

CHIMNEY ROCK LUTHERAN CHURCH – DECEMBER NEWS

SAM Monica Writes . . .

Grace, Peace & Blessings to ALL!

Praying that All were able to celebrate blessings in your lives this Thanksgiving. No matter how small or big they maybe we should be Thankful for all the blessings in our lives. Sometimes the smallest blessings are the most impactful.

This last Sunday was Christ the King Sunday which ends the liturgical year for the church. This Sunday is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent means "arrival" or "coming". For Christians the "arrival" or "coming" is in 2 parts. The first arrival we are awaiting is the when Christ came as a vulnerable infant in a humble stable with God's creation. A "King" born in a stable and laid in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes. Christ wasn't born in a palace and wrapped in fine linens as a pampered baby. A true King for the people, born in the least likely of places for the least likely of people. The second part of the coming is Christ's promise to come again in the end of times. When Christ will come to defeat evil, establish His kingdom and judge humanity.

This time of year for most seems to be a season of extra busyness. Most people I meet are in an extra sense of rush, so much to do and so little time to do it. My question is always what are we busy rushing around for? We are supposed to be preparing the for Christ to come as a baby born in a stable. What does that require of us? What things are we required to do for His arrival? I feel this is a perfect season for the devil who is always tempting and distracting us to be working overtime. If the devil can keep us super busy and distracted from the true meaning of the season, he wins. This is a perfect time for evil to pull Christians from being focused on Christ coming. Because of the commercialism of Christmas, it is very easy for evil to keep Christ believers from being focused on the true meaning of Christmas and that is the "arrival" of Christ. What are you being distracted by? Where is evil taking you away from your preparation of the "arrival" of Christ? Where do we need to stand up against evil and say "no, not this year, devil?" This is not always easy to do, go against the crowd to resist evil. The preparing for Christ's "arrival" is supposed to be a celebration of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. That is something worthy of looking forward to. Those words to me are calming in a season of commercialism and business. This is where our focus should be in this Advent season. Preparing for the "arrival" of Christ as a baby and when Christ will come again in his second coming.

God's Blessings of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love,
Monica A. Dejno

We're Collecting for Area Food Pantries

You'll notice baskets in the narthex. We are collecting again for area food pantries which are experiencing more families in need. All area pantries are accepting monetary donations, as well as personal hygiene products such as soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, laundry soap, dish liquid, peanut butter, cereal, instant pudding, Jell-O, and muffin and cake mixes, to name a few items.

Thank You for Decorating!

Thank you to Dan and Jacob Solfest for putting the Christmas trees in place and Barb McGee for decorating the sanctuary with her beautiful poinsettias and lights!

Trempealeau County Health Care Center Asking for Resident Christmas Gifts

Currently, donations are being accepted to help bring holiday spirit to more than 250 residents residing in multiple facilities. SSPP Catholic School in Independence will be a collection drop-off location again this year for TCHCC. The final drop-off day is Friday, December 5th, to allow TCHCC time to wrap and distribute items. Donations being accepted are throw blankets, toothpaste and toothbrushes, socks with grippers, candy, shampoo, body wash, deodorant, monthly calendars, Packers, Brewers, or Badger items, winter hats, gloves, and mittens, decks of cards, puzzle books, and microwave popcorn. Any donations are greatly appreciated and make a huge difference in the lives of others. Thank you to all who donate.

Wreaths Across America Program and Placement to be Held December 13

We hope to have several volunteers to place wreaths on veterans' graves on December 13! Remember that many hands make light work! The time for Chimney Rock is approximate, so plan to be there before 10:45am so you don't miss the placement! Rob Rasmussen, Commander of Legion Post #459 of Eleva sent the following information:

"Our program will be at the Legion December 13th at 9am. We will then go to Eleva cemetery to place wreaths immediately after. We will then make our way to Chimney Rock. We are estimating a 10:45 to 11am arrival time. We are just beginning to seek sponsors and families interested in purchasing wreaths. Again this year, they will be doing buy one, get one free." (Note: sponsor/order forms can be found in the church narthex.)

Eleva Cookie Walk Planned for December 14

"Baking Spirits Bright" Cookie Walk is planned at Eleva Lutheran Church following 9am worship on December 14. At this unique event you can purchase delicious, homemade Christmas cookies, candies, and special holiday treats. Come and enjoy!

Sunday School Christmas Brunch - Needed Items

The Sunday School Christmas program will be on Sunday, December 21st, at 9:30am and we are looking for the following items:

- 8 Egg Bakes
- 1/2 Gallon of Orange Juice
- 1 Gallon of Chocolate Milk
- 1/2 Gallon of White Milk
- 2 lbs. of Cheese Curds

Confirmation and Sunday School Holiday Schedule

Confirmation and Sunday School will not be held on December 28, but classes will resume on January 4.

The "First Christmas" Living Nativity Planned for December 21

The youth of Elk Creek Lutheran, Immanuel Lutheran of Strum, and Peace Lutheran of Pigeon Falls invite you to step back in time and witness the miraculous birth of our Savior with an outdoor Living Nativity on Sunday, December 21, at 5pm and 6:30pm. Join us for this heartfelt portrayal, followed by snacks and drinks outside available after each performance. We look forward to celebrating this special night with you! Note: Please dress for the weather, as the event will be held outdoors. We are accepting donations of non-perishable food items and paper goods for the community food pantries.

Worship with Us on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day!

Christmas worship is scheduled for 4pm on Christmas Eve, which is Wednesday, December 24. Breaking with tradition from the last several years, there WILL BE a Christmas Day service this year at 9:30am, so there are two opportunities to celebrate the birth of Christ this year.

We Offer Our Sympathy to . . .

- ❖ the family of Joyce Olson. Joyce passed away on November 10, and her funeral was held at Chimney Rock on November 15. Please remember to keep Joyce's family in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.
- ❖ the cousins and friends of Kent Melsness. Kent passed away on November 18, and we just found out that his burial will be held in the spring. Please remember Kent's family in your thoughts and prayers as well.

We Acknowledge the Following Memorials . . .

- ❖ Dale, Roxie, and Terry Erickson memorial to the Cemetery Fund given by Jerry Erickson.
- ❖ All Twerberg Family members memorial to the General Fund given by the Twerberg Family.
- ❖ Gordie Twerberg memorial to the Cemetery Fund given by Debra Twerberg.
- ❖ Joyce Olson memorial to the Sunday School given by McAdam, Brooklynn, Aubree and Kayden Kensmoe.

Worship Assistants Needed

Please check the sheet in the narthex and sign up to read, greet, or usher on open dates. We appreciate everyone who volunteers—including our Confirmation and Sunday School students.

Coffee Servers Needed

Thank you to everyone who served coffee so far this fall! We need more people to sign up in the narthex. The Confirmation and Sunday School students work up an appetite during their classes and really appreciate a snack each Sunday. Remember, you don't have to furnish a meal! Just bring one or two items, either purchased or homemade, enough for about 25 people. Beverages, paper plates, napkins, and tableware are provided.

Please Inform Pastors of Illness & Hospitalizations

If you hear that one of our members is hospitalized, please let Pastor Sands or Monica know. Because of HIPAA laws, hospitals no longer contact pastors when someone is admitted. Also, please contact them about illnesses—even when the member isn't hospitalized.

Membership

If anyone is interested in becoming a member, please talk to Pastor David Sands or Synod Authorized Minister (SAM) Monica Dejno. Their contact information is located on the calendar page.

Church Offerings

Please remember that our church needs your continued financial support. Jason has put a "donate" button on our church website (www.chimneyrockchurch.org) for those who wish to contribute electronically. E-Pay information is also included in this issue. Of course, checks are the preferred method of donation and should be made payable to Chimney Rock Lutheran Church. If you don't attend Sunday worship, your offering can be sent to one of the addresses listed below.

Chimney Rock Lutheran Church
N43255 Church Rd.
Strum, WI 54770

Daniel Solfest
N43178 State Rd. 93
Strum, WI 54770

E-Pay Available at Chimney Rock

If anyone would like to send their contributions to the church electronically, please contact Treasurer Dan Solfest for the correct information. You will need the church's account name, account number, depository bank's name, and bank's Federal Reserve Bank routing number. You will also need to tell your bank the amount to send and frequency of remittance. Dan can be reached at 715.985.3242 or in church on Sundays. Thank you for your interest in supporting Chimney Rock Lutheran Church.

Newsletters

For those who can't access the monthly newsletters electronically via email, our church website, or Facebook, please pick up a printed copy the last Sunday of each month for the next month's calendar and news. Newsletters will be mailed to those who don't have electronic access or aren't in church to pick up a copy. Any questions, please contact Barb Sylla at 715.985.3496 or bbsylla8246@gmail.com. Information to be included in the newsletter should be submitted by the 20th of each month.

Our Vision Statement

Be alive and well in ten years with healthy evangelism and vital family fellowship.

Our Mission Statement

We, as a family of God, rooted in the strength and inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, are called forward facing challenges by the promises of God to reach out in love to our rural community, especially cherishing and welcoming children.

December Birthdays and Anniversaries

1st—Vicky Loesel
4th—Sue Murray
8th—Pam George
9th—Lucy Olson
11th—Dan Mamary
16th—Dorin Knudtson
17th—Travis Perry

20th—Jon Flury
21st—Augustus Hovey
24th—Billie Loesel
26th—Dylan Bohlinger, M/M Bill Hermanson
28th—M/M Glen Woychik
29th—Erin Kensmoe, Michael Wogh
31st—M/M Avery Buggert

Chimney Rock Congregational Council Minutes – November 10, 2025

Call to Order—Trustee Forrest Nutter called the Monday, November 10, 2025, meeting to order at 6:35pm. Members present: Monica Dejno (arrived later), Jerry Erickson, Barb McGee, Forrest Nutter, Pastor David Sands, Dan Solfest, and Barb Sylla. Richard Gunderson, Mary Olson, and Don Solfest were absent.

Prayer—Pastor Sands opened the meeting with devotions and prayer.

Secretary's Report was read by Barb S. Barb M. and Jerry motioned to accept, and motion carried.

Treasurer's Report—Dan distributed the report ending October 31, 2025. Barb S. made a motion to accept, Barb M. seconded, and motion carried.

Old Business:

- 1) Thanksgiving Eve Service will be held at Chimney Rock at 7pm on Wednesday, November 26. This is a Community Worship and choirs from Eleva Lutheran, Elk Creek Lutheran, and Immanuel Lutheran will provide the music. Free will offering will be given to area food pantries, and that will be decided at the December Council meeting. Chimney Rock will be serving refreshments after the worship. Forrest volunteered to order and pick up 12 dozen assorted cake doughnuts from Robbe's in Strum.
- 2) Joyce Olson passed away about 3pm today, November 10, and Monica arrived at the council meeting around 7pm after being with the family.

New Business:

- 1) Sound system—Some have mentioned difficulty hearing in church, and Monica will check the sound system to see if anything is changed.

The next council meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 15, at 6:30pm.

Adjournment—Monica and Richard motioned to adjourn. The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer at 7:25pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Barb Sylla, Council Secretary

2025 Council Members

Trustee	Richard Gunderson	715.797.3721
Trustee	Don Solfest	715.287.4562 715.797.3014
Trustee	Forrest Nutter	715.695.3487
Deacon	Barb McGee	715.695.3448
Deacon	Jerry Erickson	715.530.2079
Deacon	Mary Olson	715.694.2239 651.587.6126
Treasurer	Dan Solfest	715.985.3242
Secretary	Barb Sylla	715.985.3496 715.530.0338

*Jesus Is the Reason
for the Season!*

BISHOP HALOM'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE: WHEN GOD SHOWS UP

As we approach the season of Christmas that so many of us adore, I'd like to address a few churchy words that theologians like to use and sound impressive when using them. The first word is *incarnation* and the second is

Emmanuel.



If your church uses the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), you will again hear the passage from the first chapter of John on Christmas Day. The passage famously concludes in verse 14 with the words, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us..." This verse speaks directly to the concept of incarnation. In other words, it speaks to a God who literally takes on human flesh and enters this world in the form of baby Jesus. It's in stark contrast to what some

believe and experience - a God who exists far away, only to look down on us from God's heavenly throne. Instead, the incarnate God speaks to a God who is willing to take on the human experience with all the joys and sorrows that come with it. One can readily see that Jesus did indeed make his way through the human experience. He felt joy. He felt pain. His eyes teared up. And even if I can't recall a story when he laughed, I gotta believe that he really did!

Another passage found in the Christmas season comes from the gospel of Matthew, which references Isaiah 7:14: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us.'" One of the most important lessons I ever learned in seminary was in a pastoral care class. I had hoped to learn what to say, especially to someone hurting or grieving. What I learned was much more important. Instead of learning what to say, I was taught to show up - to be present. As time passes, few will remember what I say, but will remember that I was there. That's precisely why the name *Emmanuel* means so much to me. It's a constant reminder that God is always with us. Consider the final words in the gospel of Matthew: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b) Presence matters because God embodies it and teaches it.

Christmas is known for its gift giving nature. We share gifts with one another to reveal our love for them. This year, I hope that regardless of the quantity or quality of the wrapped presents that lay under the tree, you will recognize the gift of presence. Not only the presence of your loved ones, but particularly the presence of God. So many of you will grieve as you experience the lack of presence from a loved one due to death or distance. My heart grieves with you. My hope lies in a God who provides and will gift you all with someone who will be present with you in some way at some time. If nothing else, remember God's presence as you receive the body and blood of Christ in the worship services that you attend, for that's yet another way in which God shows up.

Fellow disciples, Merry Christmas to you all and may the presence of God incarnate, Emmanuel, embrace you in such a way that brings warmth to your heart!

Bishop Martin