

# Big Canoe & Highland Lutheran Churches

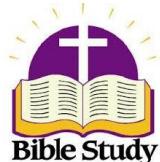
Big Canoe - 1381 Big Canoe Road – Decorah, IA 52101  
563-546-7974

Highland - 3824 Highlandville Road - Decorah, IA 52101  
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## NEWSLETTER

December 2025



### Pastor Becker's Sunday-morning Bible Class

8:45 a.m. each Sunday, class will be in the fellowship hall of the church of service and will last about 50 minutes.

Please consider taking advantage of this educational opportunity as a way to grow in your Christian faith.

All are welcome to attend!

## Upcoming Events

- Jan 12-20: Pastor and Detra will be visiting his sister in Phoenix (traveling to/from Arizona)
- Thurs, Jan 15 (9am): Shared Ministry meeting at Hesper (to discuss Lenten midweek services)
- Sun, Jan 18 (8:45am): Bible class (First John) meets in the nave at Big Canoe (Pr. Gies)
- Sun, Jan 18 (9am): Children's Sunday school meets in the Fellowship Hall at Big Canoe
- Sun, Jan 18 (10am): Service of the Word (Big Canoe) – Confession of Peter (white) – Pr. Gies
- Sun, Jan 18: Auditing Committee meets at Big Canoe
- No youth confirmation instruction on Jan 18.
- Wed, Jan 21 (9:30am): Pastor Becker meets with his ELCA colleague group (Lime Spring)
- Fri, Jan 23 (all day): Pastor Becker has an appointment in La Crosse
- Sun, Jan 25 (8:45am): Bible class (First John) meets in the Fellowship Hall at Highland
- Sun, Jan 25 (10am): Service of the Word (Highland) – Conversion of Paul (white)
- Sun, Jan 25 (after the service): Annual meeting of Highland Lutheran Church (Highland)
- Tues, Jan 27 (10am): Pastor Becker has a Zoom meeting with leaders of *Lutheran Quarterly*
- Fri, Jan 30 (all day): Pastor Becker has an appointment in Rochester
- Sun, Feb 1 (8:45am): Bible class (First John) meets in the nave at Big Canoe
- Sun, Feb 1 (9am): Children's Sunday school meets in the Fellowship Hall at Big Canoe
- Sun, Feb 1 (10am): Service w/Holy Communion (Big Canoe) – Fourth Sun. after Epiphany (green)
- Sun, Feb 1 (after the service): Annual meeting of Big Canoe Lutheran Church (Big Canoe)
- No youth confirmation instruction on Feb 1. Confirmation instruction will take place via Zoom this week.
- Sat, Feb 7 (10:30am-noon): Annual spiritual retreat for both congregations (Big Canoe)
- Sun, Feb 8 (8:45m): Bible class (First John) meets in the Fellowship Hall at Highland
- Sun, Feb 8 (10am): Service w/Holy Communion (Highland) – Fifth Sun. after Epiphany (green)
- Fri, Feb 13 (10am): Pastor Becker leads the worship service at Green Lea Manor (Mabel)
- Sun, Feb 15 (8:45am): Bible class (Gospel of Matthew) meets in the nave at Big Canoe
- Sun, Feb 15 (9am): Children's Sunday school meets in the Fellowship Hall at Big Canoe
- Sun, Feb 15 (10am): Service of the Word (Big Canoe) – Transfiguration of Our Lord (white)
- Sun, Feb 15 (after the service): Youth confirmation instruction will take place at Big Canoe.
- Wed, Feb 18 (5:30pm): Shared Ministry soup/sandwich meal and Ash Wed worship service (Big Canoe)
- Sun, Feb 22 (8:45am): Bible class (Gospel of Matthew) meets in the Fellowship Hall at Highland
- Sun, Feb 22 (10am): Service of the Word (Highland) – First Sunday in Lent (purple)
- Wed, Feb 25 (5:30pm): Shared Ministry meal and Lenten service (Pr. Becker preaching) (Burr Oak)
- August 9-14, 2026: Luther League/Shared Ministry Youth trip to the Boundary Waters

# **Big Canoe & Highland Joint Council Meeting - December 28, 2025**

**Present:** **Big Canoe Council:** Brian Bigler - President; Steve Emery - Vice President; Deb Monson - Secretary; and Seth Ferguson and Kathryn Thompson - council members, as well as Pastor Becker.

Pastor Becker gave the opening prayers and the council meeting was called to order.

Deb Monson read the minutes from the council meeting of August 17, 2025. The minutes were approved as read and are on file.

In the absence of Laurie Emery, Treasurer, Steve Emery presented the report. As of November 30, 20205, the balance on hand is -\$1,035.90. The Improvement Fund is owed \$1,000.00. The Cemetery Fund is owed \$2,500 from 2024. The Benevolence Fund is owed \$1,600 of \$8,100. \$11,500 has been borrowed. This does not include money from the Improvement Fund for the parsonage/sewer.

Pastor Becker will continue to post the offering contributions in the monthly bulletin so the congregation knows the monthly contribution income.

The reason is due in part from going from a quarter time pastor to a full time pastor.

Pastor Becker said monies have come in under the QR code system. Bill Stoen stated monies from the QR code should go to the General Fund. Brian requested a motion. Seth Ferguson made a motion, seconded by Steve Emery, and the motion passed that monies from QR code will be put into the General Fund.

Pastor gave his monthly report. He talked about the parsonage Christmas Party which will be held December 27th.

Pastor presented an updated list of the church membership. At the annual meeting, Pastor would like to have a roster of the current active membership.

Pastor would like to have an updated pictorial directory for Big Canoe. The Highland Council has already approved having a new directory. Brian asked for a motion. Steve Emery made a motion, seconded by Kathryn Thompson, and the motion passed. This matter will be voted on at the annual meeting.

Pastor offered the midweek Advent Service sign up sheet for the meal on the 21st which will be after the Christmas Program. Pastor and Detra will be gone to Arizona January 12th through the 20th. He will secure a sub pastor.

The use of the common cup for communion was discussed briefly and we will hold off on that for now.

The Big Canoe Annual Meeting will be held the first Sunday in February. The Highland Annual meeting will be held the last Sunday in January. A joint council meeting is scheduled for December 28th.

The calling tree needs to be updated. A select few will need to be called personally that do not have cell phone or computer.

Tammy Nordheim discussed making the cemetery a separate entity. Church funding would be separate from the cemetery funding. The purpose of this is to protect cemetery funds from being taken by the ELCA, if the church would ever close. The entire church would need to vote on this matter and should be voted on during the annual meeting. Notice has to be made in the church bulletin two separate Sundays before the annual meeting. Pastor Becker noted that the ELCA is not interested in taking over church property. This is a bad rumour going around.

Bill Stoen updated the council that the grant monies that he applied for from The Depot Outlet may not be available until February.

Septic installation - Sawyer Wise plans on working on the septic system on December 11th and 12th.

Tree removal on the church rental cropland was discussed. The field is overgrown. This would be done to reclaim tillable land and would be 20 to 30 feet along the fence line only. Sawyer gave a quote of \$2,500 to \$3,000. Custom removal would be \$4,000 to \$5,000. The council has received a check in the amount of \$4,849.50 for the rent of the cropland.

**Men's restroom:** Bob Thomas has been renovating the men's restroom at the church. He has already donated his time and has donated some items that needed to be purchased. The cost to complete the renovation is approximately \$2,000. The Luther League has already approved \$2,500 toward the renovation. Items needed for the renovation is a handicap accessible toilet and a divider for privacy purposes. Brian asked for a motion. Seth Ferguson made a motion, seconded by Steve Emery, and the motion passed. Brian will contact Bob and tell him to go ahead with the project.

The Spiritual Retreat for both congregations will be February 7, 2026 from 10:30 a.m. to Noon. This will involve planning for the coming year and pastoral goals. A list of committees and who serves on that committee is needed.

The 175th Anniversary of Big Canoe Church is in 2028. A committee is needed to get started on this.

Vernoe Whitaker and Brian Bigler are on the Nominating committee.

Steve Emery, Brian Bigler, and Kathryn Thompson are going off the church council in 2026.

The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Deb Monson - Secretary

## **Big Canoe & Highland Joint Council Meeting - December 28, 2025**

**Present:** **Big Canoe Council:** Brian Bigler - President; Steve Emery - Vice President; Deb Monson - Secretary; and Vernoe Whitaker, Bill Bullerman, and Kathryn Thompson - council members. **Highland Council:** Anna Jetson - President; Al Erickson - Vice President; Gary Selness - Secretary; Danny Dutka - Treasurer; and Kristi Selness, Myron Krauskopf, and Ed Stoen - council members, as well as Pastor Becker.

The reading of the Secretary's Report was waived due to the weather.

Pastor Becker went over his Pastoral Report and discussed the goals he accomplished in 2025 and goals he was unable to complete.

### **Pastor presented his goals for 2026:**

- Pastor will continue with Sunday morning Bible classes. At present 15-20 members attend the Sunday classes and Pastor hopes that more members will attend in 2026.
- Pastor will continue with home visits and communion to the home bound, and those in the hospital or nursing homes.
- Luther League members will meet quarterly.
- Pastor did reach out to inactive members over the past year.
- The two councils are in agreement to continue having services as currently established, the first and third Sundays at Big Canoe and the second and fourth Sundays at Highland.
- Pastor will continue sending out his weekly pastoral messages.
- Lenten services will need to be revised.
- Pastor will continue participating in retreats and continuing education programs.
- Pastor will share his goals for 2026 at the annual meeting.
- For consideration for the summer months:
  - During the summer months, start services  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour earlier.
  - On the 5th Sundays of those months with five Sundays, we could have an evening service.
  - Another possibility is to have services at the parsonage and then to the church for a meal.

**Old Business:**

**QR Code** - contributions by using the QR code system have been good so it's a program the two churches should keep. Monies from the QR code are kept in a separate account. The monies received under the QR code could be transferred to the General Fund account. To keep the QR code account active, a total of \$25 has to stay in the account.

A person has been arrested who had committed **burglary in the area**. No checks were reported stolen. The deputy advised to have a security camera in the church. At present, the security camera in the church is on loan from Cary and Tammy Nordheim. Pastor was authorized to purchase a security camera for the church. The wifi system at the church is now password protected.

Pastor has seen vehicles in the church parking lot at Big Canoe at 11:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. People parking at those hours may be doing a drug exchange.

**A Constitution Committee** needs to be formed to update each church's constitution so Pastor can make a report to the Synod/Bishop that the individual constitutions are up to date.

**Pictorial Directory** - the pictorial directory needs to be updated for both churches. This will need to be voted on at the annual meetings. Pastor has updated the membership lists at both churches.

**New Business:** Pastor and Detra will be going to Arizona Monday, January 12th through January 20th. Due to his brother's passing, they are going to Arizona to pick up certain items that have been in Pastor's family for many years. Pastor Gies will be conducting services on Sunday, January 18th.

Given the bombings and the current dangerous situation in Nigeria, Pastor is leaning towards not going. He will make the final decision in the next week or two.

If Pastor does not get into Nigeria, he will be going to Germany. Pastor is provided with funding for the cost of the trip.

A joint congregation retreat is currently scheduled for Saturday, February 7 at Big Canoe from 10:30 a.m. to noon. The purpose of this retreat is to discuss where the two congregations are going in the future.

The 175th Anniversary of Big Canoe will be in August 2028. An anniversary committee will need to be formed at the Big Canoe Annual meeting. Consideration should be given to having commemorative plates being made and having a history book printed. Should the church consider inviting the Crown Prince of Norway? If the prince cannot attend, maybe they will consider sending an ambassador from DC.

Pastor Becker will try to locate the Articles of Incorporation for Big Canoe which may be at the Luther College Archives.

Highland will observe their 135th Anniversary in October 2029.

Danny Dutka gave an update as to the renovation projects at the parsonage and the garage.

- There was a lot of structural rot on the south porch at the parsonage. The only salvageable part of the porch was the roof and the floor. Everything else had to be rebuilt.
- There are concrete and foundation issues with the parsonage.
- Cost to replace sidewalks and garage floor:

○ Garage floor	\$ 5,565.00
○ Concrete Apron	\$ 945.00
○ Sidewalks	\$ 3,079.00
○ Patio & new basement entry	\$ 2,525.00
○ Hatch entrance	
○ Stabilize the four corners of the parsonage foundation - the northeast corner is the worst.	
○ TOTAL COSTS	\$18,539.00

The budget to complete these projects is \$15,000.00. Danny will apply for a grant from The Depot to help with part of the costs. A bigger refrigerator is also needed at the Parsonage.

The council members worked on the 2026 proposed budget. A motion was made by Myron Krauskopf to accept the proposed budget, seconded by Verne Whitaker. Motion passed by all council members voting aye.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Deb Monson, Big Canoe Council Secretary

## **Announcements:**

The **Highland Church Council** meets January 12th after the worship service. The **Big Canoe Church Council** will meet next Sunday after the worship service at Big Canoe.

**Pastor and Detra will be on vacation** for the next ten days or so. They will be flying to Phoenix tomorrow morning and returning by rental vehicle later in the week. (They are bringing back some items given to Pastor by his deceased brother Mike.) Please keep Pastor and Detra in your prayers for safe travel. (If you need to reach him in an emergency, he will have his cell phone with him: 219-916-8535.) Pastor Gies will be preaching and serving as the liturgist at Big Canoe next Sunday.

As Pastor Becker announced last Sunday, he has decided **not to travel to Nigeria**. The current conditions in that country are such that he has determined it would not be safe to travel there at this time. Please keep Pastor David and the members of Grace Lutheran Church, Jos, Nigeria, in your prayers!

Please **sign up** to help **lead our worship services**! The sign-up sheets for January-March 2026 are now available on the table near the side entryway at Highland.

Our current **prayer list** includes the following individuals from our circle of family and friends: Vern G., baby Brooke, Katelyn, Adeline, Steve G., Steve L., Bob, Linda, Hailey, Loren, Barb, Betty, Jim, Randy, Maria, Gerald, baby Henry, Ron, Scott, and Keith. If any changes need to be made to the prayer list, please let Pastor Becker know. (He appreciates receiving updates about these individuals for whom we are praying.)

The **adult Sunday morning class** (8:45am-9:40am) is studying the general epistle of First John. For a New Year's resolution, why not make a commitment to join the Sunday-morning Bible class in 2026?! We will meet next Sunday at Big Canoe. Pastor Gies will be leading next Sunday's class (on chapter three). All are welcome!

The **2026 offering envelopes** are here for both congregations. The Big Canoe envelopes with numbers/names are in the entryway to the church. The Highland envelopes with names are in the sacristy at Highland. Please do not take the blank envelopes on the other table at Highland.

Please use only **offering envelopes** for the current year (2026). The numbers on the envelopes change from year to year. If you do not yet have your 2026 offering envelopes, then put your offering in a plain envelope. Please write your name on your envelope as well as the amount on the line provided. Thank you!

The **Big Canoe WELCA** will be collecting items for the **Lutheran Social Services of Iowa** in the months of January and February. There will be a tote in the church entryway for this project.

**MLK Celebration at Luther College** is Monday, January 19, 2026. ELCA presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry will give the keynote address at the MLK Celebration. His theme will honor Martin Luther King, Jr. and Martin Luther, both who addressed injustice and advocated for the needs of those in their midst. The keynote address begins at 10:30 am in the Main Hall of the Center for Faith and Life. For those interested, a community choir will rehearse at CFL at 9:30 am. All are invited to a

lunch at the Luther Cafeteria following the Bishop's Keynote address. The lunch cost is \$10 (free for children and youth). Advance lunch registration is requested. Visit [tickets.luther.edu](http://tickets.luther.edu) to register for lunch.

The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary annual **Game Feed of the NE Iowa Fox and Coon Club** will be on January 24, 4:30-7pm, at the Ridgeway Community Center, 690 County St., Ridgeway, IA. On the menu: different types of wild game, potatoes, baked beans, rolls, milk, coffee, water, and root beer. The cost is \$15 per ticket. Kids five and under are free. Carry outs are available. Contact: Dean Frana (563-419-1922), Don Dehning (563-380-3084), or Scott Thompson (563-379-8145).

The **Annual Meeting of Highland Lutheran Church** will be on Sunday, January 25, after the worship service. The **Annual Meeting of Big Canoe Lutheran Church** will be on Sunday, February 1, after the worship service.

Please mark your calendar now: The **annual spiritual retreat** of Big Canoe and Highland Lutheran Churches will take place on **Saturday, February 7, 10:30am-noon**, in the fellowship hall at Big Canoe. The purpose of this retreat is to examine our joint mission/purpose in this corner of God's kingdom.

We want to make our church family aware of our approximate financial situation:

#### **Big Canoe's Offering**

Sep: \$5,419 for current; \$580 for benevolence.  
Oct: \$5,446.07 for current; \$450 for benevolence.  
Nov: \$7,545 for current; \$535 for benevolence.  
Dec: \$16,577 for current; \$885 for benevolence.  
Jan 4: \$3,115 for current; \$285 for benevolence.

#### **Highland's Offering**

Oct: \$5,260 for current; \$257 for benevolence.  
Nov: \$4,057 for current; \$155 for benevolence.  
Dec: \$10,461 for current; \$219 for benevolence.  
Jan 4: \$515 for current; \$15 for benevolence.

#### **In-person worship attendance:**

Average attendance in Oct: 53  
Average attendance in Nov: 74  
Average attendance in Dec (all services): 48  
Jan 4: 45

#### **Online worship views (Facebook and YouTube):**

Oct: 2,133 views  
Nov: 2,479 views  
Dec: 2,324 views  
Jan 4: 634 views

**A grandparent is a builder of dreams, a sculptor of souls.** "We speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God has destined for our glory before time began" (1 Corinthians 2:7).

**A prayer for the coming week:** "Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus. In your name, I pray. Amen."

"Lord Jesus, ...Kings shall fall down before you, and gold and incense bring;  
all nations shall adore you, your praise all people sing!"

# January | 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
					3	
					4	5
8:45 Bible Class 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Service Big Canoe Holy Communion			Epiphany worship service w/Holy Communion Big Canoe, 6:00 PM	Pastor Becker appt. in LaCrosse	Pastor Becker appt. in Decorah	Gather Bible study at Highland 9:30 AM
8:45 Bible Class 10:00 Service Highland Holy Communion Highland Council Meeting after worship	11	12	13	14	15	16
						17
8:45 Bible Class 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Service Big Canoe Pastor Gies Auditing Committee meets at Big Canoe	18	19	20	21	22	23
						24
8:45 Bible Class 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Service Big Canoe Pastor Gies Auditing Committee meets at Big Canoe	25	26	27	28	29	30
						31
8:45 Bible Class 10:00 Service Highland Annual meeting of Highland Lutheran Church after service					Pastor Becker appt. in Rochester	

<sup>1</sup> Pastor Becker has a Zoom meeting with leaders of Lutheran Quarterly

10:00 AM

# February | 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8:45 Bible Class 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Service Big Canoe Holy Communion Annual meeting of Big Canoe Lutheran Church after service	1	2	3	4	5	6
8:45 Bible Class 10:00 Service Highland Holy Communion	8	9	10	11	12	13
8:45 Bible Class 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Service Big Canoe Youth confirmation after service at Big Canoe.	15	16	17	18	19	20
8:45 Bible Class 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Service Big Canoe Youth confirmation after service at Big Canoe.	22	23	24	25	26	27
8:45 Bible Class 10:00 Service Highland			Shared Ministry meal and Lenten service Pr. Becker preaching 5:30 PM - Burr Oak			28

## Shared Ministry Newsletter



### Worship Services ~ January 2026

	January 4 January 6—Epiphany	January 11 Baptism of our Lord	January 18	January 25
<b>Highland &amp; Big Canoe</b>	8:45 am—Bible Study (First John) 9:00 am—Sunday School at Big Canoe	8:45 am—Bible Study (First John) 9:00 am—Sunday School at Big Canoe	8:45 am—Bible Study (First John) 9:00 am—Sunday School at Big Canoe	8:45 am—Bible Study Class (First John)
Pr. Matthew Backer WEBSITE: bclutheran.org	10:00 am Worship/HC At Big Canoe	10:00 am at Highland	10:00 am: Service of the Word/HC at Big Canoe (Pr. Gies)	10:00 am: Service of the Word worship Highland Annual Meeting
<b>Burr Oak</b>	8:30 am Worship/HC 9:30 am Coffee Fellowship	8:30 am Worship 9:30 am Coffee Fellowship	10:00 am Worship	8:30 am Worship 9:30 am Coffee Fellowship
<b>Hesper</b> Pr. David Werges Lisa Kammeyer-Duncan	10:00 am Worship/HC	10:00 am Worship	8:30 am Worship/HC 9:30 am Coffee Fellowship	10:00 am Worship Annual Meeting following worship
<b>Canoe Ridge</b>	8:30 am worship at Canoe Ridge	10:30 am - worship at Canoe Ridge/HC	8:30 am worship at Canoe Ridge	8:30 am worship at Canoe Ridge
<b>Glenwood</b> WEBSITE: glenwoodlutheran.org	9:30 am Sunday School at Glenwood	9:30 am Sunday School at Glenwood	9:30 am Sunday School at Glenwood	9:30 am Sunday School at Glenwood
<b>St. John's &amp; Haugen</b> Pr. Randy Killeen WEBSITE: haugenlutheran.org	10:30 am Worship at Glenwood	8:30 am—Worship at Glenwood	10:30 am Worship at Glenwood	10:30 am Worship at Glenwood
<b>Peace Orleans</b> WEBSITE: rideawayatish.weebly.com	10:30 am Coffee Hour	10:30 am Coffee Hour	10:30 am Coffee Hour	10:30 am Coffee Hour

<b>All are invited to join us for Bible Study held at Highland Lutheran Church. Tentative date for January is Friday, the 9th at 9:30 am. A different meeting date is being considered and will be publicized if there is a change. Bible study will continue to be held at Big Canoe on Ash Wednesday, February 18th. Meal is at 5:30 pm. Please note the earlier meal/rehearsal/worship times.</b>
<b>Upcoming Events</b>
<b>Shared Ministry Meeting</b>

<b>A meeting will be held Thursday, January 15, 2026 at 9:00 am in Hesper to finalize Lenten Round Robin worship plans.</b>
<b>Our first Lenten Shared Ministry Worship service will be held at Big Canoe Lutheran on Ash Wednesday, February 15th. Meal is at 6:00 pm. There will be a joint choir this year as in the past. Choir practice for those who wish to participate begins at 6:00 pm. Worship follows at 6:30 pm.</b>
<b>Please note the earlier meal/rehearsal/worship times.</b>
<b>LOOKING AHEAD</b>
<b>The next Shared Ministry GROUP meeting will be held Monday, April 20, 2026 at St. John's in Locust All are welcome to attend!</b>

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