio  
broadcast 10:05 on AM 880 and 106.3 FM.

Sermon: "Generosity (vs. Greed)"

Scripture: Deuteronomy 15:7-11

\*United Methodists serve Open Communion, welcoming all to join Christ's table,  
because that's what he did, too.

help feeling that moral instruction should *not* be seen as our primary purpose.

I've been thinking about this since reading that chapter in Smith's book, and here's my own thought. I think we've gotten it backwards. People see faith as a tool toward teaching morality; I think we need to see morality as a tool toward growing in faith. Morality is not the goal. The goal is to grow in love to God and neighbor – or, more simply, to become more like Christ. This means growing in our praise and dependence on God and in our compassionate and respectful treatment of others. Moral instruction can obviously be a useful tool in working toward this goal (along with meditation, time in spent in nature, prayer, music, volunteering, good manners), but it is only a tool. It is not the end in itself.

So here's what I'm going to do in our worship during Lent. We're going to do moral instruction. I'm starting with the famous church formulation of the "Seven Deadly Sins" – Pride, Lust, Envy, Sloth, Gluttony, Greed, and Wrath – and then asking, "What is the *opposite* of this sin? What is the virtue that this sin prevents? And how can we grow in that way?" But the challenge I'm giving myself each week is not to stop with just the moral guidance. I want to go the next step and draw the connection between this moral behavior and growing in our relationship to Christ. Because the church is more than a moral instruction service provider. We are the Body of Christ in the world.

### Worship Notes for February

*Ash Wednesday, February 18.* Lent is early this year, as we kick off that season of reflection on Wednesday, Feb. 18. As we have done for the past few years, we are planning two Ash Wednesday services—both of them in partnership with Hope UMC. We will host a lunch hour service here at Lake Street, for those who want to come during break from work and who prefer not to drive after dark. This service begins at 12:15 and should be finished by 1:00 pm. The second service will be at Hope UMC, beginning at 6:30pm. Pastor Jen Barnet of Hope will preach at both services. Chancel Choir will sing at the 6:30 service.)

*We are always looking to new choir members.* If you want to give one of our choirs a try, drop in. Rehearsal schedules on Wednesdays are:

- 6:15pm Ellesi, in the Fellowship Hall
- 6:15pm Handbells, in the sanctuary\*
- 7:00pm Chancel Choir, in the Fellowship Hall
- 8:00pm The Ensemble, in the Fellowship Hall

Celebration, our instrumental ensemble, meets on Sunday mornings after worship, in the sanctuary (about 10:15am).

### RADIO SERVICE SUPPORT = \$165/week

- February 8
- February 15
- February 22
- February 1
- March 8
- March 15

Given by: \_\_\_\_\_ In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_ In Recognition of: \_\_\_\_\_

### HAVE YOU FOUND US ONLINE?

Our website [www.lakestreetumc.org](http://www.lakestreetumc.org) always has the most up to date calendar, news, online giving and more. Visit it often for past sermon recordings, past Circuit Riders, and a direct link to our Facebook page.



### ADDRESS CHANGES

If you have had an address change within the past four months and are receiving the **Circuit Rider** newsletter electronically, please send your new address to the church office: [adminsec@lakestreetumc.org](mailto:adminsec@lakestreetumc.org).

Because your digital issue does not go to the post office, there is no Address Service Requested changes that come back to the church office. We appreciate your help to keep our database up to date.

### March Circuit Rider

Deadline is  
Wednesday, February 18  
for  
Thursday, February 26  
mailing

Be sure to send your news to Ellen Prellwitz at [Adminsec@lakestreetumc.org](mailto:Adminsec@lakestreetumc.org)



## A COMMUNITY OF INCLUSIVE WELCOME

*We embrace all of God's children as persons of sacred worth regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, national origin, culture, tradition, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other difference real or perceived, and welcome all people into the life of this congregation.*



## FRIENDS at the LAKE

We recently launched our new website!

The new site is **Friendsatthelake.com**, and we invite you to check it out to see what's happening at Friends at the Lake. You'll find quotes from volunteers and caregivers that reflect the heart of our program.

This week, we welcomed our **16th friend**, and we're grateful that word of mouth continues to help our community grow. As participation increases, we are exploring the possibility of adding a **Thursday program** in addition to Tuesdays.

To support this growth, we are looking for volunteers to help with **arts and crafts** and **music**. If you feel called to serve in this meaningful way, let us hear from you.

### Contact:

Laurie Van Beek  
Laurievb@lakestreetumc.org  
715-832-6603

### Upcoming Pancake Breakfasts

Remember, the pancake team takes December off. Our next breakfast will be:

**February 15**  
**March 15**

Cost: \$8.00. Children and guests free.

Volunteers always welcome.



### Behind the Scenes

In theater, everyone notices the actors on stage, and at least a few are aware of the director. But the lighting technicians, prop managers, costumers, make-up designers, and stage hands generally get their names on a list that nobody reads, tucked away on the back of the program.

Now in my experience, that is often what those backstage workers want. If they wanted bouquets, they'd be actors. Nevertheless, the actors and the directors would have nothing without the work that these people do behind the scenes. They should be recognized at least sometimes for their essential contributions.

Now Sunday morning worship is not theater—or at least shouldn't be—but there are some similarities. For instance, everyone notices those who preach or sing or play music or read liturgy, but there are a lot of people doing a lot of work behind the scenes to make it all work.

This month, we'd like to draw your attention to Sherrie Southard, who is our Ushering Coordinator. The ushers are those who distribute bulletins, take up the offering, do a head count, then take the offering to the church safe and the Connect Cards to the office after worship is over. And Sherrie is here every Sunday, making sure that everything goes smoothly and filling in herself or recruiting last-minute subs any week that an usher is ill or out of town.

This month at church, say thank you to Sherrie Southard. She'll probably hate it. Like those theater stage hands, she doesn't do it for the recognition. All the same, people should know to whom they are indebted.

Thank you, Sherrie./



## A COMMUNITY OF COMPASSIONATE OUTREACH

*Our time and talents and resources are not gifts for our enjoyment but a calling to serve others, particularly the marginalized and those without other defenders.  
We seek to serve God by serving God's children in our community, our nation, and our world.*

### February Mission Offering: Campus Harvest

In general, we have no idea who is food insecure. Anyone can lose a job. Anyway can be suddenly crushed by medical bills. For instance, you might not think of college students going hungry—if they can afford college, they can afford food, right? No. In a 2024 survey of the student body, the UWEC determined that 47% of their students have at least uncertainty about where their food is coming from. It's hard to study when you're hungry.

Since 2014, the university has sponsored a food pantry in Davies Hall, which provides some non-perishable food, some frozen food, and some toiletry items. This month, our Mission Offering will go to support the Campus Harvest Food Pantry, not only helping to meet a need but also investing in the future of those students.



**Community Table:** Lake Street volunteers prepared and served a January Thanksgiving casserole, green salad, banana pudding and cookies to 78 guests on Wednesday, January 14. Our next dates to volunteer are February 11 and March 11. To volunteer, call or text Peter Nelson at 715-379-8135 or email [petermnelson@sbcglobal.net](mailto:petermnelson@sbcglobal.net)

#### Community Table

Our next dates at TCT are:

**February 11 – 9:00-2:00pm**  
**March 11 - 9:00-2:00pm**

To volunteer, contact Peter Nelson at 715-379-8135 or at



[petermnelson@sbcglobal.net](mailto:petermnelson@sbcglobal.net)

#### Beacon House Hosting

Our congregation hosts evening meals at Beacon House next on:  
**May 17th—23rd.**

Thank you to all the many volunteers who keep this ministry alive, especially our new volunteers.



### ARCW Wish List for February: Tuna Fish

You're invited to join others from Lake Street in donating tuna fish to the ARCW Food Pantry in our community. You will be helping feed local clients, affected by HIV/AIDS, and their families. Please place your donated item in the ARCW Food Pantry box located near the entrance to Fellowship Hall.

Thank you to all the people who donated Meals-in-a-Can during the month of January; twenty-five+ jars/cans of food were delivered to the ARCW pantry. Thanks also for the donations of canned milk, crackers, nutrition bars, raisins, soda, marshmallows, condiments and juice. Your generous gifts are always appreciated.

**Blessing Box:** Thank you to everyone who continue to supply items for our Blessing Box. Items currently needed are toothbrushes, wash clothes, toothpaste, socks, large underwear, Vaseline, and Band-Aids. We have enough soap, shampoo, and conditioner for now. .

## A COMMUNITY OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION

*We seek to be a place where all God's children, of all ages and abilities, can grow together in knowledge and faith, through study, through participation in worship, and through service to others.*

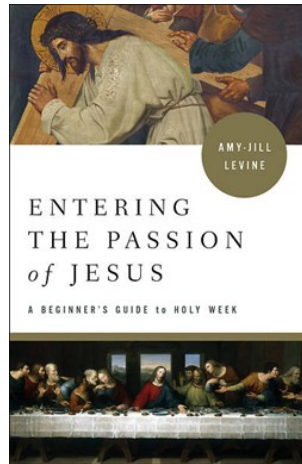
### A Lenten Study: Entering the Passion of Jesus

by Amy-Jill Levine

Last year during Lent we did a book study reading together the book *Re-Telling the Story*, by Anne van Gend, on the Atonement. This year we have chosen to look together at the book *Entering the Passion of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to Holy Week*, by Amy-Jill Levine. Dr. Levine takes us through the geography and the history of that most significant week in human history, from Palm Sunday to Gethsemane.

Each session will begin with a 7-minute video presentation by the author. We will begin on Wednesday, February 25, and we will meet in the Fireside Library (unless the class gets too big) at 5:00pm.

The church will order books ahead of time from Cokesbury. If you would like to join us and read along, let the office know, so we can order yours.



### Sunday Book Group: Now Bible Group

The study group that meets on Sunday mornings in the church office conference room has for many years been reading books together, but has shifted focus. We will now be doing "pick up Bible study." We will have a plan for the study a few weeks ahead, but preparation is optional. We are currently studying the Gospel of Mark.

#### Men at Prayer: Thursdays @ 7:30am

A weekly time of praying together and studying scripture verse by verse.

Followed by "After-MAP"  
at The Goat Coffee House on Water Street.

### Olson-Maser Scholarship

The Norma Olson-Beverly Olson Scholarship is an annual scholarship for students who are preparing for "helping professions." This includes teaching, social work, medical care, and ministry. Last year the grant was \$500.

If you or someone you know fits that general description, application forms are available either at the office or on the church website under the "Spiritual Formation" tab. The deadline for applications is April 15.

This scholarship is not restricted to members of Lake Street. Students at any level of post-high school education are encouraged to apply: university, tech school, or graduate school.

### Children's Sunday School

In February, we continue looking at the Fruits of the Spirit focusing on peace, patience, and kindness. We continue practicing the song "The Books of the Bible", to help them remember all of the books. We hope to share this song with you in the future. We also will be learning a song about the Fruits of the Spirit.

**February 1** – Peace. We will look at Paul and Barnabas and how they overcame differences

**February 8** – Patience. We will look at Abraham and how he used patience when waiting for God to answer his prayer for a son.

**February 15** – No Sunday school. Pancake breakfast

**February 22** – Kindness. We will look at David and Mephibosheth

# UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

Happy Birthday



United Women in Faith

## UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH (UMW) NEWS

### UWF on Hiatus

There was a time when United Women of Faith (then, United Methodist Women) took a couple of months off from their regular meetings in the summer. But in recent years the thinking has changed. Actually, summer is a *great* time to meet. It's in January and February, when any given day may involve shoveling snow or driving on ice, that people may not want to get out. So UWF will not be meeting in those two months. To hold you over, here is a picture taken at the December Christmas Tea—at the pre-tea concert, led by the Ahrens family.

### Haven House Needs Volunteers

Hope Gospel Mission's Community Haven House is a safe space for people experiencing homelessness to get connected with the resources they need to move toward wellness and out of chronic homelessness. To do this well, more help is needed. Volunteers connect guests with agencies, assist guests during the check-in process, assist with shower and laundry schedules, and help with cleaning tasks. Shifts are two or four hours, once every week or every other week. Volunteer opportunities are listed at [hopegospelmission.org](http://hopegospelmission.org), or contact volunteer coordinator Linda: 715-552-5566, ext. 1302; or email her at [lindav@hopegospelmission.org](mailto:lindav@hopegospelmission.org).

### CHANGES to HOLEY SOCKS PROJECT

Lake Street United Women in Faith continues their **Holey Socks** project, which is a recycling program that raises funds for Northcott Neighborhood House in Milwaukee. **The Terra-Cycle program will now only accept GOLDTOE-Brand socks.** A collection box is in the Fellowship Hall by the water fountains. This is an all-church project.



A collection box is in the Fellowship Hall by the water fountain. This is an all-church project, so start looking for those **Holey Socks** today.

### February Birthdays



- 02-01 Corinne Gjernerig
- 02-06 Margo Bolton
- 02-12 Amber Possehl
- 02-14 Joyce Mortt
- 02-27 Evelyn Peterson

### Prayer Holds Us Together

One of the ways we are able to care for each other, whether we are together or not is by praying. If you would like to be a part of our regular prayer email group, contact Pastor Jerry.



### The Lake Street Stampers ...

Will meet in Room 202 on Thursday **February 26 at 1:00 pm.** We always welcome new helpers so maybe this different day might allow you to join us. It's a good time to be together.



# RESOURCES FOR MINISTRY

## Foundation Grant Report, 2025

The Lake Street Foundation's grants to the church for this past year added up to \$22,559.30. Our goal is for this money to be used in ministry now, not just to be socked away for a rainy day, but at the same time we want to make sure we are using the money well. Here is an accounting of how the Foundation Grant money has been used in 2025.

<b>Music and Worship</b>	<b>\$1,700.01</b>
Paying an interim handbell director, Easter brass, altar Candles, new anthems for choirs	
<b>Inclusive Welcome</b>	<b>\$1,086.34</b>
Pancake subsidies for students, fellowship meal and Hippolytus Communion, new drinking glasses for kitchen, new name tags, replacing picture frame on historic quilt, lift inspection	
<b>Spiritual Formation</b>	<b>\$556.10</b>
Amplify Media subscription, Bibles for children, Lay Speaker class materials, scholarship plaque	
<b>Compassionate Outreach</b>	<b>\$2,986.49</b>
Community Table, grants to Bolivian church projects	
<b>Infrastructure Projects</b>	<b>\$12,648.88</b>
Repair lightning damage to boiler, new speaker for sanctuary, replace windows in hall and 3rd floor, dishwasher upgrade, tuck pointing on Lake Street side, paper shredding, Capital Campaign adjustment	
<b>Total used:</b>	<b>\$18,977.82</b>

## Foundation Grants for 2026

And the new grants have been determined for this year. What is your passion in ministry? What do you wish we could do? Maybe we can.

2026 Distributions			
		%	\$
Worship		4.22%	<b>\$1,004.04</b>
Inclusive Welcome		16.21%	<b>\$3,852.71</b>
Compassionate Outreach		8.94%	<b>\$2,124.83</b>
Spiritual Formation		11.40%	<b>\$2,708.57</b>
Capital Improvements		20.93%	<b>\$4,973.50</b>
Olson-Maser Scholarship		1.76%	<b>\$418.15</b>
Undesignated		36.55%	<b>\$8,686.12</b>
			<b>\$23,767.93</b>

## SCRIP Continues

One way that we have been able to give to (and through) our church has been the SCRIP program. In this program, the church buys gift cards at a discount, then sells them to the church at face value and keeps the difference. Most of the discounts are small – 3%, for instance – but by using SCRIP for our ordinary purchases, we are able to designate that small percentage of our shopping to a good cause.



Over the years, we have used the SCRIP profits to support various projects, from our capital campaign in 2018, when we were fixing our bell tower to mission projects such as Feed My People and The Community Table.

Well, for eleven years, SCRIP has been run by Dave Doxsie – single-handedly for the past six or seven – and at the end of last year Dave retired. The SCRIP program will continue, however. Al Weisenbeck has agreed to take on the management of this program. Watch your Short Circuit for updates on any changes.

A JONAH COFFEE CHAT

# Common Grounds

Thursdays at 9am

@ the JONAH Office -  
2233 Golf Rd. Eau Claire  
\*excluding Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day

Plus, two Sunday chats!

Sunday, November 16 & Sunday,  
December 21 at 11:00am  
@ Wonders of Nature -  
416 S Barstow St, Eau Claire

Connection and conversation are healthy practices! With everything going on in the world, the JONAH Voices United Task Force would like to invite you to a coffee hour to connect, share your feelings, and find shared values. A guided structure will be provided to ensure safety, support, and productivity.

# RESOURCES FOR MINISTRY

## Memorials and Special Gifts Through January 20, 2026

### MEMORIALS

Donors: Ron and Corinne Gjerner; In  
Memory of: Rev. Thomas Jarrell;

Donors: Ron and Corinne Gjerner; In  
Memory of: Carroll Vowels;

Donors: Steve and Rebecca Lasure; In  
Memory of: Ed, Char and John Kaehler;

### SPECIAL GIFTS

Donors: Leonard and Margaret Larsen;  
Designated for: Scholarships for  
Friends at the Lake;

Donors: Paul and Virginia  
Hilbrich; Designated for: Radio  
Broadcasts;

Donors: Ron and Corinne Gjerner;  
Designated for: Kitchen sink faucet  
replacement;

### MEANINGFUL CHRISTMAS:

Donations by: Marlene Arntson, Nancy Zabel, Margo Bolton, Peggy Nelson, Doug and Sara Dunham, Kathy Anderson, Rita Houser, Carol Lamirande, Gary and Carol Mooney, Peter and Barb Nelson, Jennie Stratton, Terry and Marilyn Sullivan, Jeff and Jan Voss, Toni Kruse, Suzanne Heabler, Shirley Hoffman, Teresa Koca, B.J. Keepers, Dennis and Linda Peterson, Joanne Ures-Halvorson, Paul and Virginia Hilbrich, Brian and Kirsten Gierhart, Chuck and Chuck Grandy, P.I. Peterson, Jon and Julie Holzinger, Lloyd and Florence Shepherd, James and Patricia Roach, Robert Tollefson.

## End of Year Financial Report for 2025

What a great report I have to share with you. What a church Lake Street is. Thank you for your generosity.

We ended the year in the black. Yes, the chart below shows us ending the year with a \$7,160 deficit, but that chart does not take into account that some of the “expenses” that are accounted there are depreciation costs (i.e. expenses from previous years that are spread out over many years for accounting purposes). Over \$20,000 of our expense this year was depreciation.

Nor does that number recognize that some of our expenses were paid by internal transfers, which are not taken as income. For instance, over \$7,900 were transferred from our “Parsonage Fund” to support the pastor’s housing allowance. In terms of actual cash expenditures versus actual gifts that were made available, we are well into positive territory.

Largely because of this, the balance of our cash reserve—the money that enables us to weather the ups and downs of the year—is about \$40,000 higher at the end of 2025 than it was at the end of 2024.

Getting even more granular, the good news continues. When we look at the category “Gift to God,” which reflects just congregational giving, we see that you gave about \$5,000 **more** in 2025 than in 2024 (\$349,099 instead of \$343,743).

This is not normal for American churches in the 21st century. Numbers just don’t go **up**. But thank you. Thank you for your generosity, and thank you for the trust that that giving expresses in your church leadership and the direction that Lake Street is going in ministry.

Lake Street United Methodist Church

	Operating Fund		Building Fund		Total	
	Actual YTD Dec 2025	Budget YTD Dec 2025	Actual YTD Dec 2025	Budget YTD Dec 2025	Actual YTD Dec 2025	Budget YTD Dec 2025
Offerings and other income *	\$ 385,394	394,080	\$ 9,925	\$ 4,200	\$ 395,319	\$ 398,280
Expenses	312,231	324,601	90,248	\$ 99,827	402,479	424,428
Net of Offerings less expenses	\$ 73,163	\$ 69,479	\$ (80,323)	\$ (95,627)	\$ (7,160)	\$ (26,148)

\* Excludes parsonage investment gain/loss because it is not included in budget

## CONFERENCE AND COMMUNITY

### Lake Street Scholarships to Summer Camp!

At its January meeting, our Church Council approved using our Foundation Grant money for Spiritual Formation to offer scholarships to camp at Pine Lake United Methodist Camp this summer. (Camp Lucerne, our other camp, is closed for renovations this summer.) The church will pay 80% of the cost for children or youth going to camp. This includes not only the children of church members but extended family members. The council has given Pastor Jerry some flexibility, so if you aren't sure, talk to him. For a full listing of the various camps, go to [wiumcamps.org](http://wiumcamps.org), but in the meantime here's a sampling:

**Create!** (a camp devoted to visual art)  
Grades 2-4: June 14-17 (Sun-Wed)  
Grades 4-6 and 6-9: June 14-19 (Sun-Fri)

**Leadership Skills**  
Grades 9-12: June 14-19. Through hands-on experiences that blend nature, faith, and friendship, you'll learn how to guide younger campers in activities and evening games—bringing energy, empathy, and creativity to every moment.

**Grandparent/Grandchild Camp**  
June 19-21 (Fri-Sun)

**Mother/Daughter Weekend**  
July 10-12 (Fri-Sun)

**Wild: Treehouses**  
Grades 2-4: July 5-8 (Sun-Wed)  
Grades: 4-6: July 5-10 (Sun-Fri) and Aug 2-7 (Sun-Fri)

**Wild: Backpacking**  
High School: July 5-10 (Sun-Fri)  
Middle School: August 2-7 (Sun-Fri)

**Classic Camp** (a traditional camp experience)  
Grades 2-4: July 12-15 (Sun-Wed)  
Grades 4-6, 6-9, and 9-12: July 12-17 (Sun-Fri)

There are camps devoted to games and outdoor adventure, camps that begin with a time of playing video games followed by an afternoon of acting out epic adventures in nature, camps centered on robotics and STEM, camps for families, camps for young adults and camps for adults with differing abilities.

You really should check out the site.



#### **EDITORIAL POLICY**

The *CIRCUIT RIDER* is a monthly news and information publication for members and friends of the Lake Street UMC.

#### **EDITORS**

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#### **DEADLINE**

News items for the March issue (mailed on Feb. 26) need to be received by **February 18**.

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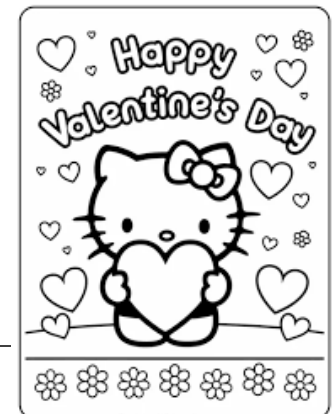
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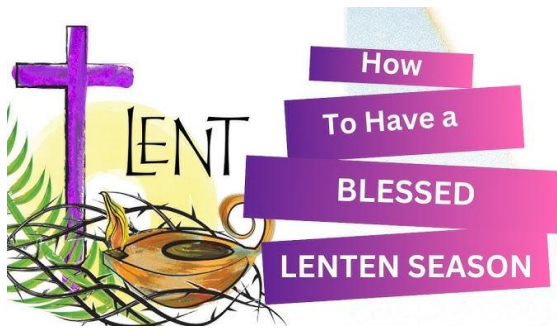
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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><b>1</b>  <b>Mission Emphasis: Campus Harvest Food Pantry</b>  <b>9:00am Worship with Communion; livestream on Facebook and YouTube; [Nursery Available]</b>  <i>Message: "Companions on a Journey"</i>  <i>Text: Philippians 3:7-16;</i>            10:00am Coffee Fellowship (Fellowship Hall)            10:05am Radio Ministry (<b>880AM or 106.3FM</b>)            10:15am Celebration Rehearsal (Sanctuary)            10:15am Children's Education (102/103)            10:15am Confirmation/Youth (Fireside)            10:15am Methodism 101 (Room 202)            10:30am Bible Group (Conference Room)            3:00pm Souleing Ministry (Chapel)            5:00pm Girl Scout Troop 3514/3324 (Rooms 101/102/103/Dockside)</p>	<p><b>2</b>            10:00am Fellowship Hall (ADRC Brain and Body Class)            10:00am Staff Meeting (Conf Room)            6:15pm Pack 128 Meeting (Rooms 101/102/103)</p>	<p><b>3</b>  <b>10:00am Friends at the Lake (Fellowship Hall)</b>            6:00pm Fellowship Hall (EC Male Chorus Board)            6:30pm Lounge (Tuesday Womens NA)</p>	<p><b>4</b>            10:00am Fellowship Hall (ADRC Brain and Body Class)            6:15pm Ellesi Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)            6:15pm Handbell Choir (Sanctuary)            6:30pm Fireside Library (Wed NA Group)            7:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)            8:00pm Ensemble Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)</p>	<p><b>5</b>            7:30am MAP (Men At Prayer) [Fireside Library]            9:00am Quilters (Room 101A)</p>	<p><b>6</b>            Kairos Home School (Rooms 101/102/Third Floor, Fireside, Fellowship Hall and Dockside)</p>	<p><b>7</b>            12:00pm Fireside Library (Sat NA Group)            6:00pm Living Room            Worship on Facebook</p>
<p><b>8</b>  <b>Mission Emphasis: Campus Harvest Food Pantry</b>  <b>9:00am Worship with livestream on Facebook and YouTube; [Nursery Available]</b>  <i>Message: "Saved: Beautiful on the Mountain";</i>  <i>Text: Romans 10:14-17;</i>            10:00am Coffee Fellowship (Fellowship Hall)            10:05am Radio Ministry (<b>880AM or 106.3FM</b>)            10:15am Celebration Rehearsal (Sanctuary)            10:15am Children's Education (102/103)            10:15am Confirmation/Youth (Fireside)            10:30am Bible Group (Conference Room)            3:00pm Souleing Ministry (Chapel)</p>	<p><b>9</b>            10:00am Fellowship Hall (ADRC Brain and Body Class)            3:00pm Staff Parish (Conference Room/on line)            6:00pm Welcome and Worship Team (Room 202/online)            6:15pm Pack 128 Meeting (Rooms 101/102/103)</p>	<p><b>10</b>  <b>10:00am Friends at the Lake (Fellowship Hall)</b>            6:00pm Communications Team (on line)            6:30pm Lounge (Tuesday Womens NA)</p>	<p><b>11</b>            9:00am The Community Table            10:00am Fellowship Hall (ADRC Brain and Body Class)            6:15pm Ellesi Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)            6:15pm Handbell Choir (Sanctuary)            6:15pm Pack 128 Committee (Room 202)            7:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)            8:00pm Ensemble Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)</p>	<p><b>12</b>            7:30am MAP (Men At Prayer) [Fireside Library]            9:00am Quilters (Room 101A)</p>	<p><b>13</b>            Kairos Home School (Rooms 101/102/Third Floor, Fireside, Fellowship Hall and Dockside)</p>	<p><b>14</b>            12:00pm Fireside Library (Sat NA Group)            6:00pm Living Room            Worship on Facebook</p>



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><b>15</b>  <b>Mission Emphasis: Campus Harvest Food Pantry</b>  8:30am Breakfast (Fellowship Hall) with Children and Youth Helping  <b>9:00am Worship with livestream on Facebook and YouTube; [Nursery Available]</b>  <i>Lay Speaker, Len Larsen, preaching;</i>  10:00am Coffee Fellowship (Fellowship Hall)  10:05am Radio Ministry (<b>880AM or 106.3FM</b>)  10:15am Celebration Rehearsal (Sanctuary)  10:30am Bible Group (Conference Room)  <b>3:00pm IM Church (Fellowship Hall)</b>  3:00pm Souleng Ministry (Chapel)  5:00pm Girl Scout Troop 3514/3324 (Rooms 101/102/103/Dockside)</p>	<p><b>16</b>  10:00am Fellowship Hall (ADRC Brain and Body Class)  10:00am Staff Meeting (Conf Room)  6:15pm Pack 128 Meeting (Rooms 101/102/103)</p>	<p><b>17</b>  <b>10:00am Friends at the Lake (Fellowship Hall)</b>  5:30pm Trustees (Room 202/on line)  6:30pm Finance Committee (Fireside Library/on line)</p>	<p><b>18</b>  <b>ASH WEDNESDAY Circuit Rider Deadline</b>  10:00am Fellowship Hall (ADRC Brain and Body Class)  <b>12:16pm Ash Wednesday Worship at Lake Street; Preacher – Rev. Jen Barnet;;</b>  6:15pm Handbell Choir (Sanctuary)  <b>6:30pm Ash Wednesday Worship Message At Hope UMC; Peacher – Rev. Jen Barnet;</b>  7:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)  8:00pm Ensemble Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)</p>	<p><b>19</b>  7:30am MAP (Men At Prayer) [Fireside Library]  9:00am Quilters (Room 101A)</p>	<p><b>20</b>  Kairos Home School (Rooms 101/102/Third Floor, Fireside, Fellowship Hall and Dockside)</p>	<p><b>21</b>  10:00am Room 202 (Huntington's Disease Support Group)  12:00pm Fireside Library (Sat NA Group)  6:00pm Living Room Worship on Facebook</p>
						
<p><b>22</b>  <b>Mission Emphasis: Campus Harvest Food Pantry</b>  <b>9:00am Worship with livestream on Facebook and YouTube; [Nursery Available]</b>  <i>Message: "Generosity (vs Greed)";</i>  <i>Text: Deuteronomy 15:7-11;</i>  10:00am Coffee Fellowship (Fellowship Hall)  10:05am Radio Ministry (<b>880AM or 106.3FM</b>)  10:15am Children's Education (102/103)  10:15am Confirmation/Youth (Fireside)  10:30am Bible Group (Conference Room)  3:00pm Souleng Ministry (Chapel)</p>	<p><b>23</b>  10:00am Fellowship Hall (ADRC Brain and Body Class)  10:00am Staff Meeting (Conf Room)</p>	<p><b>24</b>  <b>10:00am Friends at the Lake (Fellowship Hall)</b>  10:00am Room 202 (ADRC Med Wise Class)</p>	<p><b>25</b>  10:00am Fellowship Hall (ADRC Brain and Body Class)  1:30pm Room 202/Fireside Library (ADRC Memory Loss Support Group)  6:15pm Ellesi Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)  6:15pm Handbell Choir (Sanctuary)  6:30pm Lenten Worship  8:00pm Ensemble Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)</p>	<p><b>26</b>  7:30am MAP (Men At Prayer) [Fireside Library]  9:00am Quilters (Room 101A)  <b>9:30am Circuit Rider Assembly (Room 202)</b>  1:00pm Stampers (Room 202)</p>	<p><b>27</b>  8:00am Fellowship Hall In Use (Sewing Guild)</p>	<p><b>28</b>  12:00pm Fireside Library (Sat NA Group)  6:00pm Living Room Worship on Facebook</p>



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**Lent 2026**

Dear Lake Street Members and Friends:

What is the character of a Christian? Or does it even matter? After all, we are saved by grace, through faith. Our salvation is the gift of God, not the result of our own works and character (Ephesians 2:8-9). And yet we can't help feeling that there are some expectations for those who claim the name of Christ. When we read about a religious leader who turns out to have had a harem of mistresses, we think it matters. When a politician claims the name of Christ even while endorsing acts of cruelty, we don't just say, "It doesn't matter. We're saved by grace, anyway."

No, as I said in several different ways during my sermon series on "Getting' Saved," our salvation by grace should have some effect on the rest of our lives. Well, Lent is here again, a time of year that has traditionally been set aside for Christians to focus on ways to better reflect Christ. (At least that's what it meant for centuries, before it became about giving up chocolate for six weeks.) So, through this month, I will be preaching a series on the opposite of sin. My goal is to turn the negative focus that Lent sometimes has around. Instead of talking about things we should avoid or should stop doing, I want to ask, "What are the things that we could be doing that would fill that space in our lives instead."

But Lent is more than moral instruction, and we are also offering a chance to think more deeply about scripture. On Wednesday evenings in Lent (beginning Feb. 25), at 5:00pm, we will hold a Bible Study in the Fireside library on the history and background behind the week of Christ's Passion. Using the book *Entering the Passion of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to Holy Week*, by Amy-Jill Levine, we will walk the streets of Jerusalem alongside his other disciples as we prepare ourselves for Good Friday and Easter.

However you approach this Lenten season - whether you make use of the programs we offer at church or do something privately - I hope you will find a way to turn your eyes away from the bleakness of much of human existence toward the hope that is in Christ. No, we can't retreat from the world entirely. But a time of retreat can be a source of strength.

And as always, we include along with this letter, a Lenten offering envelope, for those who would like to add a special gift to the church beyond what they give normally.

*Pastor Jerry Morris*