

# THE CALLER

AMERICAN LUTHERAN  
CHURCH  
CASTLEWOOD, SD

Volume 30, Issue 11, December 2025

## ***"It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" – P.T.'s Practical Theology***

*"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples, but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. The least one shall become a clan, and the smallest one a mighty nation; I am the LORD; in its time I will hasten it".* **Isaiah 60:1-3,18-19,22**

It's happened again!! Christmas Music before Thanksgiving!! Yep!....already heard on the radio the 1<sup>st</sup> of many yet to come, the recording of the Christmas ballad: *"It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year"*!

Now, I really do love Christmas music, both religious and secular; but I just wish they could wait to start playing those tunes until after Thanksgiving!! But, alas, that is a battle in which I will not engage, for it is one that is doomed to fail. So, I will acquiesce.....

Andy Williams' song of which I speak is part and parcel with the message of the great prophets of old. That is, it speaks a message that projects into what will be the future reality.

There'll be parties for hosting

There'll be Marshmallows for toasting

There'll be caroling out in the snow

There'll be tales of the glories of Christmases long, long ago,

.....all when loved ones are near.....makes this the most wonderful time of the year!

In the portion of scripture above, the Prophet Isaiah was also singing a song of what would be Israel's most wonderful time.

There'll be light upon you

There'll be glory upon you

There'll be when the kings of the earth, come to Israel to find the true king

There'll be a time when violence will not reign

There'll be a time when even the most humble will become mighty,

....all because of what God was preparing to do!!



***"It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year"!! Cont.***

My friends, we know of the time and of the one in whom God was going to make this, His most wonderful day. For it was God who had given Isaiah the words to speak to a people who knew hardship, who knew persecution, who knew a sense of being under a cloud of darkness. So, Isaiah is given the prophetic words and voice to sing out to those living in darkness that the true light was coming to them!

From the beginning of time, God had known that given free will, his people would choose poorly and disappoint and disobey him. Yet, God wanted to be a God whom people chose to follow, not were compelled to follow. So, God had set, in His most perfect timing, a day in which the most wonderful of gifts would be bestowed on his people...the light of His life. This God did in the birth of a child. A child on whom the fullness of God's light rested, and in whom we would be drawn to the brightness of His rising!

That Gospel prophecy, and its glorious fulfillment is what makes this upcoming seasons of Advent and Christmas, truly, *"the Most Wonderful Time of the Year"!!*

A Witness to the Light!  
Pastor Tom



**Christmas Program**  
**Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup>**

Please note, this will be our Sunday Morning Worship, as the young people of ALC will proclaim the Christmas Gospel in drama, word and song!

9:00 Program Practice  
10:00 Christmas Program

**CHRISTMAS**

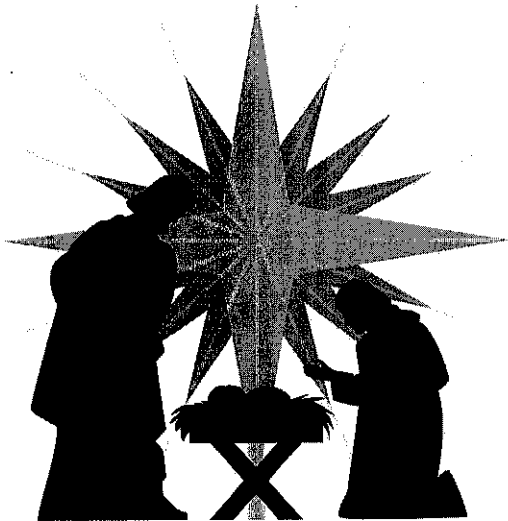


**PROGRAM**

**Open House Baby Showers:** Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup>!

10:30 – Noon: Shower for Baby "Boy" Leo, Abbey (Strait) Leo

1:30-3:30: Shower for Baby Wiersma, Bethany & Noah



## Christmas Eve Worship Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 5:30pm!

Our worship will include lessons and carols as well as Holy Communion and the Candlelight ritual.

**NALC Advent & Christmas Devotional: “The Unshaken Light”** - a daily devotional for the seasons of Advent and Christmas is available for each family in the narthex.



Dear Lord,

You have brought us to Christmastime once more. Help us not to get lost in the glitter and the glow, but to see the true glory of the birth of Your only begotten Son. Keep our hearts from clinging too tightly to parties, presents and decorations, and turn our eyes instead to Christ — who bears Your very image and brings us Your message of love and hope.

In the glorious name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

### Youth/Adult Bible Study

#### *“Breaking the Code”*



In this study we will seek to understand some of the bizarre and even frightening images in the

Book of Revelation, so that we can fully embrace John's triumphant message of Hope. Study will be offered at ALC at 9:30 am and 7:00 pm on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

### ANNUAL MEETING



ALC Annual meeting is in January, date to be announced later. Please contact Pastor Tom or a Church Council member if interested in being a part of the church council.



**Dear American Lutheran Church Members (ALC),**

**As we approach the splendor of the holidays, I wanted to take this time for all of us to remember the true meaning of Christmas, the birth of Jesus. Please enjoy this time with your families, relatives, friends and ALC.**

**Also, I want everyone to understand how important ALC is for our faith both in maintaining of our faith and the growth of our faith & beliefs. ALC also plays a large part in the community in support, volunteer work and teachings.**

**It takes all of us to volunteer, help and assist to continue to make ALC the church that it is. There are way too many people to mention to say "Thank You" to for their efforts in the management, maintenance, grounds work and the many other things which are done by the volunteers by ALC for the church. We welcome all volunteers for help or assistance in the many areas of the church; maintenance, grounds work, the youth groups and the other many committees the church has. Another big part is the reading of the scriptures and hosting the fellowship hour after church each Sunday. Please consider any time, help or assistance you might be able to work into your schedule.**

**A special "Thank You" to the many who help with the maintenance and servicing requirements to help keep the church in good condition and repair.**

**November 23, 2025 was ALC's annual Thanksgiving dinner for our members and the community. We were honored to serve over 200 people for dinner. I heard nothing but positive comments about the event and the food. We made about 25 take home dinners for people who could not attend for whatever reasons. Thanks to all who helped and participated in the many tasks required to make this such a successful event.**

**My service to the church council, one year as a member and the last 2 years as your president has been an honor. Being president has allowed me to meet and discuss the many subjects of the church. Bonnie and I are so pleased with our move to the Castlewood area 16 years ago and finding ALC. ALC is a special place for our faith and its involvement with the community. The after-church fellowships are truly enriching for all of those attending.**

**The ALC Annual meeting will be coming up in January, 2026, date has not been set as of yet.**

**A special "Thank You" to Pastor Tom for all that he does for ALC, its members and the community.**




**Everyone have a blessed Holiday Season and remember the true meaning of Christmas.**

**John Bucher  
President ALC Church Council**

**December 2025**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

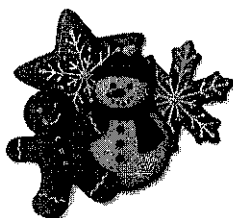
**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

3rd	7:00 a.m. "Wednesday in the Word" Youth Breakfast 6:00 p.m. Confirmation	
6th	10:30 a.m.—Noon Shower for Baby "Boy Leo, Abby (Strait) Leo 1:30—3:30 p.m. Shower for Baby Wiersma, Bethany & Noah	
7th	8:30 a.m. Choir 9:00 a.m. Worship Service—with Holy Communion 10:00 a.m. Fellowship 10:15 a.m. Christmas Program Practice 12:30—1:30 p.m. Blessing Center Open	
10th	9:30 a.m. Bible Study at ALC 6:00 p.m. Confirmation 7:00 p.m. Bible Study at ALC	
14th	9:00 a.m. Sunday School Christmas Practice 9:30 a.m. Choir 10:00 a.m. Sunday School Christmas Program	
16th	ESD Pastor's Meeting in Brookings	
17th	6:00 p.m. Confirmation	
21st	First Day of Winter 8:30 a.m. Choir 9:00 a.m. Worship Service with Holy Communion 10:00 a.m. Fellowship 10:15 a.m. Church Council No Sunday School 12:30—1:30 p.m. Blessing Center Open	
24th	5:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship	
25th	Christmas Day	
28th	9:00 a.m. Worship Service 10:00 a.m. Fellowship No Sunday School	
31st	New Year's Eve	



## DECEMBER *birthdays*

Carter Larson	12-04
Gail Nagelhout	12-04
Rhonda Karst	12-09
Kendall Nielsen	12-11
Ernie Karst	12-12
Landon Vetter	12-12
Carna Miller	12-16
Kevin Pribbenow	12-21
Larry Dockter	12-22
Lisa Janssen	12-27
Kendra Nielsen	12-27
Lorene Tvedt	12-27
Celia Kenyon	12-29
Jenny Carter	12-31
John Mickey	12-31



## Baptism

Drake Langenfeld	12-03
Julie Hofwalt	12-05
Lincoln Pribbenow	12-05
Clara Kenyon	12-08
Paul Christenson	12-11
Adrienne January	12-12
Barbara Stevens	12-19
Chuck Juntti	12-20
Emma Lewno	12-23

### Blessing Center Collection

We remind the congregation that there is a collection box in the narthex, and ask that each ALC family bring in a few non-perishable items each month to support this local ministry.



## DECEMBER *anniversaries*

Kendal & Alisha Nielsen  
Dec.21

### Estelline Nursing Home

*Carrie Henrichsen*

*Geraldine Gantvoort*

### Lake Norden Care Center

*Richard Tvedt*

### Castlewood Assisted Living

*Lorene Tvedt*



### Sr. High/Adult Choir!

Practices in December will be on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup>, and we will sing on Sunday the 21<sup>st</sup>!

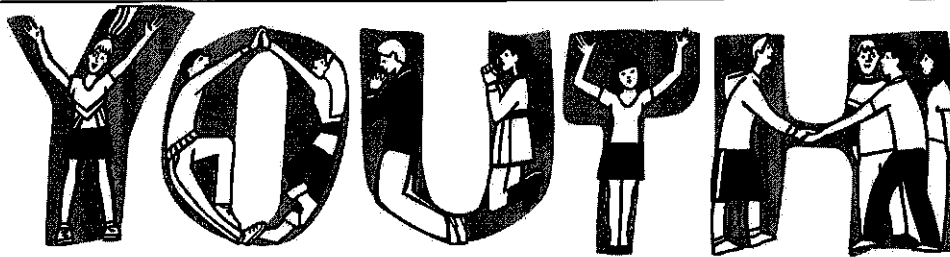


"The LORD has done great things for us, and we [rejoice]"  
(Psalm 126:3, NRSV).  
Tune our hearts, God,  
to sing your praises  
now and always.



If there is a need for pastoral care please contact ...

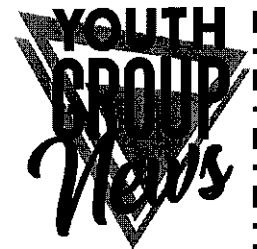
Pastor Tom Christenson  
605-956-0130



## Attention American Lutheran Youth!

### Wednesday in the Word!

On Wednesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> we encourage our youth in grades 7-12 to invite their friends to join us from 7:00-8:10 for a breakfast at American Lutheran. There will be a full breakfast, a special Devotional presented by Breanna Beebe, guided meditation and prayers. Please bring a Bible and a friend! We will ensure that any Jr. High student who is dropped off to attend, will get a ride to the school!



### Confirmation Ministry – Grades 7-9

**Confirmation Classes** are on Wednesdays, December 3, 10, 17 at 6:00. **Please help:** if your son or daughter will not be in class for any reason, it is the parent's responsibility to contact Pastor Tom **in advance** to arrange for the make-up material. **Students:** BRING YOUR OWN BIBLE & WRITING UTENSIL!



#### December Acolytes:

7 Mya Craig  
14 Liyah Vetter  
21 Reese  
24 Ruml  
28 Mya Craig

#### December Snack Families:

3 Pribbenow Family  
10 Pewe Family  
17 Pastor Tom

### No Sunday School



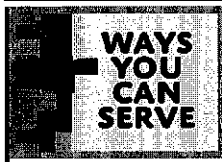
December 21st  
December 28th  
January 4



### ONLINE GIVING

Our congregational website: [americanlutheranchurch.com](http://americanlutheranchurch.com) now has a link on the home page for online donations: **DONATE NOW.** From that link, you can set One-time, Weekly or Monthly Offerings.

If you point the camera on your cell phone at the QR code it will take you to the donation page.

*The Servants of our Lord*

	<i>Organists</i>	<i>Ushers</i>	<i>Audio-Visual Technician</i>
December 7	Roxanne Bass	Dennis & Vicki Strait	Chuck Juntti
December 14	Marsha Kurtenbach	Russell & Lorie Mack	Chuck Juntti
December 21	Roxanne Bass	Jake & Lacey Severson family	Doug Strait
December 24	Marsha Kurtenbach	Darin & Traci Laue family	
December 28	Karen Lund	Doug Strait & Dan Davis	Rod Fischer

**SIGN -UP SHEETS**  
 Lectors—  
 (Scriptures sheets available)  
 &  
 Fellowship Servers  
**IN THE NARTHEX**

**ALTAR GUILD***December: Joann Fischer & Lorie Mack*

Altar Guild takes care of the communion ware, change altar clothes, banners and fill oil candles when needed. Thank you for your service.

Items that you wish to borrow from the church, please contact Pastor Tom or Janell to coordinate the use of those items. Thank you!

**Our Faithfulness in Giving**

	<b>General</b>	<b>Building</b>	<b>Mission</b>	<b>*Children</b>	<b>*Blessing Ctr</b>
<b>October 26</b>	\$1,912.00	\$	\$26.00	\$21.00	
<b>November 2</b>	\$1,750.00	\$80.00	\$324.00		
<b>November 9</b>	\$2,109.00	\$5.00	\$139.00	\$8.00	
<b>November 16</b>	\$1,610.00	\$136.00	\$11.00		
<b>November 23</b>					

\*Childrens and Blessing Center amounts are included into the Mission account totals.



**Remember there is CALENDAR on our Website!** Go to: [americanlutheran-church.com](http://americanlutheran-church.com) and you can see the calendar of events for American Lutheran. If you have anything church related to add to the calendar, please contact Pastor Tom at [pastortlc@gmail.com](mailto:pastortlc@gmail.com)



**Church Council Meeting Minutes**  
**American Lutheran Church**  
**September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025**

**Members Present:** John Bucher, Danny Davis, Andy Smith, Amanda Pribbenow, Doug Strait, Lindsey Vetter, Mark Larson and Pastor Tom.

**Call to Order:** President Bucher called the meeting to order.

**Prayer:** Led by Pastor Tom

**Meeting Minutes:** Review of the August 2025 meeting minutes. Motion by Doug Strait and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by Amanda Pribbenow to approve. **MC**

**Financial Report:** Treasurer Strait presented the August 2025 financial payment report for review. Motion by John Bucher, second by Lindsey Vetter to approve the report as presented. **MC**

**Pastor's Report:** Pastor Tom gave his report to include a brief discussion about Bible Study and Youth Group.

**Old Business:**

The basement trim has been ordered and should arrive soon. Council members will then discuss the installation. No further action taken.

A discussion was had concerning re-roofing of the parsonage garden shed. Gerhold Construction has offered to complete this task.

Brian's Glass & Door adjusted the south side entrance door and it appears to be operating correctly now.

Parsonage Water Damage: All work at the parsonage has been completed and Pastor is happy with the end results.

Discussion about replacement of the dining room crank-out window: Castlewood Lumber was awarded the bid for the window, and it should arrive in early October. Council members will then discuss installation.

**Communion Schedule for October 2025:**

October 5th – Mark Larson

October 19th – Lindsey Vetter

### **New Business:**

A discussion was held concerning stained glass windows that were to be donated from a Church in Holloway, MN. It was decided that the installation of the windows in our Church would be cost prohibitive and would mean cutting drywall, trim and other finishes in the Sanctuary. Motion by Mark Larson to decline the windows and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by Lindsey Vetter. **MC**

Any further storm damage to contend with: Council members agreed that everything had been repaired or addressed, and no further action was needed on this.

Redesignation of the Children's Offering from China World Services to Global Health Ministries: Motion by Pastor Tom to approve this with a 2<sup>nd</sup> by Lindsey Vetter. **MC**

Thanksgiving Meal Discussion: Pastor mentioned that the local area newspapers would like a date from us on this. Andy Smith Family and John Bucher family volunteered to spearhead this event. It was agreed that the meal would take place on Sunday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025.

Framed Artwork in Narthex: A discussion was held concerning updating the artwork in the Narthex and Pastor Tom presented a few ideas. Motion by Pastor Tom and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mark Larson to approve. **MC**

Gideon Sunday Discussion: Pastor Tom made a motion for this to take place on Sunday, October 19<sup>th</sup> with a 2<sup>nd</sup> by John Bucher. **MC**

**Next Council Meeting:** The next council meeting was scheduled for November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025, following worship.

**Closing:** With no further matters at hand a Motion by Lindsey Vetter to adjourn. Second by Andy Smith **MC**.

Pastor led us in the Lord's Prayer and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Larson, Secretary

### **ADVENT TRADITIONS**

- ♦ *On December 13, Scandinavian countries honor Saint Lucy (or Lucia), a third-century martyr who, according to legend, brought food to people in the catacombs during winter. For light — and to be able to carry as much food as possible — she wore a wreath of candles on her head. On St. Lucy's Day, the oldest daughter gets up early and brings sweet rolls to family members. The tradition reminds Christians that Jesus is a gift of light and love for our dark world.*
- ♦ **In Normandy, children used to set fires in fields during Advent. The flames killed caterpillar eggs and drove away rodents. The tradition reflected good conquering evil, just as God's perfect Son rescues us from sin.**

**American Lutheran Church Financial Report  
October 2025**

**General Account**

Balance on hand 10-1-2025			\$	35,496.33
Receipts				
Offerings	\$	10,454.75		
Thrivent	\$	6.00	\$	10,460.75
Disbursements				
Thomas Christenson (Pastor Salary)	\$	4,905.50		
Thomas Christenson (Social Security)	\$	310.34		
Thomas Christenson (Housing Equity)	\$	200.00		
Thomas Christenson (Mileage - 191 Miles)	\$	133.70		
Retirement Contribution	\$	500.55		
EBSO (Health Insurance)	\$	2,450.00		
Tristar Management (Ancillary Benefits)	\$	572.11		
Janell Bemis (Secretary - 25 hrs)	\$	360.16		
Dawn Mickey (Custodian - 18 hrs)	\$	249.34		
Roxanne Bass (Organist - 2 Svcs)	\$	130.00		
Marsha Kurtenbach (Organist - 2 Svcs)	\$	130.00		
City of Castlewood (Ch: \$65.00, Pars: \$97.68)	\$	162.68		
ITC (Phone & Internet)	\$	129.71		
NorthWestern Energy (Ch: \$14.78, Pars: \$12.78)	\$	27.56		
Otter Tail Power (Ch: \$151.58, Pars: \$129.11)	\$	280.69		
North Star Mutual Insurance Company	\$	483.58		
NALC	\$	50.00		
Office Peeps (Office supplies & Copier)	\$	114.10		
Concordia (worship supplies)	\$	105.86		
Thomas Christenson (worship supplies)	\$	141.71		
PB Pye Barker (fire extinguisher maintenance)	\$	247.45		
Hobby Lobby (picture frame in narthex)	\$	230.87		
US Treasury (3rd quarter taxes)	\$	298.53	\$	(12,214.44)
<b>Balance on hand 10-31-2025</b>			<b>\$</b>	<b>33,742.64</b>

\*\*\* Thrivent Choice Balance \$ 2,616.36

**Building Account**

Balance on hand 10-1-2025			\$	29,351.20
Receipts				
Offerings for Building Fund	\$	10.00	\$	10.00
Disbursements				
John Bucher (basement baseboards)	\$	583.48	\$	(583.48)
<b>Balance on hand 10-31-2025</b>			<b>\$</b>	<b>28,777.72</b>

**Mission Account**

Balance on hand 10-1-2025			\$	7,718.53
Receipts				
Offerings for Mission Fund	\$	2,500.00		
Children's Offering	\$	44.00		
Offerings for Blessing Center	\$	70.00	\$	2,614.00
Disbursements				
Castlewood Blessing Center (offerings for October)	\$	70.00	\$	(70.00)
<b>Balance on hand 10-31-2025</b>			<b>\$</b>	<b>10,262.53</b>

**Memorial Account**

Balance on hand 10-1-2025			\$	4,119.36
Receipts (in memory of Hallie Stallman)	\$	250.00	\$	250.00
Disbursements	\$	-	\$	-
<b>Balance on hand 10-31-2025</b>			<b>\$</b>	<b>4,369.36</b>

**Account Summary**

	Current Balance	Change October 2025	Change Year to Date
General Account	\$ 33,742.64	\$ (1,753.69)	\$ (27,297.22)
Building Account	\$ 28,777.72	\$ (573.48)	\$ (14,133.66)
Mission Account	\$ 10,262.53	\$ 2,544.00	\$ 6,396.95
Memorial Account	\$ 4,369.36	\$ 250.00	\$ 11.05

*The American Lutheran Caller*

*P.O. Box 132*

*Castlewood, SD 57223*

*Address Service Requested*



**WATCH US ON YOUTUBE & ITC!**

*American Lutheran  
Church's  
Mission Statement*

The mission of American  
Lutheran Church is to

**welcome,  
worship,  
teach and  
serve**

In the name of Christ our Lord  
and Savior!



**[americanlutheranchurch.com](http://americanlutheranchurch.com)**

**2025 Church Council Members**

John Bucher, President

Lindsey Vetter, Vice President

Mark Larson, Sec.

Doug Strait, Treas.

Jesse Ruml

Dan Davis

Al Schochenmaier

Andy Smith

Amanda Pribbenow