



Life Lines

2026

Volume 41 Issue 2

February 2026



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February Readings

February 7 & 8

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

First Reading..... Isaiah 58:1-9a

Psalm.....Psalm 121:1-9 [10]

Second Reading...1 Corinthians 2:1-12 [13-16]

Gospel.....Matthew 5:13-20

February 14 & 15

Transfiguration of Our Lord

First Reading.....Exodus 24:12-18

Psalm.....Psalm 2

Second Reading 2 Peter 1:16-21

Gospel.....Matthew 17:1-9

February 21 & 22

First Sunday of Lent

First ReadingGenesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

Psalm.....Psalm 32

Second Reading.....Romans 5:12-19

Gospel.....Matthew 4:1-11

February 28 & March 1

Second Sunday of Lent

First Reading.....Genesis 12:1-4a

Psalm.....Psalm 121

Second Reading.....Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

Gospel.....John 3:1-17

FEBRUARY 2026 BIRTHDAYS

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 Mary Cooper	3 Denise Angel Hazel Yaskanin	4 Becky Utz	5 Annelise Bergvin Mike Morgan	6 Miriam Simmons	7
8	9	10 Sharon Oniga	11 Millie Kendall	12	13	14 Ron Borges Gloria Floros
15	16 Bill Neeb	17	18	19	20	21
22 Linda Farber Joe Garner	23	24	25	26 Matthew Christiansen	27	28

FEBRUARY 2026 ANNIVERSARIES

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5 Bruce & Diane Klockars (54)	6 Gene & Linda Ferris (44)	7 <i>Jon & Fay Kowalsky (38)</i>
8	9	10	11 <i>Don & Debbie Gunsten (59)</i>	12	13	14
15	16	17 <i>Fred & Paula Rehorst (30)</i>	18	19	20	21
22	23 <i>Al & Cindy Love (53)</i>	24	25	26	27	28



Dear Beloved in Christ, Sisters and Brothers of the Southeastern Synod,

Grace and peace to you from God our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

I write to you with a heavy heart as I see the disturbing reports of immigration enforcement actions marked by violence, fear, and loss of life in Minneapolis and in other cities across our nation. The images and stories appearing from these raids; families separated, communities traumatized, and lives lost, should grieve every follower of Jesus Christ.

I lament the lives taken and the injuries inflicted. I lament the fear now carried in the bodies and hearts of children, parents, and neighbors. I lament any system of enforcement that forgets the humanity of those it meets. As Scripture reminds us, “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18). I trust that God’s heart is especially close to all who are suffering in this moment.

As a church shaped by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we cannot be silent when human dignity is trampled. Our Lutheran theology teaches us that every person is created in the image of God and is therefore worthy of dignity, safety, and respect — regardless of nationality, documentation, or status. The ELCA’s long-standing social teaching on immigration calls us to both respect the law and to insist that the law serve justice, mercy, and the common good.

I reject any narrative or practice that dehumanizes our neighbors. I am deeply troubled by enforcement actions that rely on fear, militarization, racial profiling, or indiscriminate force. These are not merely political questions; they are moral and theological ones. The prophet Amos still cries out to us: “Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24).

The Church exists not for its own preservation, but for the life of the world. When our neighbors live in fear, the Church is called not to retreat into silence, but to bear courageous, compassionate, and public witness to God’s justice and mercy.

I call upon our synod to respond in the following ways:

First, I call us to prayer and lament. I ask congregations to include prayers for immigrants, refugees, and all who live in fear in your worship. Pray also for those in authority, that their hearts and policies may be guided by wisdom, restraint, and compassion.

Second, I call us to pastoral care and radical hospitality. Our congregations must be places of refuge, safety, and hope. I encourage pastors and lay leaders to be attentive to the trauma people are carrying and to offer Christ’s presence through listening, accompaniment, and care.

Third, I call us to education and theological reflection. Host forums, Bible studies, and conversations grounded in Scripture and our Lutheran social teaching. Help your people see that this is not a “them” issue, but a gospel issue, because it is about who our neighbor is and how God calls us to love.

Fourth, I call us to advocacy and faithful civic engagement. I encourage you to speak to elected officials, to support humane and just immigration policies, and to insist on accountability, transparency, and restraint in enforcement practices. This is one way we live out our vocation as citizens under God.

Fifth, I call us to community partnership and public witness. Where possible, work with local organizations, legal aid groups, ecumenical and interfaith partners to support vulnerable families, host “Know Your Rights” trainings, and accompany those who are at risk.

As Lutherans, we hold together a respect for lawful order and a deep commitment to God’s justice. But when the law becomes an instrument of cruelty rather than a servant of the common good, the Church must speak, not with hatred, not with violence, but with moral clarity, courage, and hope.

Jesus tells us, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35). That is not a suggestion. It is a description of what faith looks like when it is alive.

I want you to know that I stand with all in our synod and beyond who are afraid, who are grieving, and who are exhausted. You are not alone. The Church of Jesus Christ belongs precisely in moments like this, not on the sidelines, but in the midst of suffering, bearing witness to a God whose mercy is stronger than fear and whose justice is stronger than death.

May the Holy Spirit give us courage, wisdom, and compassion for the days ahead.

In Christ’s peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin L. Strickland". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

+The Reverend Dr. Kevin L. Strickland, Bishop Other resources and letters:

⇒ <https://mailchi.mp/cord/a-pastoral-message-on-the-shooting-of-renee-nicolegood?e=c0a590ae3d>

-<https://www.marchminnesota.org>

-<https://mpls-synod.org/giving/welcome-fund/>

Pastor Lewis Groce

February 18 is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of our Lenten journey. On this date we will use the Liturgy for Ash Wednesday. We celebrate the Imposition of Ashes and celebrate Holy Communion. This probably our most powerful and power-filled service. As the ashes are placed upon our foreheads, we remember that we are dust and to dust we shall return. But the power of this evening is that we are not left in ashes.

Baptized into Jesus Christ, we are nourished at Christ's table. We look not to an eternity of ash, but to resurrection and new life. Ashes and Communion are celebrated together. The last word is not death, but life. We are Easter People and the Lenten journey helps us to embrace and live into this reality!!

I had planned to use the same format as last year where I addressed your questions. However, the events unfolding in our country have overtaken that plan. In this newsletter you will find a pastoral letter from our Bishop. It is thoughtful and grounded. I hope that we can come together as a community to reflect upon the letter and the requests which it makes upon us.

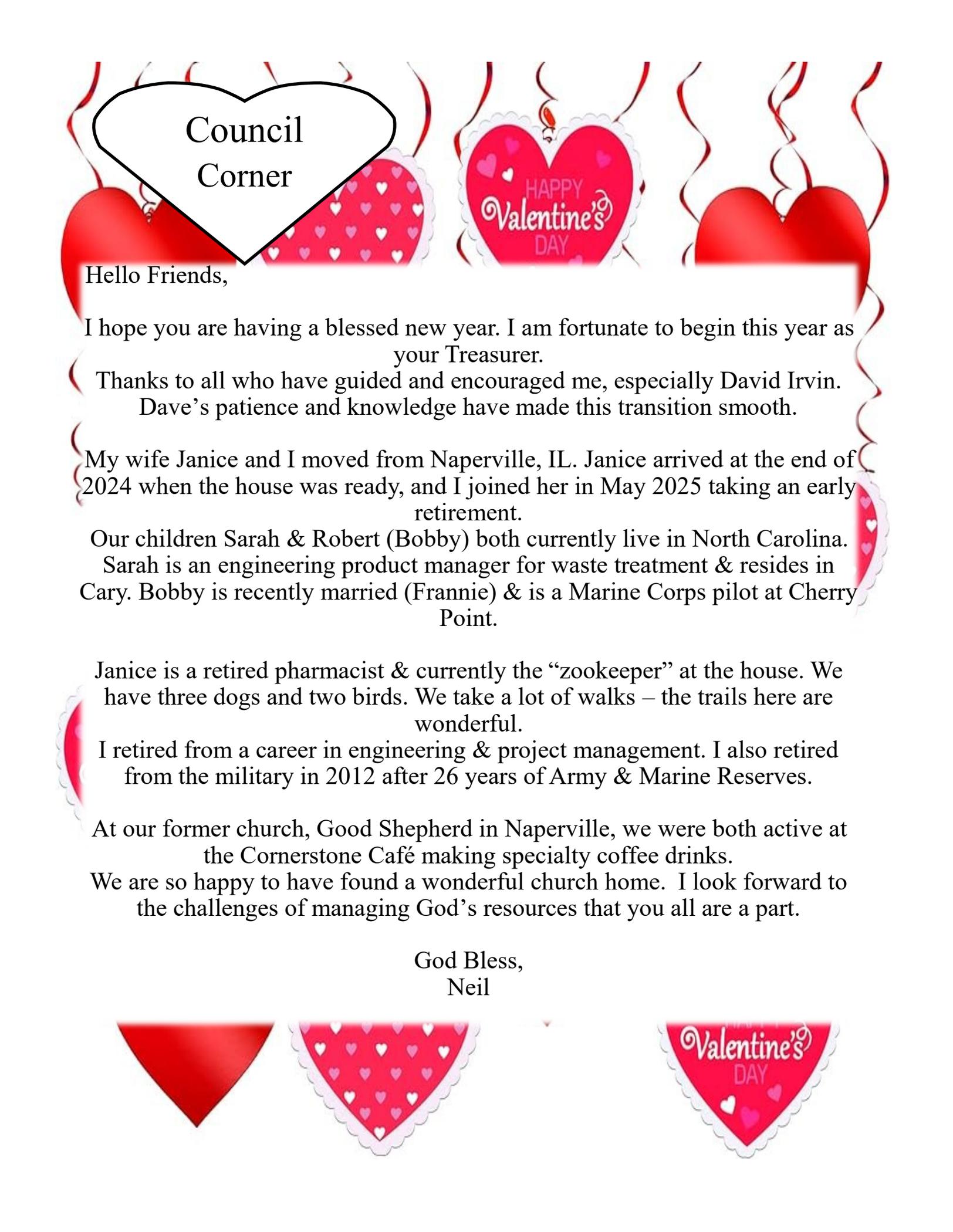
Each weekend worship service ends with the same group recitation on the concluding section of our behavioral covenant. I find these two documents marry together very well. We do not all agree on issues of moral deliberation, but we are all called to be a place of honest discussion and wrestling. This is a safe space where we can explore and examine viewpoints which may cause us discomfort. That's OK. Being uncomfortable is a signal that we are engaged and growing.

I will confess that I do not "have all the answers" and do not purport to have them. What I can tell you is that I will always be honest with you, work with you, and walk with you as we seek to be the community we are called to be – even if and especially when that work makes us uncomfortable. Here is the portion of the behavioral covenant we say each week:

"Christ Lutheran Church is a caring community of the baptized people of God, saved by the gift of grace, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and sent into the world to share the Good News of God's love."

May we enter into this Lenten journey with confidence that God accompanies us in this journey!

**God's Peace-
Pr. Groce**



Council Corner

Hello Friends,

I hope you are having a blessed new year. I am fortunate to begin this year as your Treasurer.

Thanks to all who have guided and encouraged me, especially David Irvin. Dave's patience and knowledge have made this transition smooth.

My wife Janice and I moved from Naperville, IL. Janice arrived at the end of 2024 when the house was ready, and I joined her in May 2025 taking an early retirement.

Our children Sarah & Robert (Bobby) both currently live in North Carolina. Sarah is an engineering product manager for waste treatment & resides in Cary. Bobby is recently married (Frannie) & is a Marine Corps pilot at Cherry Point.

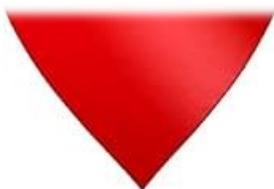
Janice is a retired pharmacist & currently the "zookeeper" at the house. We have three dogs and two birds. We take a lot of walks – the trails here are wonderful.

I retired from a career in engineering & project management. I also retired from the military in 2012 after 26 years of Army & Marine Reserves.

At our former church, Good Shepherd in Naperville, we were both active at the Cornerstone Café making specialty coffee drinks.

We are so happy to have found a wonderful church home. I look forward to the challenges of managing God's resources that you all are a part.

God Bless,
Neil



Welcome Team

The Welcome Team would like to start a transportation ministry to help our non-driving members get to and from worship services and other activities held at the church.

If you are interested in being a driver for this ministry, or would like more

information,

please contact

Heather Pelfrey at (865) 216-7564 or Deb Tenny at (434)



Lenten Soup Supper Invitation

Please join us for our Lenten Soup Supper on Wednesday, February 25, 2026. This is a wonderful opportunity for fellowship as we gather during the Lenten season to share a simple meal and enjoy one another's company.

A sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board. You are invited to help in whatever way you are able—by bringing soup, French bread, assisting with setup, or helping with cleanup. Every contribution, big or small, helps make this evening a success.

Sign up and come join in! We look forward to sharing this meaningful time together as a church family.



A heart-shaped wreath composed of numerous pink roses and a smaller section of blue forget-me-not flowers at the top. The wreath is set against a light background. A large, solid pink heart is superimposed over the center of the wreath, containing text.

Confidential Prayer

A subset of Stephen Ministry provides confidential prayers for you, family, friends and neighbors. These individuals are not ready to “go public” with their situation. Contact Beverly Olin to be placed on her list. Share as much information as you feel comfortable providing – and please provide updates as you are able or to be removed from the list

**Beverly can be contacted at
931-200-4610.**



BARREL MINISTRY FOR JANUARY Bread of Life

Please bring in:

Non-perishable food items: canned goods crackers,
macaroni, pancake mix, cooking spray, jelly .

Hygiene items like shampoo, body wash, lotion , make-up
cleaning products.

Stephen Ministry

The Stephen Ministry program started in St. Louis fifty years ago to allow lay members to assist the Pastor with meeting the needs of the community. CLC has participated in Stephen Ministry for twenty-five years; there is no telling how many Stephen Ministers have been trained over these years or the number individuals benefiting by this care. CLC is in the midst of forming a new training group. Several years ago CLC partnered with St. Francis and Community Church to provide this training for members of our congregations. This partnership allows us to share training time and have larger groups. If you have ever considered becoming a Stephen Minister, please complete an application (found on the Stephen Ministry bulletin board at the end of the hallway) or contact a Stephen Leader.

Training consists of 50 classroom hours usually meeting twice a week over seven weeks. Training is provided by several individuals that have completed Stephen Leader training. At the conclusion of the training, commissioning may occur and an individual could be paired with a care receiver.

Care receivers are paired with a trained Stephen Minister working through a difficult situation. Meetings are usually scheduled weekly and all discussions are completely confidential and free for everyone.

For additional information, please contact Pastor Groce, Beverly Olin, Carol Donalson, Sue Gauerke, Judy Hammond or Linda Vanc



Bread of Life

Thanks to everyone that provided food for the January meal at Bread of Life. About 70 individuals were served a meal of chicken and rice, tossed salad, bread and dessert. We were blessed to have five members help serve our neighbors. One comment we heard frequently was how great the rice was! We often wonder if this outreach mission is “worth the time”, just sign up to help serve and your concern will be put to rest.

While at the mission, we learned Ralph Reagan, founder, is in need or out prayers. He is experiencing major heart problems. Ralph and Connie founded the Bread of Life Rescue Mission in 2000 by purchasing the chapel and subsequently added the shelter, a home for veterans (CLC helped to rehab this facility) and a half way house. Food insecure individuals are provided two take-out meals each day; residents are provided three meals and shelter.

BOL does not receive state or federal funding and relies on the community for operations. For additional information, please contact Donn or Linda Vance.



SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY CONTEST

Are you an AFC person or an NFC person? Is your favorite team in contention to go to the Super Bowl? Do you really not care one way or the other but would like to support a worthy cause?

We have just the thing for you!!

Of course, the teams playing in the Super Bowl are still to be decided. Will it be the Patriots or the Broncos for the AFC or the Rams or the Seahawks in the NFC?

If you support the AFC / Patriots- bring in a can of tomato soup or a case if you want.

If you support the NFC / Sea Hawks – bring in a can of chicken noodle soup.

(Yes, I have my favorite having moved here from Massachusetts) But let's bring in lots of both as they will all go to the Peavine Care Center when the contest is over. Leave your soup on the table by the barrel in the Narthex. And thank you for supporting this fun project brought to you by the Service Team.

Our Thoughts & Prayers



- Vicki Deierlein—Home
- Jan Rhind—CMC 492
- Sue Straw—Surgery Knee 2/3
- Hazel Yaskanin
- **ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL**
- **Kiswahili Lutheran Mission Church**, Nashville, mission partner
- **ELCA Global Mission**
- Mellisa G—Daughter in law of Gary & Vicki D.
- Terri Gawrych— niece of Barbara Kalmar
- Nancy Allen—Niece of Kay Kibble
- Angela Kronau—Sister of Heather Pelfrey
- Annette Deck
- Nicole Caiola—Daughter of Jean & Linda LeBreux
- Jon Grande— Friend of Pastor & Amy Groce