

# Big Canoe & Highland Lutheran Churches

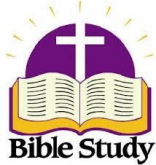
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## NEWSLETTER

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

- Tues, Dec 2 (9:30-noon): Pastor Becker will be in La Crosse for an appointment
- Wed, Dec 3 (5:00 pm): Midweek Advent soup supper and worship service (Big Canoe)
- Thurs, Dec 4 (1 pm): WELCA of Big Canoe meets for a Christmas Party (Big Canoe)
- **Sat, Dec 6 (10am-noon): Annual spiritual/planning retreat for both congregations (Big Canoe)**
- Sun, Dec 7 (8:45 am): Bible class (topic TBD) meets in the nave at Big Canoe
- Sun, Dec 7 (9 am): Sunday school meets in the Fellowship Hall at Big Canoe
- Sun, Dec 7 (10 am): Service w/communion & baptism of Rawson Ferguson (BC) – 2 Sun./ Advent (blue)
- Sun, Dec 7 (11:15 am-noon): Youth confirmation class at Big Canoe
- Tues, Dec 9 (1:00 pm): Pastor Becker participates in a Crossings online presentation about Christmas
- Wed, Dec 10 (5:00 pm): Midweek Advent soup supper and worship service (Highland)
- Fri, Dec 12 (10 am): Pastor Becker leads the worship service at Green Lea Manor (Mabel)
- Sun, Dec 14 (8:45 am): Bible class (topic TBD) meets in the Fellowship Hall at Highland
- Sun, Dec 14 (10 am): Service w/Holy Communion (Highland) – Third Sun. in Advent (blue)
- Sun, Dec 14 (after worship): Highland WELCA will meet (Highland)
- Wed, Dec 17 (2:30 pm): Pastor Becker leads the communion service at Aase Haugen
- Wed, Dec 17 (5:00 pm): Midweek Advent soup supper and worship service (Big Canoe)
- Sat, Dec 20 (10 am-11:30 am): Practice for the Children's Christmas Program (Big Canoe)
- Sun, Dec 21 (8:45-9:30 am): Practice for the Children's Christmas Program (Big Canoe)
- Sun, Dec 21 (10 am): Children's Christmas Program and soup luncheon (Big Canoe)
- Wed, Dec 24 (5:30 pm): Christmas Eve service and potluck meal (Highland)
- Thurs, Dec 25 (10 am): Christmas Day service (Big Canoe)
- Sat, Dec 27 (2-4 pm): Open House at the Parsonage (carol singing at 3pm)
- Sun, Dec 28 (8:45 am): Bible class (topic TBD) meets in the Fellowship Hall at Highland
- Sun, Dec 28 (10 am): Service of the Word (Highland) – First Sunday of Christmas (white)
- Sun, Dec 28 (after the service): Joint council meeting of both church councils (at Highland)
- Wed, Feb 18 (5:30 pm): Shared Ministry soup/sandwich meal and Ash Wed worship service (Big Canoe)
- Wed, Feb 25 (5:30 pm): Shared Ministry meal and Lenten service (Pr. Becker preaching) (Burr Oak)
- Apr 21 – May 5, 2026: Pr. Becker will be in Nigeria, Africa (ordaining 20 pastors)
- August 9-14, 2026: Luther League/Shared Ministry Youth trip to the Boundary Waters

**Memory Lights.** The white lights at the church this year will be lit again by Bev Stortz, Mitch & Amanda Stortz, and Mark & Michelle Borreson in memory of Michael Stortz, Brady Stortz, Nate Borreson, and Gary Stortz. The blue bulbs on the bushes at the entrance of the church may be purchased in honor or in memory of a loved one for \$5.00 per bulb. Please send a list of loved ones, along with the number of bulbs that you wish to purchase to Big Canoe Lutheran Church, Tree of Memories, 1381 Big Canoe Road, Decorah



## Highland Church Council Meeting Minutes - November 9, 2025

### Following Joint Worship at Highland

**Call to Order:** President Anna Jetson called the meeting to order at 11:26 AM.

**Attendance:** President Anna Jetson, Vice President Al Erickson, Secretary Kristy Selness, Treasurer Dan Dutka, Council members Myron Krauskopf and Gary Selness, and Pastor Matthew Becker.

**Opening Devotions:** Anna Jetson provided a prayer.

**Secretary's Report:** Council waived reading of the September 14, 2025 Congregational meeting minutes. September 14, 2025 Council meeting minutes read. Dan Dutka made one correction to the minutes, QR code was by Pastor Becker. Motion to approve minutes by Myron Krauskopf, seconded by Al Erickson, carried.

**Treasurer's Report:** Dan Dutka provided a financial update through October 2025. Discussion by Council. Filed for audit.

**Pastoral Report:** Pastor Becker provided an October report. Spiritual retreat is December 6, 2025, from 1000 to 1200 AM, at Big Canoe.

#### OLD BUSINESS:

1. Northside concrete project. Project almost complete. Dan Dutka and Myron Krauskopf reported a railing is needed for safety on Southeast corner of handicapped parking. Six posts, anchors and boards, estimated to cost approximately \$500. Motion by Myron Krauskopf to move forward with project, seconded by Gary Selness. Carried. An additional \$1,500 was used for extra gravel adjacent to the sidewalk. There was an additional \$1,000 donation to the Improvement Fund.
2. Update on the fundraiser for \$1000 for Aase Haugen Capital Campaign for this year. Balance is unknown at this time.
3. Feed the Farmers project. Anna Jetson reported. Good feedback from the community. Fed about 50 local farmers. We should continue with project next year. Possibly alternate churches each year. Shirley Bigeler should be thanked for all her hard work, and all the others that participated.
4. Coffee Chats. Discussed by Council. The principle of coffee chats are a good thing to have people come and talk about how our contributions are used. Motion by Myron Krauskopf to have quarterly coffee chats, seconded by Al Erickson. Carried.
5. No other old business.

#### NEW BUSINESS:

1. Offering Envelopes. Discussion by Council to continue with offering envelopes as we are currently doing. We currently order 40 boxes at a cost of about \$200, with some boxes not being picked up. Dan Dutka will do research to see if there is a more economical way of purchasing envelopes.
2. Sunday Attendance pads at Highland. Pastor Becker wanted Council to consider this. Attendance pads are helpful for him on who is attending and for visitors who are attending and leaving their addresses, who may be potential new members. Tabled for next meeting.
3. ELCA Model Constitution. Anna Jetson reported that our Constitution was updated when Pastor Bockoven (2015 – 2021) was here and it was updated to the model constitution at that time. It was approved by the congregation after

much debate. The synod has requested that the constitution be reviewed. A committee of Pastor Becker, Anna Jetson and will ask Dennis Karlsbroten to be on the committee, or other designee. To be reviewed by the January/February meetings.

4. Internet/WIFI at Highland. Tabled to next council meeting.
5. List of projects that we have received grants/gifts for and haven't finished yet (review past minutes/deposits in improvement account.) Request for Kristy Selness (Secretary) to look back at 2025 minutes for projects and/or grants approved and for Dan Dutka (Treasurer) to look back at the financial to see what projects/grants have been completed or not. Provide Council with a list of above items.
6. Other new business: Food Shelf at church. Discussion by Council to support our local community food shelves instead of starting our own. Motion by Dan Dutka to give the three local food shelves (Mabel, Decorah Community and NE Iowa Food Bank) a donation of \$500 each from the Improvement fund, second by Myron Krauskopf. Carried. The three benevolences would be paid for the year.
7. Myron Krauskopf and Dan Dutka have been in contact with a contractor (Alvin Yoder) about the steeple repair project. It would include repairing the steeple and re-roofing the upper steeple. No exact estimate has been determined, will have it for council to approve, such that it can be presented at the Annual Congregational meeting.
8. Myron Krauskopf brought up to Council about compensating a person who has done above and beyond work to the churches and parsonage. Discussion by Council and Myron should bring item up at the budget meeting as a line item.

No other new business.

Closing Prayer by Pastor Becker.

**Adjournment.** Motion to adjourn meeting by Myron Krauskopf, seconded by Dan Dutka. Carried. Adjourned at 1:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Kristy Selness, Highland Church Council Secretary

## *Announcements:*

**Prayer cards** are available to fill out before or during the first part of the worship service. Please hand your completed card to the pastor, or hand it to an usher who will get it to the pastor for our corporate prayers.

Our current **prayer list** includes the following individuals from our circle of family and friends: Katelyn, Adeline, Steve G., Steve L., Bob, Linda, Hailey, Loren, Walter, 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.)

**Midweek Advent services** will start on Wednesday, Dec 3, at 5pm, in the Fellowship Hall at Big Canoe. There will be a soup supper followed by a special Advent service in the Fellowship Hall. Once again, Pastor Becker will be focusing on "art in Advent." For this first Wednesday, we will examine "Adam and Eve" in Christian art. While people have signed up to help with food and drinks on Dec 3 and 10, we need people to sign up to help on Dec 17 (at Big Canoe). The meal begins at 5pm; the service begins at approximately 5:45pm. We will be using Holden Evening Prayer for these special services.

The **annual spiritual retreat** of Big Canoe and Highland congregations will take place this coming **Saturday, Dec 6, 10am-noon**. Please plan to attend this important spiritual retreat led by Pastor Becker. We will be focusing on worship, parish education, other congregational activities, and missional planning for the coming year. Pastor Becker wants to review his pastoral goals for the coming year as well. Please take time to participate in this significant retreat!

The **children's Sunday School** meets at Big Canoe next Sunday, December 7, 9:00-9:40am. We need people to sign up to lead Sunday school that day! A sign-up sheet is available on the table at the back of the nave at Big Canoe.

The **next youth confirmation class** will take place after the service at Big Canoe next Sunday, December 7 (11:15am-noon). We will meet at the table at the back of the church. Please keep Isabella and Brenden in your prayers as they deepen their faith during their confirmation instruction this year!

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.

**Camp Ewalu** has successfully raised over \$2.1 million for Cedar Lodge renovations and the solar project (already completed), based on the initial projected cost of \$2 million. But construction costs have risen dramatically since the start of the campaign. Camp Ewalu needs approximately \$1.4 million to close the funding gap. Can YOU help us "close

the gap” with a gift to the campaign? If you've already donated, can you make an additional gift to help cover rising construction costs? You may donate online: [www.Ewalu.org/Cedar-Lodge-Project](http://www.Ewalu.org/Cedar-Lodge-Project) For more information, speak with Bill Stoen, who recently represented both congregations at a special meeting at Camp Ewalu.

The **NE Iowa Community Action Corporation** is seeking financial donations to help meet hunger needs in our area. To make an online contribution, go to [www.neicac.org](http://www.neicac.org). The **Decorah Community Food Pantry** is also seeking donations of canned goods (soup, fruit, veggies, beans), pastas, cereal, peanut butter, and rice. All are needed, as are diapers of all sizes. Monetary donations are welcomed as well. <https://www.decorahpantry.org/>

**Life for Relief and Development** is seeking contributions to help ease suffering in **Gaza**. To make a contribution, go to: [www.lifeusa.org](http://www.lifeusa.org) or call 1-800-827-3543.

At their WELCA meeting on Nov 19, the women of Big Canoe decided to have just one organization instead of three. There will no longer be two circles. Instead, the group will be called “**WELCA, Hands of Hope**,” which will meet monthly, March through December. There will be a Bible study at each meeting. All Big Canoe women, young and old, are welcome to attend. The group is open to suggestions as to which day to hold meetings (or any other suggestions that people might have). **WELCA, Hands of Hope** will meet next on **Thursday, Dec 4, at 1pm**, with a potluck lunch for a Christmas Party. All Big Canoe women are invited to attend.

**The Colors of Christmas:** You are invited to attend the annual Burr Oak Lutheran Church WELCA Advent Brunch on December 6 at 9:30am. Participants will be able to reflect on customs and traditions as they are reviewed in the special program. But don't stay there for very long: Come to the spiritual retreat at Big Canoe that day as well (10am-noon)!!

The **Children's Christmas program and soup luncheon** will take place on Sunday, December 21 (10am), at Big Canoe. The **practices for this program** have been tentatively scheduled for Saturday, Dec 20 (10am-11:30am), and Sunday, Dec 21 (8:45am-9:30am).

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 2: \$2,639.65 for current; \$305 for benevolence.	Nov 9: \$1,195 for current; \$110 for benevolence.
Nov 16: \$2,446 for current; \$110 for benevolence.	Nov 23: \$1,265 for current; \$10 for benevolence.

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

Sep: \$2,798 for current; \$149 for benevolence.	Oct: \$5,260 for current; \$257 for benevolence.
Nov 2: \$755 for current; \$15 for benevolence.	Nov 9: \$1,071 for current; \$40 for benevolence.
Nov 16: \$1,315 for current; \$15 for benevolence.	Nov 23: \$916 for current; \$85 for benevolence.

#### **Big Canoe Financial Report (through the third quarter):**

Annual budgeted income:	\$154,615
First three quarters' income:	\$120,340
	(includes \$24,164 from Osmundson and Improvement Funds)
First three quarters' expenses:	\$120,699
Annual budgeted benevolence:	\$8,100
First three quarters' expenses:	\$4,250

#### **Highland Financial Report (through the third quarter):**

Annual budgeted income:	\$71,555
First three quarters' income:	\$29,640
First three quarters' expenses:	\$46,253
Annual budgeted benevolence:	\$6,600
First three quarters' expenses:	\$1,957

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

Average attendance in Sep: 47  
Average attendance in Oct: 53  
Nov 2: 74  
Nov 9: 49  
Nov 16: 130  
Nov 23: 45

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

Oct: 2,133 views  
Nov 2: 554 views  
Nov 9: 704 views  
Nov 16: 754 views  
Nov 23: 467 views

# December

# 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Pastor Becker will be in La Crosse for an appointment 9:30-noon	Midweek Advent soup supper & worship service Big Canoe 5:00 p.m.	WELCA of Big Canoe meets for a Christmas Party Big Canoe - 1:00		Annual spiritual/planning retreat for both congregations Big Canoe 9:00 to Noon
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
8:45 Bible Class 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Service Big Canoe Holy Communion & baptism of Rawson Ferguson (BC) 11:15-12 Youth Confirmation 2nd Sunday in Advent		Pastor Becker participates in a Crossings online presentation about Christmas 1:00 p.m.	Midweek Advent soup supper and worship service at Highland 5:00 p.m.		Pastor Becker leads the worship service at Green Lea Manor (Mabel) 10:00 a.m.	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
8:45 Bible Class 10:00 Service Highland Holy Communion 3rd Sunday in Advent Highland WELCA after service			Pastor Becker leads the communion service at Aase Haugen 2:30 p.m. Midweek Advent soup supper and worship service at Big Canoe 5:00 p.m.			Children's Christmas Program practice Big Canoe 10 to 11:30 a.m.
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
8:45-9:30 Children's Christmas Program Practice - Big Canoe 10:00 Children's Christmas Program & Soup luncheon - BC 4th Sunday in Advent			Christmas Eve service and potluck meal Highland 5:30 p.m.	Christmas Day service Big Canoe 10:00 a.m.		Open House at the Parsonage 2 - 4 p.m. Carol singing at 3
28	29	30	31			
8:45 Bible Class 10:00 Service Highland 1st Sunday after Christmas Joint council meeting of both church councils after service						





## Shared Ministry Newsletter December 2025



\*To submit information for the monthly Shared Ministry newsletter, please email Linda Folstad at [linda.folstad49@gmail.com](mailto:linda.folstad49@gmail.com)  
By: December 15th for the January 2026 Newsletter

All are invited to join us for Bible Study held at Highland Lutheran Church Friday, December 12, 2025 at 9:30 am!  
Discussion centers around Bible studies in the GATHER Magazine.

Bring a Friend!

NOTE: If school is delayed or cancelled, Bible Study is also cancelled.



Shared Ministry Meeting

A meeting will be held Thursday, January 15, 2026 at 9:00 am in Hesper to finalize Lenten Round Robin worship plans.

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The next Shared Ministry GROUP meeting will be held Monday, April 20, 2026 at St. John's in Locust

### Upcoming Events

#### Burr Oak Lutheran Church WELCA

#### Advent Brunch ~ The Colors of Christmas

Saturday, December 6, 2025 at 9:30 am



We hope you will enjoy reflecting on customs and traditions as we review them in our Program. All are welcome!



#### Burr Oak—Hesper Lutheran Parish "Hops & Hymns"

at Barney's in Burr Oak

Sunday, November 30, 2025 ~ 2:00—4:00 pm

Join us at Barney's and spend a fun afternoon singing cherished Christmas Hymns and enjoying a favorite beverage!

#### Big Canoe ADVENT Worship—2025

Midweek Advent Soup Suppers and Worship ~ 5:00 pm

Wednesday, December 3 at Big Canoe  
Wednesday, December 10 at Highland  
Wednesday, December 17 at Big Canoe



#### Enjoy Holiday Lights and Support Community Needs!

Helping Services of Northeast Iowa hosts a Holiday Lights Drive-thru Fundraiser at Pulpit Rock in Decorah (505 Pulpit Rock Road) Thanksgiving through Christmas. Open nightly from 5:00—9:00 pm. Donations support Youth mentoring, substance abuse prevention programs and assistance for victims of domestic violence.

#### Rotary Lights at Riverside Park

Rotary Lights, a Christmas display at Riverside Park in LaCrosse is open daily Thanksgiving through New Year's Eve from 5:30—8:30 pm. Admission is free but food pantry items and cash donations are encouraged.

## Worship Services ~ December 2025

	December 7	December 14	December 21	Christmas Eve December 24 Christmas Day December 25	December 28
<b>Merry Christmas</b>  <b>Highland &amp; Big Canoe</b>  Pr. Matthew Becker  WEBSITE: <a href="http://bchlutheran.org">bchlutheran.org</a>	8:45 am—Bible Study  9:00 am—Sunday School at Big Canoe  Worship/HC 10:00 am at Big Canoe	8:45 am—Bible Study.    Worship/HC 10:00 am at Highland	10:00 am—Children's Christmas Program and Soup Luncheon at Big Canoe	5:30 pm—Christmas Eve Worship & Potluck at Highland  10:00 am—Christmas Day Worship at Big Canoe	8:45 am—Bible Study Class    Service of the Word worship 10:00 am at Highland
<b>Hesper</b>  WEBSITE: <a href="http://bohllutheran.org">bohllutheran.org</a>  <b>Burr Oak</b>  Pr. David Werges Lisa Kammerer—Deacon	8:30 am Worship/HC  9:30 am Coffee Fellowship  10:00 am Worship/HC	8:30 am Worship  9:30 am Coffee Fellowship  10:00 am Worship	8:30 am Worship  9:30 am Coffee Fellowship  10:00 am Worship/HC	4:30 & 10pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship in Hesper/HC  10:00 am Christmas Day in Burr Oak/HC	8:30 am—Joint Worship/ Hymnsing in Hesper 9:30 am—Coffee Fellowship
<b>Canoe Ridge</b>    <b>Glenwood</b>  WEBSITE: <a href="http://glenwoodlutheran.org">glenwoodlutheran.org</a>	8:30 am worship at Canoe Ridge 9:30 am Sunday School at Glenwood 10:30 am worship at Glenwood	10:30 am - worship at Canoe Ridge/HC  8:30 am— Worship at Glenwood 9:30 am Sunday School/Glenwood	10:30 am— Sunday School Christmas Program at Glenwood	Dec. 24: 4:00 pm Candlelight Worship at Glenwood  Dec. 24: 6:00 pm Candlelight Worship at Canoe Ridge	
<b>St. John's &amp; Hauge</b>  Pr. Randy Kittleson  WEBSITE: <a href="http://haugelutheran.org">haugelutheran.org</a>	Joint Worship/HC 9:30 am at Hauge 10:30 am Coffee Hour	Joint Worship/HC 9:30 am at St. John's 10:30 am Coffee Hour	Joint Worship/HC 9:30 am at Hauge 10:30 am Coffee Hour	4:00 pm—Joint Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship with Holy Communion at St. John's	Joint Worship/HC 9:30 am at St. John's 10:30 am Coffee Hour
<b>Peace Orleans</b>  Pr. Nathan Wicks  WEBSITE: <a href="http://ridgewayparish.weebly.com">ridgewayparish.weebly.com</a>	9:00 am— Worship at Orleans/HC 10:30 am Worship at Peace/HC	9:00 am— Worship at Orleans/HC 10:30 am Worship at Peace/HC	9:30 am—Peace Christmas Program/HC/Brunch 4 pm—Orleans Christmas Program/HC/Potluck	4:30 pm—Orleans Christmas Worship/HC 6:00 pm—Peace Christmas Worship/HC	9:00 am—Worship at Orleans  10:30 am Worship at Peace