

THE CALLER

AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH CASTLEWOOD, SD

Volume 31, Issue 2, February 2026

"What is the Worst Candy?" - P.T.'s Practical Theology

What is the worst candy in the world? Is it "Circus Peanuts" or "Conversation Hearts"?

Gotta be.....circus peanuts! For the taste and texture, Circus Peanuts are not good at all!

But.....for the chalky taste and rock-hard texture, Conversation Hearts come in a close second!

Now, you may choose to disagree with my findings, and at any other time in the year, you might have a case. But as we enter the month of February, we can't make Conversation Hearts the worst of all candies, because despite the chalky taste and hardness that can break a tooth....many of us do have a sentimental attachment to the Conversation Heart!

I suspect that I am not the only one who vividly remembers dumping out that box into my hand, to be able to sift through the ones that had just the right saying to be given to just the right person. "Cool Cat" might be given to your good buddy....but, not "Crazy for You"! For that cute kid that sat behind you in homeroom, maybe you could slip back a "Be Mine", or an "I Luv U". Or if you were really daring you could hand over a trio: "Be Mine", "I Luv U" and a "Kiss Me"! (*never worked for me....but it's always good to hope!*)

Well, that sentimental luv of the Conversation Hearts must, at some point, mature into the love for which Christians must be known. I say, "must mature" because Christians are called to mirror the love of God that was commanded by Jesus Christ: *"love one another just as I have loved you"*! (John 13:34).

In a world that has such an affinity with throwing out the command to love.....we, as a people of faith, know by example what love is and what love is not. When Jesus showed love, he did not reduce his love to that of a conversation heart. No! Jesus showed love by seeing a person through the eyes of the divine.



"What is the Worst Candy?" - P.T.'s Practical Theology cont.

He loved with a pure love and with pure intent as only God can do. And when he came upon one whom he loved, but also one who needed some correction, he didn't excuse or gloss over sin, but out of His love, he called out the sin, forgave the sin and then called for those whom he loved to live in accord with God.

As you know, Jesus' greatest display was prefaced in John 15:13 when he said to the disciples: *"Greater love has no one than this that someone lays down his life for his friends"*. Now, that is the ultimate display of love, for which Christ would suffer, yet it was not the display of love that Jesus wanted his disciples to have to do, but still wanted them to be ready to do, if God so called.

So, we you remember your loved ones on St. Valentine's day with a call, a card or candy, also take a moment to offer up a prayer of thanksgiving and dedication to the one who loved you as no other, Jesus the Christ, love made manifest!

In Christ's Service,

Pastor Tom Christenson

Council Update

Thank you to those who attended and participated in the church annual meeting on the 25th of January. The Church Council now welcomes Joann Fischer as a new member and announces that Danny Davis was reelected for a 2nd term. Your council looks forward to honorably serving the mission and ministry of American Lutheran Church in the coming year.

The next Church Council meeting will be on February 15th at which they will elect among themselves the positions of President, Vice-President and Secretary. Installation of the Church Council is tentatively set for Sunday, February 22nd.

John Bucher
Mark Larson
Al Schochenmaier

Dan Davis
Amanda Pribbenow
Andy Smith

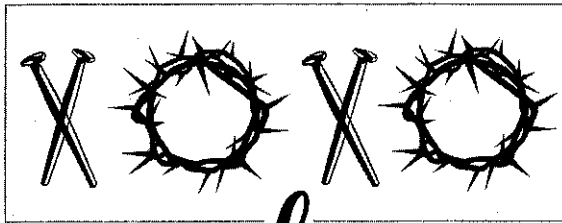
Joann Fischer
Jessi Ruml
Lyndsey Vetter



Sr. High/Adult Choir!

Practices on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Sundays of each month in the fellowship hall and will generally be prepared to provide the anthem on the 3rd Sunday in Worship.

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



The Original *Love* Letters

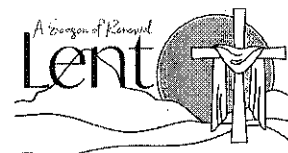
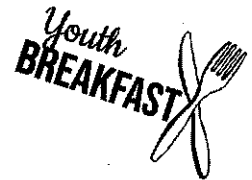
February 2026

Su M Tu W Th Fri Sa

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

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- 1st** 8:30 a.m. Sr. High/Adult Choir Practice
 9:00 a.m. Worship Service with Holy Communion
 10:00 a.m. Fellowship
 10:15 a.m. Sunday School
 12:30—1:30p.m. Blessing Center Open
- 2nd** 8:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m. Pastor at Continuing Ed
- 3rd** 8:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m. Pastor at Continuing Ed
- 4th** 7:00 a.m. Wednesday in the Word Youth Breakfast
 9:30 a.m. Bible Study
 6:00 p.m. Confirmation
 7:00 p.m. Bible Study
- 8th** 8:30 a.m. Sr. High/Adult Choir Practice
 9:00 a.m. Worship Service
 10:00 a.m. Fellowship
 10:15 a.m. Sunday School
- 11th** 6:00 p.m. Confirmation
- 12th** Pastor Meeting in Brandon
- 14th** *Valentine's Day*
- 15th** 8:30 a.m. Sr. High/Adult Choir Practice
 9:00 a.m. Worship Service with Holy Communion
 10:00 a.m. Fellowship
 10:15 a.m. Sunday School
 10:15 Church Council
 12:30—1:30p.m. Blessing Center Open
- 18th** 6:15 p.m. Lenten Meal
 7:00 Ash Wednesday Worship
- 22nd** 9:00 a.m. Worship Service
 10:00 a.m. Fellowship
 10:15 a.m. Sunday School
- 25th** 6:15 p.m. Lenten Meal
 7:00 p.m. Mid-Week Lenten Worship





HAPPY Birthday

Hadley Severson	2-02
Solvei Gasner	2-04
Hannah Mickey	2-09
Carrie Henrichsen	2-10
Emery Nei	2-11
Tanner Hanson	2-13
Briar Borer	2-13
Cora Pewe	2-15
Emerson Carter	2-19
Sharla Hamen	2-22
Lynn Borer	2-23
Sklyer Ruesink	2-23
Larz Tvedt	2-24
Brent Bass	2-28

February BAPTISMS

Deb Aderhold	2-05
Barrett Wittnebel	2-08
Bostyn Ruml	2-12
Kellyn Jackson	2-13
Claire Severson	2-14
Kylie Haight	2-17
Andrew Bemis	2-18
Christina Kenyon	2-18
Rod Fischer	2-22
Jodi Hanson	2-22
Colt Pewe	2-23
Jacob Severson	2-23
Sarah Christenson	2-25
Dennis Strait	2-27



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

Pastor Tom
Christenson
605-956-0130



Let's stay
connected



Castlewood Assisted Living

Lorene Tvedt

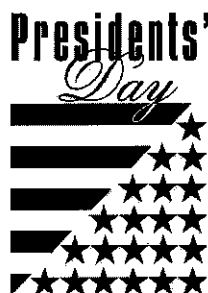
Estelline Care Center

Carrie Henrichsen

Geraldine Gantvoort

Lake Norden Care Center

Richard Tvedt



February 16, 2026

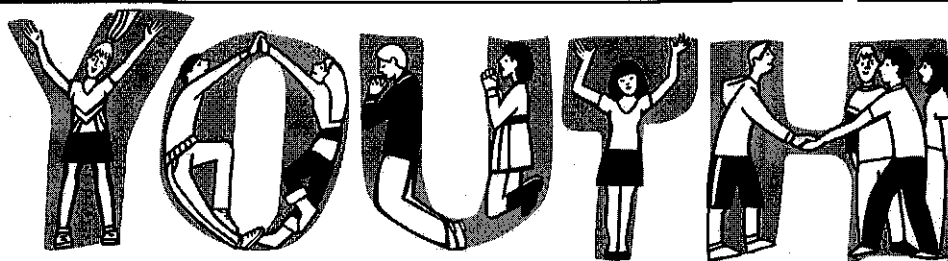
Blessing Center Collection

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.



Remember the CALENDAR on our Website!

Go to: americanlutheranchurch.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

**Attention American Lutheran Youth!****Wednesday in the Word!**

On Wednesday, February 4th 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 Collin VanderWal of Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), 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 (Wednesdays at 6:00)

Confirmation classes resume on January 7th and will run through February 4th.

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!

February Snack Families:

4th Pribbenow Family

11th Pastor Tom

February Acolytes:

1st Reese Rawsthorne

8th Ruml's

15th Reese Rawsthorne

22nd Lincoln Pribbenow

**Youth Group – 2026 Youth Gathering or Mission Trip**

Pastor Tom and Brenda are looking for input from our youth and their parents as to what kind of Summer Faith Trip would be of interest. Our denomination will be holding the Continental Youth Gathering in Roanoke, VA July 7-10. Other possibilities could be week-long mission trips such as we have done to Cheyenne River or Colorado Springs. Nashville, could also be a week-long Mission site. Or, if those trips are too long in length we can hatch another shorter-term mission trip as we did last year. Please let us know of your interest!!





Midweek Lenten Services – Walk by the Spirit!

Mid-Week Lenten Suppers & Services to begin on Wednesday, February 18th.

This year's theme will come from Galatians 5, as Paul writes: "Walk by the Spirit, for the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

Galatians 5:16, 22-23

Meal: 6:15 Served by Youth of ALC (Free-Will Offering for Youth Mission Trip)

Worship: 7:00 pm

The theme will be introduced on Ash Wednesday, and then followed up in the subsequent 5 Weeks of Lent in which we will have dramatic dialogues each night. Pastor Tom will be looking for 1-2 volunteers each week to help lead us in these dramas. No memorization required! Please talk to Pastor Tom about your availability to serve.

For youth: Please see Pastor Tom for the Sign-up to help with the Lenten Suppers!

February 18: Ash Wednesday	Imposition of Ashes & Holy Communion
Feb. 25: Love & Joy	Drama – Installing Love
March 4: Peace & Patience	Drama – Offering Grace, getting Peace
March 11: Kindness & Goodness	Drama – Counting on Good Deeds
March 18: Faithfulness & Gentleness	Drama – Faithful Heros Monologue
March 25: Self-Control	Drama - "Will" Needs a Gardener



ONLINE GIVING

Our congregational website: americanolutheranchurch.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.

Church Happenings



Sympathies to the family of Ronald Greenfield. He passed away on January 15, 2026 and funeral on January 19, 2026

Church Council Meeting Minutes
American Lutheran Church
December 21st, 2025

Members Present: Danny Davis, John Bucher, Amanda Pribbenow, Doug Strait, Al Schochenmaier, Andy Smith, Jessie Ruml, Lindsey Vetter, and Pastor Tom.

Call to Order: President, John, called the meeting to order declaring a quorum present.

Prayer: Led by Pastor Tom

Meeting Minutes: Review of November 9th, 2025, meeting minutes. Motion by Lindsey Vetter and a second by Jessie Ruml, to approve. **MC**

Financial Report: Treasurer Strait presented the November 2025 financial report for review. Motion by Lindsey Vetter and a second by Amanda Pribbenow to approve the report as presented. **MC**

Pastor's Report: Charles (Chuck) Stanga is leading the service on Sunday, December 28th, when Pastor Tom is on PTO. Danny/John will let Chuck in and show him where everything is. Sound person will help Chuck with the microphone.

Old Business:

- Dan Gerhold will work on re-roofing the shed, he would like to get it done sooner rather than later, but council agreed it is not super urgent and will be completed when Gerhold Brothers are available.
- Thanksgiving meal was a great success, our thanks especially to Andy and Sarah Smith.

Communion Schedule for January 2026:

January 4th- Jessie Ruml

January 18th- John Bucher

New Business:

- The council discussed filling two church council openings. Pastor has reached out to the nominating committee to let them know to begin the process of finding replacement council members.
- A discussion was held concerning the current mission fund and how to proceed with giving. It was agreed to donate \$500.00 to Castlewood Kid's Care Closet, \$500.00 to Breanne Mack family, Sleep In Heavenly Peace \$1,000.00, The Beacon Center

\$1,000.00, and \$2,000.00 to the EECMY in Ethiopia. A motion was made by Jessie, which was seconded by Doug to approve the donations.

- A discussion was held for a date on the annual meeting in January, 2026, and what all needs to be done before. It was decided the meeting will take place on January 25th. Doug will have a financial report out to the congregation by January 18th, 2026, so they have time to look over the report before the meeting takes place.
- A discussion was conducted regarding feedback communicated to council members by congregants concerning the duration of sermons and the nature of the messages being presented.

Pastor Tom left the meeting while the council entered into a short executive session.

Next Council Meeting: The next council meeting was scheduled for January 11th, 2026, following worship.

Closing: With no further matters at hand, Andy made a motion to adjourn, with Lindsey's second. **MC.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Pribbenow

Joint Mission District Convocation – “Renewed, Refreshed, Ready!”

April 17, 7:00 pm – April, 18, 3:00 pm at Atonement Lutheran in Fargo.

Please consider joining us for the annual Convocation of the Eastern South Dakota and Minkota Mission Districts of the NALC. We are honored to have Bishop Selbo scheduled to join us. Posted on the narthex bulletin board are copies of the Agenda, Registration Form, and a NALC Disaster Response Flyer. Please talk to Pastor Tom if you can attend or have any questions.

Special In-Kind Offering for NALC Lutheran Disaster Response! At the Convocation a representative from our church's Disaster Response team will be present for us to “stuff the trailer” with items to be distributed in areas affected by natural disasters. Grab a flyer from the bulletin board and be ready to bring your items to the Convocation or arrange with Pastor Tom for them to be delivered.

**American Lutheran Church Financial Report
December 2025**

General Account

Balance on hand 12-1-2025			\$	30,248.55
Receipts				
Offerings	\$	19,002.69		
Thrivent	\$	25.00	\$	19,027.69
Disbursements				
Thomas Christenson (Pastor Salary)	\$	4,905.50		
Thomas Christenson (Social Security)	\$	310.34		
Thomas Christenson (Housing Equity)	\$	200.00		
Thomas Christenson (Mileage - 359 Miles)	\$	251.30		
Retirement Contribution	\$	500.55		
EBSO (Health Insurance)	\$	2,450.00		
Janell Bemis (Secretary - 30 hrs)	\$	432.19		
Dawn Mickey (Custodian - 25 hrs)	\$	367.04		
Roxanne Bass (Organist - 4 Svcs)	\$	260.00		
City of Castlewood (Ch: \$65.00, Pars: \$96.60)	\$	161.60		
ITC (Phone & Internet)	\$	130.52		
NorthWestern Energy (Ch: \$91.49, Pars: \$43.42)	\$	134.91		
Otter Tail Power (Ch: \$81.77, Pars: \$89.82)	\$	171.59		
North Star Mutual Insurance Company	\$	483.58		
NALC	\$	50.00		
Office Peeps (Office supplies & Copier)	\$	98.90		
Augustana District (meeting registration)	\$	145.00		
Concordia (weekly inserts, Strength for the Day)	\$	293.75		
US Treasury (4th quarter)	\$	350.31	\$	(11,697.08)
Balance on hand 12-31-2025			\$	37,579.16

*** Thrivent Choice Balance \$ 2,452.49

Building Account

Balance on hand 12-1-2025			\$	27,974.65
Receipts				
Offerings for Building Fund	\$	560.00	\$	560.00
Disbursements				
	\$	-	\$	-
Balance on hand 12-31-2025			\$	28,534.65

Mission Account

Balance on hand 12-1-2025			\$	8,576.12
Receipts				
Offerings for Mission Fund	\$	550.00		
Children's Offering	\$	55.00		
Offerings for Blessing Center	\$	250.00	\$	855.00
Disbursements				
Hamlin County Publishing (ad for Thanksgiving Dinner)	\$	102.00		
Global Health Ministries (childrens offering Oct, Nov, Dec)	\$	149.00		
Castlewood Blessing Center (offerings for December)	\$	250.00		
Breanna Mack (cancer treatments)	\$	500.00		
Castlewood Kids Care Closet	\$	500.00		
Beacon Center (Watertown)	\$	1,000.00		
Sleep in Heavenly Peace - Watertown SD	\$	1,000.00		
Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)	\$	2,000.00	\$	(5,501.00)
Balance on hand 12-31-2025			\$	3,930.12

Memorial Account

Balance on hand 12-1-2025			\$	4,369.36
Receipts	\$	-	\$	-
Disbursements	\$	-	\$	-
Balance on hand 12-31-2025			\$	4,369.36

Account Summary

	Current Balance	Change December 2025	Change Year to Date
General Account	\$ 37,579.16	\$ 7,330.61	\$ (23,460.70)
Building Account	\$ 28,534.65	\$ 560.00	\$ (14,376.73)
Mission Account	\$ 3,930.12	\$ (4,646.00)	\$ 64.54
Memorial Account	\$ 4,369.36	\$ -	\$ 11.05

American Lutheran Church – Castlewood, SD

Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes

January 25th, 2026

Call to Order: President Bucher called the meeting to order declaring a quorum present.

Prayer: Pastor Tom led us in an opening Prayer.

Presidents Report: President John Bucher presented his report which can be found on Page #3 in the Annual Report.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Tom presented his report which can be found on Page #4 in the Annual Report.

Secretary's Report: Secretary Larson presented the 2025 annual congregation meeting minutes which can be found on Page #6 in the Annual Report. A motion was made by Craig Bass to approve the minutes as written with a 2nd by Rod Fischer. **MC.**

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Doug Strait presented the 2025 financial report to include the current Certificates of Deposit. This information can be found on Page #8 and Page #9 in the Annual Report. A motion was made by Lynn Borer to approve the financial report with a 2nd by John Top **MC.**

American Lutheran Church Women Report: Joann Fischer presented the financials for the ALCW which can be found on Page #10 and Page #11 in the Annual Report. Joann requested that the ALC Women continue to donate a minimum of \$20.00 to help with funeral expenses for any given year. Joanne also mentioned that Sharla Hamen is not the contact person for funerals and that she will check with Neda Ries to determine who the contact person is. Rhonda Karst volunteered to water flowers on an as-needed basis.

Sunday School Report: Brenda McKee Almos presented the Sunday School report which can be found in the Annual Report on Page #12. Brenda mentioned that they have closed out the camp financial fund and that Sunday school attendance is down compared to other years. A brief discussion was had by congregation members with no action taken at this time.

Youth Report: Brenda McKee Almos presented the Youth Financial report which can be found on Page #13 and #14 in the Annual Report. Brenda advised that Wednesday in the Word (morning meditation, prayers and a full breakfast for grades 7-12) was well received with good attendance. She also mentioned that the trip to Minneapolis to assist with Global Health Ministries was a good and productive learning experience for all who attended.

Audit Committee Report: Rod Fischer advised that the audit committee (Rod Fischer, Lynn Borer and Landon Vetter) had reviewed all financial reports and that no issues were found.

Nominating Committee Report: A discussion was started by Rod Fischer concerning nominations with the following results:

- Danny Davis agreed to serve a 2nd term on the Church Council.
- Rod Fischer nominated Joanne Fischer to serve on the Church Council and Joanne agreed to do so.
- Landon Vetter is coming off the Audit Committee and Phil Ruml agreed to fill this position.
- Phil Ruml is coming off the Nominating Committee and Craig Bass agreed to fill this position.

Paula Grup made a motion to accept all the positions listed above with a 2nd by Jess Ruml.
MC.

NEW BUSINESS:

Constitutional Change Vote:

President John and Pastor Tom presented the request from the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) for us to ratify the constitutional changes made at the 2025 Annual Convocation. That motion is found on page 16 in the Annual Report. Pastor Tom moved adoption, with a 2nd by Rod Fischer. **MC.**

Pastor Tom stated that according to our Congregational Constitution, we need to ratify the action we took at the 2025 Annual Meeting to change our Constitution Article 12.0Sc to read "The Church Council may enter into contracts for up to \$7,500 for items not included in the budget. Previously the amount was \$2,000. Pastor Tom moved the ratification, with a 2nd by Paula Grupe. **MC.**

Presentation of the 2026 Church Budget:

Treasurer Doug Strait & President Bucher presented the 2026 budget which can be found on Page # 17 of the Annual Report (on the back of the constitution ratification voting page which was not utilized). A brief discussion was had by Congregation members and Council members with a challenge for additional stewardship in 2026 and beyond. Rod Fischer made a motion to accept the 2026 budget as written with a 2nd by Phil Ruml. **MC.**

Adjournment:

A motion was made by Dan Grupe with a 2nd by Mark Larson to adjourn the meeting. **MC.**

Pastor led us in song to conclude the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark D. Larson

Mark D. Larson, Council Secretary



The Servants of our Lord

	<i>Organists</i>	<i>Ushers</i>	<i>Audio-Visual Technician</i>
February 1	Roxanne Bass	Diane Koosman & Al Schochenmaier	Chuck Juntti
February 8	Marsha Kurtenbach	Mark & Angie Larson Family	Chuck Juntti
February 15	Roxanne Bass	Rod & Joann Fischer	Doug Strait
February 18 Ash Wed.		Philip & Jessica Ruml Family	
February 22	Marsha Kurtenbach	Dallas & Paige Moorehouse Family	Rod Fischer
February 25 Lent		Landon & Lindsey Vetter	



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

ALTAR GUILD

February: Vicki Strait & Kristi Borer

March: Carna Miller & Gail Nagelhout

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

	General	Building	Mission	*Children	*Blessing Ctr
January 4	\$2,231.00		\$183.00	\$3.00	
January 11	\$2,490.00	\$5.00	\$271.00	\$6.00	\$70.00
January 18	\$2,515.00		\$140.00	\$10.00	
January 25	\$1,272.00		\$132.00	\$7.00	



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

Lord, as we begin this journey of Lent, remind me of your grace and renew a right spirit within me. "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10, ESV).

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

2026 Church Council Members

John Bucher

Lindsey Vetter

Mark Larson

Doug Strait, Treas.

Jesse Ruml

Dan Davis

Al Schochenmaier

Andy Smith

Amanda Pribbenow

Joann Fischer