

CHIMNEY ROCK LUTHERAN CHURCH – SEPTEMBER NEWS

Pastor Sands Writes . . .

I believe that we can learn life lessons from the animals that we care for, even lessons of faith. Consider this soldier's story of unconditional love: Eight of us slipped quietly through the rolling German countryside. We were the intelligence and reconnaissance unit, the eyes and ears of the Army infantry that battled Hitler's army across northern Europe. The fighting had grown more fierce in October 1944, as we crossed the Luxembourg border into Germany. Our job was to scout the German lines and report back on how many troops they had, how many tanks, and the number and size of their big guns.

One night the Germans spotted us as we approached a small village, and let loose with their deadly, 88 mm guns. All of us ran for cover. I headed for an old barn. I found a dark corner to wait out the thunderous artillery assault, unable to stop shivering. As I prayed, Lord get me through this, I realized I wasn't alone. A small dog, weighing maybe 30 pounds, stared at me with fear in his eyes, quivering just like me. The dog looked like he was praying right along with me. I put my arm around him and we rode out the shelling together. When the firing ended, I walked to my Jeep and the dog followed me. I was amazed we were both still alive. I picked him up and put him in the Jeep.

He rode with me back to headquarters, where I introduced him to my buddies. My good luck charm, I thought. I called him Minka, after a 1930's song that I loved. Minka stuck to me like my shadow. I guess we were meant to be together. One day, our team was scouting the outskirts of another village. When Minka started to whimper. He's warning us I thought, so we took cover. Sure enough, German troops were nearby. "You stay quiet now," I told him. I spoke to him in German, because I figured he'd been trained in that language. He never made another peep. After that, the guys were sold on him. Minka accompanied us on all our missions. Only once did we become separated. Orders came down from command. We had 5 minutes to pull out, but Minka had gone off. I couldn't find him, so I was distraught. Soon we had advanced 30 miles. I felt like I'd lost my little brother, and my protector. It was my lowest moment of the war. I prayed for a miracle to bring us back together, and the Lord heard me, because two days later someone from the division found him and drove him to our outfit. Oh, what a reunion we had! After that, I tried never to let him come out of my sight. Minka seemed to feel the same about me. We grew so close that throughout the snowy winter, as we fought the Battle of the Bulge, Minka would crawl into my sleeping bag and curl up at my feet.

In some ways, the worst part of the war for me was when I received orders to return home. You see, we were forbidden to take animals aboard our transport ship. I know it sounds silly now, but I actually considered staying in Europe rather than leaving Minka behind. Feeling desperate, I came up with a plan, but I needed Minka's help. If I could pack him into my barracks bag and train him to keep silent, I could carry him onto the ship, and none of the ship's officers would know. I practiced with him. Four days, to no avail. I just couldn't get through to him. Not in German, not in English. The day we were to ship out from France, I was in a panic. At the dock, out of view of the officers, I tried one more time. "Okay," I said to Minka, "This is it. You stay quiet or else you can't come." He looked at me in that way that dogs do, that makes it seem they understand. And then he crawled into the bottom of my barracks bag and never made a move, never uttered a sound.

Aboard the ship, the guys and I surreptitiously fed him from our rations. When we landed in New York, he went into the barracks bag again and I didn't have to warn him. Once we were on land again, Minka sprang out of the bag and ran back and forth, celebrating like it was New Year's Eve.

Minka and I lived another 11 years together. They were among the happiest years of my life. People who hear my story say it's so touching that I saved Minka. "No," I tell them. "Minka saved me."

Like the little dog Minka, who was able to save his friend because he had been saved. When we live in the salvation we have received from our Lord, Jesus Christ, we can "save" others by sharing the Good News, by reflecting the light of Christ in our lives, by helping them get to know Jesus as their Savior too. Then we will have a celebration that's better than a New Year's Eve party. It will be a Heavenly celebration!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Sands

Cemetery News

All urns and summer flowers should be removed from the cemetery by October 1. Thank you!

Sunday School and Confirmation Classes to Begin

Welcome back to our students! Sunday School and Confirmation classes will resume on September 7 from 9:30-11am.

Keep Spreading the Word about Chimney Rock's 155th Anniversary on October 19

In September of 2019, a committee was formed and began meeting monthly to plan for Chimney Rock's 150th Anniversary, which was originally scheduled for September 20, 2020. Due to Covid in early 2020, we had to cancel that date, but in those few months many things on our list were accomplished:

- We chose a new theme, "By His Grace, For His Glory," based on several verses in the book of Romans.
- We began using this theme on weekly bulletin covers.
- We designed and ordered a 150th indoor banner from Supreme Graphics.
- We commissioned Bob Speltz from the Whitehall area to paint a new outdoor sign, again using our theme.
- We ordered and sold trivets with a picture of Chimney Rock Lutheran Church.
- And we also helped a family from Malawi, Africa (our companion Synod) by purchasing farm animals through ELCA Good Gifts, earning \$715 for that mission.

Now, the council has decided to complete what began over five years ago! As we mentioned in the June-July newsletter, we're still in the planning stages for our 155th Anniversary on October 19 and want to keep the celebration simple and more informal than previous anniversaries. This is what we have decided:

- Worship will be held at the usual time of 9:30am, with guest speaker Pastor Diane House, Assistant to the Bishop in the Northwest Synod.
- The Lorn & Royce Band will provide the music for the service and perhaps other musicians will be added.
- A meal in the church basement, served by Council members, will follow the morning worship. The menu will include: pulled pork sandwiches, grilled brats, potato salad, potato chips, baked beans, pickles, cake, and beverages. We aren't requiring RSVPs. Instead of a set price, a free will offering will be accepted for the meal.
- We want this to be like a family reunion of all who have ties to Chimney Rock, including those who have been baptized or confirmed here and may have moved away from the area.
- There will be lots of time to mingle and visit, especially during and after the meal.
- Please help us get the word out. So far, we've been announcing the 155th in our weekly bulletins, monthly newsletter, on Facebook, on our church website (www.chimneyrockchurch.org), and via personal texts and emails. We're asking all of you to help too by telling your family members and friends who have ties to Chimney Rock. A flyer/poster was included in the August newsletter which you can forward to others if you receive the newsletter via email OR take a picture of the flyer with your cell phones and text to others.

We're looking forward to seeing you on October 19 to celebrate Chimney Rock Lutheran Church, which began in 1870. We have reason to celebrate all those who went before us, those who built this beautiful church building, worshipped here, and supported the congregation for 155 years, spreading God's word from generation to generation. This is a time to thank God for all His blessings!

Engaging Children Initiative Scheduled for September 6

The Engaging Children Initiative is a ministry of the La Crosse Area Synod, in partnership with Sugar Creek Bible Camp and Luther Park Bible Camp. It is generously funded by a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. The Engaging Children Initiative (ECI) equips ministry leaders to creatively engage children in prayer and worshipful experiences through the arts, movement, playful curiosity and story. Children of all abilities and their families will feel welcomed in congregational worship and the life of the church. Congregations of the Luther Park Bible Camp Association are invited to participate in this initiative. Details about events and training opportunities that the initiative are hosting can be found in the narthex. Church staff and volunteers are invited to the equipping and training event (at no cost) on Saturday, September 6th at Sugar Creek Bible Camp in Ferryville, Wisconsin. The optional lunch will be available at a minimal fee. If you would like to learn more about the Engaging Children Initiative, look at our website, eci.lacrosseareasynod.org and sign up to receive occasional updates about events, resources and initiative findings.

Thank you to . . .

- ❖ Dan and Jacob Solfest for painting the small windows in bell tower, balcony, and above the side door. We appreciate all your hard work, and it looks so much better!

We Acknowledge the Following Memorials . . .

- ❖ Dale, Roxie, and Terry Erickson memorial to the Cemetery Fund given by Jerry Erickson.

Worship Assistants and Coffee Servers Needed

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

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.

September Birthdays and Anniversaries

1st--Sara Kensmoe, Ryan Wogh
2nd--M/M Andy (Butch) Dejno
3rd--Donna Olson
4th-- Chase McGee
6th--M/M Thor Hermanson, Deaklyn Mish
8th--Kevin Edison
9th--Ann Johnson
10th--Dawn Woychik
12th--Tess Nysven
15th--Justin Bohlinger
16th--Carson Bisek
23rd--Kim Jacobson
24th--Heidi Christianson, M/M Dalton Solfest
25th--Brooklynn Olson, Mackenzie Mueller
26th--M/M Levi Loesel
28th--Carson Coburn, Broc Coburn
29th--Bill Hermanson
30th--Evan Lee, M/M Keith Edison

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

The Strum Area Food Pantry Is Here to Serve

The Strum Area Food Pantry is here to serve our community and provide individuals and families assistance in meeting their nutritional and personal care needs. They always need non-perishable food items, personal care products, paper products, as well as monetary donations. Donations may be dropped off at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Strum. If you would like to arrange a specific date and time to drop off donations or would like more information, please call 651-398-8861. For monetary donations, please make checks payable to "Strum Area Food Pantry" and send to PO Box 98, Strum, WI 54770. Thank you for your continued support. The Pantry is open the first Saturday of each month from 9-11am and the third Wednesday from 4:30-6:30pm.

Strum Is Senior Dining Site

Trempealeau County ADRC offers Senior Dining at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Strum. The meals are catered by Sweet Temptations, are served on both Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:30-12:30pm, and the suggested donation is \$5 for those who qualify (60 years and older). Reservations are required by 9am a day prior by calling 715-695-3511. This is not only for senior citizens from Strum—anyone can attend if you meet the age requirement and call ahead.

Norden's Fall Festival Scheduled

Trinity Lutheran Church of Norden has scheduled its Fall Festival for Sunday, September 7. Worship will be held at 8:30am; charcoal chicken dinner will begin at 11am; and the live auction is at 1pm. Also Included are a silent auction, basket bonanza, tractor parade, 50/50, bouncy houses, face painting, youth stand, and root beer barrel game. Raffle prizes include: Grand Prize--1/4 Black Angus beef, 2nd--\$200 Kwik Trip Gift Card, 3rd--\$100 cash, 4th--\$100 cash, 5th--\$100 cash, and 6th--\$100 cash. In addition this year there will be music by Madlee Band from 11am to 1 pm.

Chimney Rock Congregational Council Minutes – August 10, 2025

Call to Order—Trustee Don Solfest called the Sunday, August 10, 2025, meeting to order at 10:35am. Members present: Monica Dejno, Barb McGee, Forrest Nutter, Mary Olson, Pastor David Sands, Dan Solfest, Don Solfest, and Barb Sylla. Jerry Erickson and Richard Gunderson were absent.

Devotions—Pastor Sands read from Luke 12:51-53 and led in discussion. Monica shared an opening prayer.

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

Treasurer's Report—Dan distributed the report ending June 30, 2025. Barb S. made a motion to accept, Mary seconded, and motion carried. Dan then distributed the report ending July 31, 2025. Forrest made a motion to accept, Barb M. seconded, and motion carried.

Old Business:

- 1) Small bell tower and balcony windows—Dan and Jacob Solfest and Duke Berg rebuilt and painted the east-facing window in the tower. The plexiglass is cloudy and will be removed from the two east-facing balcony windows as well as the small window above the south door before they are painted by Dan and Jacob.
- 2) Barb will send a thank you to Duke and Mary Berg for building and staining the outdoor display case.
- 3) Storm windows—Steve Stendahl of Whitehall submitted a bid of \$1,190.85 for painting storm windows plus small windows on the west side of the church (17 windows). Mary Olson made a motion to accept the bid, Dan Solfest seconded the motion, and motion carried. Steve is planning to paint in September.
- 4) Gus Hovey has attended Sunday worship eight Sundays this summer and qualifies for a trip to Action City.
- 5) The July 6th service at Pleasantville was well attended by our congregation and the community. Congratulations to Mary Olson, who received the Pleasantville Citizen of the Year Award.
- 6) The Castle Project Grant was awarded to Wartburg Seminary to support Synod Authorized Ministers. This is a multi-year grant, and the first stage will be mentorship. The SAM program began as an exit program and is now a ministry program. One SAM is now authorized to serve Synod-wide, while all the rest can only serve the congregation(s) they are contracted with. The Northwest Synod of Wisconsin has grown to nearly 40 SAMs. This program is not a national ELCA program. Two SAMs have been serving between 20-30 years in our Synod.
- 7) 155th Anniversary on October 19—Assistant Bishop Pastor Diane House will be the guest speaker and the Lorn & Royce Band will provide most of the music. We will have processional communion but not by intinction. Council members will serve the meal.
The menu was decided: Pulled pork (donated by Monica), brats (donated by Forrest, who will also grill them), potato salad (donated by Monica), beans (previously donated by Bush's), chips and pickles (donated by Barb S.), cake (donated by Barb M.), condiments including ketchup, mustard, barbecue sauce, sauerkraut, chopped onions, etc. (donated by Mary). Hamburger buns and hot dog buns (approximately 150 of each) will be ordered. Water, milk, and coffee will also be served. Depending on attendance, we may have to serve in two groups since we can seat about 100 in the basement. We'll also check supplies and buy paper plates, cups, plastic tableware as needed. Ione Jacobson has offered to provide two mums or other fall flowers for the sanctuary. Barb M. volunteered to decorate the church, including the basement, and will also decorate outdoors by the main steps.

New Business:

- 1) Monica will be performing a non-member wedding at Chimney Rock on October 4th, which has been okayed by the Synod. The council agreed on charging a \$200 fee for use of the church, since the kitchen will not be used.
- 2) Sunday School will begin on September 7.
- 3) Monica is scheduled to preach on August 31st, the fifth Sunday of the month.

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

Adjournment—Dan and Barb M. motioned to adjourn. The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer at 11:56am.

Respectfully Submitted,
Barb Sylla, Council Secretary