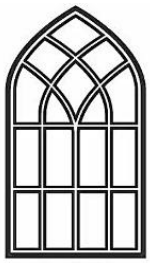
West St. Olaf Lutheran Church East St. Olaf Lutheran Church

DECEMBER 2026 HAPPENINGS

Pastor Paul Thompson: Cell: 507-273-8504 (call before driving to office) **Email:** pthomp821@gmail.com
Websites: eaststolaf.org ...OR.... weststolaf.org
Gina Moser, Secretary: Email: eastwest@kmtel.com Office: 365-8222 Cell: 507-951-4964



WEATHER-RELATED CHURCH CANCELLATIONS: To verify if there is a cancellation for a church service or church activity, **please check: KTTC TV (channel 10), or online at www.kttc.com** *and click on the tab for WEATHER - then click on Closings and Delays*. Decided by council presidents and pastor.



December Worship Schedule

(Pastor Paul retires at end of Dec.)

EAST EARLY at 9:00 am for Dec. (*East coffee after church*)
BOTH JAM at 10:00 am at West (*also West coffee*)
WEST LATE at 11:00 am for Dec.

>>DEC. 13: JAM Christmas program at West / A play at East during worship
>> CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICES: 4:00 pm at WEST, 6:00 pm at EAST

OFFERINGS: Our congregational councils ask you to prayerfully continue your financial support for church. Please be sure to make your check out to "West St. Olaf Church" or "East St. Olaf Church" and mail to:

West members mail to: Dave Peterson 25378 720th St., Hayfield, MN 55940
East members mail to: Bryan DeCook at 7583 80th Ave. SW, Stewartville, MN 55976

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,



This is the last time I will be writing you in the parish newsletter. I will be with you through this month, though. I will be there when you are lighting the Advent Candles. I will be with you when the Sunday School presents their Christmas Program at West on December 13. I will be with you as we celebrate God's arrival on the Earth in the Christ Child. I will be with you on Sunday the 27th, as we bid 2026 goodbye, and look forward in faith to 2027.

I will not be there to perform any pastoral actions, like funerals, weddings, Sunday services, counseling, and hospital or home visits. I will probably run into some of you shopping in Rochester, watch bands in Stewartville, or Berne, Mantorville. Such encounters will be a joy to me, but I will not discuss any church matters with you.

In the near term, you will be in the experienced and loving hands of Rev. Cheryl Indehar. She will guide you through the interim (*as she did ten years ago*), until your next pastor is called and installed. You will have the continuing support of the Bishop's Office of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, particularly Pastor Barb Streed. You will have the prayers of congregations throughout our synod.

I will always remember you with warmth in my heart.

God bless you all,
Pastor Paul Thompson

Membership Updates, WELCA News, Serving Schedules, & More!

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

ETERNAL LIFE

Marilyn Kay Skov (a West member), was given a Christian service at West St. Olaf on November 10, 2027, with burial at West St. Olaf cemetery. Blessed be her memory. Officiated by Rev. Paul Thompson.

WEST WELCA NEWS

The busy Christmas season is upon us once again. In all our haste, let us not forget Jesus is the reason for the season. The Advent by Candlelight service on December 6 is a wonderful way to begin our Advent season and remind us of Jesus' birth. Be sure to let Donna or Heather know soon if you would like to attend.

The appreciation dinner for Pastor and Jana was a very special day. We thank Sharon and all who helped her organize this day. We congratulate them both on their retirement and wish them well but they are certainly going to be missed.

Our WELCA Christmas program and potluck luncheon is December 9 at 10:30 AM. Carma always has a special program to remind us of the joy of Christmas. Please bring a dish for the lunch. Remember men are included.

The information about our Christmas mission is in this newsletter. We are sponsoring a family from Families First. Please have your gift to the church or chapel by Dec. 6. Luther League will wrap them on Dec. 9 if you choose not to wrap it.

Thank you to Nancy Gulbransen for being our chairperson in November and organizing the lunch and workers for Marilyn's service. Thank you to Mary and Sandy for serving on altar guild. Carma and the WELCA board are chairpersons for December. Jane and Sheryl are serving on altar guild.

We would appreciate many helping hands to decorate the chapel at 9 AM on November 27. We welcome help from some men.

Nancy P. is working on the 2027 WELCA calendar. We need chairpersons for each month and also a hostess to serve dessert for our WELCA meeting. Please let Nancy know if you are able to help out.

Have a blessed Christmas!

Sharon and Nancy

SERVING SCHEDULES: WEST—DECEMBER

Ushers: Pete D. organizes
Deacon: Carma Bjornson
Altar Guild: Mary B., Sandy I.
Acolytes: check online sched.
Stewardship:
1st Sun.— Luther League
2nd Sun.— JAM or B.O.E.
3rd Sun.— WELCA
4th Sun.— Church council
5th Sun.— Church council

SERVING SCHEDULES: EAST—DECEMBER

Acolytes: Ushers covering
Altar Guild: Darlene M., Sonya M.
Deacon: Jane Williams
Coffee Servers:
1st Sun.— Quilting Sisters
2nd Sun.— Sarah Circle
3rd Sun.— Circle 4
4th Sun. — OPEN: *Contact Marylin Carlson, if willing*
5th Sun.— S.S. or Council

WOMEN OF EAST

NO meeting for East women during December. **The next meeting will be Sun., January 10.**

EAST DECEMBER MISSION: "All Things Cozy Tree" YOUTH TREE



This year, there is still a need at ***180 Degrees Emergency Youth Shelter***, formerly the VonWald Youth Shelter, on Bamber Valley Road. This shelter supports youth from Southeast Minnesota, who are experiencing homelessness, are in transition between foster families, or simply need a safe place to stay due to family crisis. 180 Degrees provides shelter, meals, support services, and a clothing closet. These are the kids that seem to get "left behind" and are the reason for the VonWald/180 Shelter. *This 12-bed facility has been rebuilt with donations from our local community. There is an increasing need for teenagers to find safe havens. This new facility provides basic items, along with counseling for youth and families, and support for school success.*

OUR MISSION: Provide clothing donations for these teens!

· Clothing is needed in sizes 10/12 to 2X, both male and female.

· You can find tags of clothing needs on the Christmas Tree in the Narthex. You can also make a donation on their website, directly to 180 Degrees.

· **Donations will be collected from Nov. 20 thru Dec. 21 at East St. Olaf**. *Tuesday, Dec. 22 items will be delivered to the 180 Shelter.*

Your donations for these kids are greatly needed. Some of these teens come with just the clothing on their backs, and attending middle and high school means looking presentable. Please consider a gift under our Mission Tree for a young person who is truly in need.



DECEMBER 13: SPECIAL SERVICES

9:00 am at EAST – During worship: A play, "On the Road to Bethlehem"

11:00 am at WEST – During worship: JAM Christmas programs

Holiday Palooza

Craft & Vendor Fair

East St. Olaf Lutheran Church

6200 County Rd 3 SW Byron, MN 55920

Saturday, December 5, 2026

9:00am – 2:00pm

Local Crafters & Vendors!

Baked Goods, Candles, Flower arrangements,
Christmas Items, Cookbooks & more!

If you would like to sell your wares, tables are $30. A lunch will be served.
Contact Amy Schwarz if interested: amy.jorgenson23@gmail.com

Lunch Menu:

Hotdishes, dinner rolls,
coffee, & hot cocoa bar
Price: Free will donation

THANK YOU!

To all members of East & West St. Olaf Churches,

Grace to you and peace in the name of our Heavenly Father. I am so grateful for the Appreciation Dinners held in honor of Jana and myself. The appreciation should be all ours for the way both congregations received us with open arms 10 years ago, and how all of you have given us blessing after blessing in Jesus' name. The cards and gifts were overwhelming, and I cannot thank you enough for them.

As we are not leaving the area, I imagine we will be seeing one another from time to time. Even though I can no longer be your pastor, I hope Jana and I can continue to be your friends.

May God's blessings abound in the lives of each of you.

In Christ's name, Paul and Jana Thompson

Luther League Christmas Party!!!

Luther League teens: Join us for Wrapping gifts for our adopted families + pizza party + holiday games on Wednesday, Dec. 9 at 6:00 pm [*for confirmation students, a class will follow the wrapping/pizza*].

With Gratitude - Luther League

Thank you for the generous gifts of food and monetary donations for the Hayfield Food Pantry. For the fourth consecutive year, Luther League helped package Thanksgiving meal kits for the food pantry. It was a great way to spread our mission of service to others! Thanks again for your tremendous support!



The Liturgical Church Year: An Invitation to Life in Christ

While we are busy "just living" – working, parenting, fixing things, being ill, fishing, etc. – how can we live our lives in the light of Christ? Know God's peace in the blur of the day?

The Church Year is meant to help us. Like a mother holding her child, the liturgical church year enfolds us in Christ, keeping us mindful of things divine as we live our lives. Walking with Christ brings rest unto our soul: *"Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."* *(continued next page…)*

It begins with **Advent**, a time pf preparation for the coming of Christ. *"Let every heart prepare him room"*. Hymns invite us to inwardly prepare to receive God's greatest gift. With Mary, let us ponder all these things in our hearts -– the angel Gabriel's annunciation, the holy wonder of a divine birth, the joy of the shepherds.

Next comes **Christmas**, a time to celebrate the birth of God's Son on earth and in our hearts. "*Come into my heart, Lord Jesus" we* sang in Sunday School. Pray for a pure heart, that God's will may be done in you and through you. *"Christ in you, the hope of glory."*

In **Epiphany,** the mature man Jesus is shown to be divine. At his baptism, Jesus appears with God and the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, though the term was not used until later. In his first of many miracles, Jesus turned water into wine in the wedding at Cana. On Mount Tabor, Jesus appeared transfigured before three of his disciples. God the Father spoke out of the cloud, "*This is my Son; listen to him."*

Lent is a time of introspection and solemn preparation for the culmination of Christ's mission on earth – humiliation, suffering and death for the sake of sinful humanity*. "And I, when I am lifted up (on the cross) will draw all people unto myself,"* Christ proclaimed before his crucifixion." *Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me," the crowds sang at Billy Graham crusades.*

On **Easter**, the prime festival of the church year, we celebrate Christ's triumph over the grave, his resurrection from the dead. Then comes his ascension into Heaven, to sit at the right hand of God. Our Savior reigns forevermore! "*Death, where is thy sting*?" Let us walk with Christ in confidence and joy.

On **Pentecost**, Christ sent the Holy Spirit to the disciples, as he had promised. Fearful Peter, who had lately denied Christ, now proclaimed him boldly. The disciples became apostles, preaching the good news of God's salvation in Christ Jesus. In this season, we are invited to live in Christ by the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost takes us through summer and fall until we once more approach **Advent**, and the cycle of the church year begins anew.

~ Norman Senjem ~

FIELD CREST AUXILLIARY CHRISTMAS BAZAAR



Saturday, December 5 from 8:00 am -12:00 pm at
the Hayfield Senior Center (25 East Main Street)
Everyone is welcome to attend! There will be Lefse, Baked Goods, Embroidered Dish Towels, Craft Items, Christmas Décor. Coffee and Treats: Free Will Offering. *All proceeds are put towards projects at Field Crest Care Center and Assisted Living.*

WEST CHRISTMAS MISSION



We are adopting a family of 4 children and a Mom and Dad for our Christmas mission. There are tags on a tree in the entry of the church with their needs. **Please have your gifts here by Dec. 6.** *If you choose not to wrap them, the Luther League youth will wrap them on Dec. 9.* Please attach the tag to the gift. There are boxes in the church and chapel to place your gifts. This is a Thrivent Action team mission. Thank you for your generosity.

WEST ST. OLAF ADVENT BY CANDLELIGHT



Advent by Candlelight will be Sun., December 6 at West St. Olaf, beginning at 5:00 pm for punch and fellowship, followed by the service at 6:00 pm, then dinner immediately following. ***This is just a reminder for those who signed up to work and/or are attending this event.***

DECEMBER 2026 East & West St. Olaf

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Pastor Vac **10:00 am** East Quilt/sack lunch **Noon** Circle 4 meeting	**2** Pastor Vac W. Chapel Reserved **NO class** for Conf. (pastor on vac.)	**3** Pastor Vac W. Chapel Reserved	**4** Pastor Vac W. Chapel Reserved Pastor's day-off **NOON-4:00 pm OPEN HOUSE** for Jana Thompson's 60th Birthday & her Retirement All welcome!	**5** Pastor Vac W. Chapel Reserved **9 am - 2 pm HOLIDAY PALOOZA at EAST** Craft & Vendor Fair and Lunch All welcome!
6 W. Chapel Reserved **9:00 am** East worsh Communion, coffee follows (**NO meeting** for East Women) **10:00 am** JAM, NO West coffee **11:00 am** West worsh, Communion Deadline: Christmas Mission **5:00 pm WEST ADVENT BY Candlelight & Meal**	**7**	**8** **10:00 am** East Quilt/sack lunch	**9** **10:30 am** West WELCA Christmas Potluck & Program (Men welcome too) **6:00 pm** L.L. teens wrap gifts for West Christmas mission! **FOLLOWED by** Conf. class @ West	**10**	**11** Pastor's day-off	**12**
13 **9:00 am East Play:** ***On the Road to Bethlehem*** **10:00 am** JAM, also West coffee **11:00 am** West **CHRISTMAS PROGRAM**	**14** **JOINT COUNCIL MEETING** at WEST 6pm-Individual 7pm-Joint Mtg	**15** **10:00 am** East Quilt/sack lunch	**16** **7:00 pm** BOTH: Conf. class @ West **7:00 pm** DEADLINE to submit info for next newsletter	**17**	**18** Pastor's day-off	**19**
20 **9:00 am** East worsh Communion, coffee follows **10:00 am** JAM, also West coffee **11:00 am** West worsh, Communion	**21**	**22** **10:00 am** East Quilt/sack lunch **NEWSLETTER DAY at Office** 9:10- print 9:25– fold 9:35– collate	**23** NO CLASS for *Conf. (holiday)*	**24** **CHRISTMAS EVE Candlelight Worship with Communion** **4pm** at WEST **6pm** at EAST	**25** OFFICE CLOSED *No worship:* Merry Christmas!	**26** GINA VAC
27 *Pastor Paul's last day at St. Olaf Parish* GINA VAC **9:00 am** East worsh, coffee follows **10:00 am** JAM, also West coffee **11:00 am** West worsh	**28** GINA VAC	**29** GINA VAC **10:00 am** East Quilt/sack lunch	**30** GINA VAC NO CLASS for *Conf. (holiday)*	**31** GINA VAC	**JAN. 1 of 2027** OFFICE CLOSED *Happy New Year!* GINA VAC - back Tue., Jan. 5	

Special East St. Olaf Congregational Meeting: November 1, 2026

Special East congregational meeting held November 1, 2026, to vote on the future of the parsonage. President Randy Robinson explained the voting process. There were 61 in attendance to vote so quorum was met. The three options are as follows: 1.) remove the parsonage, 2.) sell the parsonage on open market, or 3.) leave it as is. Vote outcome will be announced at East Council meeting Monday, November 2, 2026, as well as on the church website.

November 1, 2026 final results of congregational parsonage vote:

105 total ballots: East 51 ballots, West 54 ballots.

1 - Remove it (35 votes)
2 - Sell on open market (38 votes)
3 - Leave as is (32 votes)

EAST OFFERINGS

(Oct. 4 & Oct. 11, 2026) Current $2,079 and Benevolence $125.
(Oct. 18 & Oct. 25, 2026) Current $2,760 and Benevolence $75.
(Nov. 1, 2026) Current $8,622, Reimburse $220, Benevolence $25.
(Nov. 8 & Nov. 15, 2026) Current $7,390.82 and Benevolence $25.
CORRECTION: A month or so ago, there was a notice of $10,000 donated for the parking lot reseal - actually $12,000 was donated.

East Council Minutes: November 2, 2026 - 6:00PM East St Olaf Lutheran Church

Call to Order: Randy Robinson called the meeting to order.

Vote Discussion: Outcome was 38 to sell, 35 to remove, and 32 to leave as is. Parsonage will be put up for sale on the open market per joint congregational vote.

Members Present: Randy Robinson, Gary Kearns, Pete Exe, Bryan DeCook, Danny and Terry Zieman, Jeff Beaver, Jen Briske, and Meghan Ohman

Devotions: No devotions this evening.

Pastor's Report: Church times for December. Previously has been out of office Sunday after Christmas and have had a joint service. Would the parish prefer to have separate services, combined, or other options? Will discuss during the joint service. *Proposal to have one joint service will be made.*

Secretary's Report: No report.

Financial Secretary's Report: September offerings were 17,196 and October 4,839 offerings and 200 benevolence.

Treasurer's Report: Capital credit with electric, brought the bill down to 14.00. 4th quarter elevator monitoring with custom alarm, pastor's mileage, and organist paid for 3rd quarter. Postage and postcards paid for vote information.

Deacon's Report: Terry updated the confirmation pictures. Have one being confirmed next year. Readers signed up for the next month.

Trustees Report: Gutters have been cleaned at the parsonage, mentioned to check the roof at the church as there are areas it is buckling and warping. Eric Ronigan Roofing offered to do an estimate, weather permitting will contact Pete on 11/6. Have previous Kenny Schimik snowplowing estimates, also asked Nick Swanson

who proposed $150/hr for church, $175/hr with the skid loader; Parsonage is $125/$150 pending if skid loader needed. Also includes shoveling sidewalks. One hour minimum. Bryan DeCook made a motion to offer snowplow contract to Nick Swanson, Pete Exe second, motion pass unanimously.

Education Report: Confirmation and Luther League putting together events during holiday season.

Parsonage Report: No report.

Old Business: Informational meeting held regarding parsonage and need to work on getting offices moved to the church. Need to confirm where to run line for internet and other office set up decisions. Need to reach out to Dahl in Stewartville about moving the copier/printer and work with Gina on the best set up for processes. Pete will work with Gina, WELCA members, and others to strategize on re-organizing current spaces and prepping to move in early 2027 (after the holiday season).

New Business: Pastor Cheryl has accepted the interim pastor position. She will guide us through the process beginning 2027. Contract has been mailed to her. Parsonage vote is complete. Joint council discussion for December; should this be joint council and parsonage committee working together – need to outline logistics. Will reach out to real estate agent in the future post joint meeting discussion. Well, property boundaries, septic, and other items will need to be reviewed.

Nominating committee: The positions that will be open for nominations this year are as follows.

1. Board President
2. Trustee
3. Education committee – 2 positions open
4. Parsonage committee – 1 position open

Positions with no change:

- Cemetery Committee
- Audit Committee
- Finance Officer
- Treasury Officer
- Secretary
- Trustees - Remaining

Christmas Eve service: WEST is at 4pm and EAST is at 6pm

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Jen, Terry 2nd ; closed with the Lord's Prayer.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, December 7th, 6:00PM at West St Olaf with Joint Meeting to follow at 7pm.

November 1, 2026 West results of congregational parsonage vote:

West St. Olaf Congregational Vote Meeting November 1, 2026

President Greg Brandt opened the meeting.

Greg explained the voting process. The ballot and 2 envelopes will be passed out by the ushers. Place the ballot into the smaller envelope, put the small envelope into the large envelope, seal it, and write your name on the outside. Greg read the congregational voting section of the constitution.

The three options on the ballot:
1 – Tear parsonage down and create a usable green space or park area
2 – Sell parsonage
3 – Do nothing

The West votes will be authenticated and taken to East where they will be combined and counted. Majority result will be posted on the church website. Once you have completed your vote place it in the box on your way out.

West had 58 votes authenticated with 54 meeting constitutional requirements.

Submitted by: Cindy Stoppel West St. Olaf Secretary

West Council Minutes

West St. Olaf Council Minutes: November 9, 2026

Attendance (P = Present)

Pastor Paul	P	Cindy Stoppel	P	Sue Hyland	P	Hans Estby	P
Greg Brandt	P	Sheryl Wohlers	P	Carma Bjornson		Chad Thompson	P
Dave Peterson	P	Deb Schuck	P	Ben Horejsi		Del Senjem	P
Jenny Twaddle	P	Mary Brandt		Clay Hazelmann			

Meeting called to order by Greg Brandt.

Motion made to approve agenda by Hans nd seconded by Deb carried, motion carried

Secretary's Report: Reports read, it was noted a name was missed in the October minutes agenda approval. Deb was added as the person who seconded the motion to approve agenda in October minutes. Motion made to approve October minutes with correction by Sheryl and seconded by Deb, motion carried.

Financial Secretary: Report reviewed and discussed. Motion made to approve by Deb and seconded by Sheryl, motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Report reviewed and discussed. Motion made to approve by Hans and seconded by Deb, motion carried.

Pastor's Report: Report reviewed, Pastor Paul expressed his thanks to the congregation for the appreciation dinner and gifts. It was appreciated.

Boad of Education Report: JAM Halloween party was a good time with 8 kids attending a lesson and games. Christmas Program practice has started with 11 kids signed up to participate on December 13. The program is new and was written by Will Laxen. Thank you Will. Luther League did not have a Halloween event. Six kids signed up to narrate for the Christmas program. The LL Thanksgiving service project is set for Monday November 16 at the Hayfield food pantry.

Deacon's Report: Cards sent: Thinking of you to Russ Skov & Norman Senjem; Birthday to Jean Thoe; wedding congratulations to Jenny & Andrew Milligan, and Norman & Nancy Senjem; Sympathy to Virginia Iverson family (passing of brother Roger) and Russ Skov family (passing of Marilyn). Larry Himle's birthday celebration was a success. Thank you to all who attended the appreciation dinner for

Pastor Paul & Jana, and to those that helped prepare, serve, and clean up. Thank you to all who made the 2026 WELCA bazaar a success. Upcoming events: Marilyn Skov funeral November 10, WELCA meeting November 11, Joy Beaver 95th birthday party November 15, Volunteer appreciation coffee and church decorating November 22. Thank you to Deb as October's Deacon.

Trustees Report: Hans changed a light bulb in the church and put a sign by the chapel door handle to turn up when using.

Old Business: Christmas Eve service 4pm for West and 6pm for East; Final results of parsonage vote (remove: 35, sell: 38, leave it: 32) discussion occurred about next steps such as determining parcel split. It was shared that an interested party came forward about purchasing the parsonage. Contact will be made to gather more information.

New Business: Hans is willing to do snow removal; discussion around the 2027 proposed budget draft; discussion about housing for Pastor Cheryl, Greg will check where she lived before. Other options will be check into for availability. The possibility of reducing the number of council members was discussed.

Motion to adjourn: Motion to adjourn made by Dave and seconded by Cindy, motion carried.

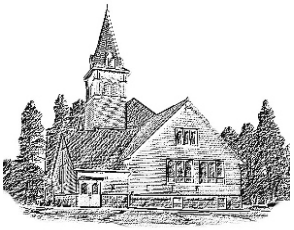
Submitted by: Cindy Stoppel, West St. Olaf council secretary
Next Meeting: Next month West council meeting on December 7 at 6pm followed by joint meeting at 7pm

East & West St. Olaf
Lutheran ELCA
6200 County Road 3 SW
Byron, MN 55920

>> Return Address Service Requested

Pastor Paul Thompson
Cell: 507-273-8504 Email: pthomp821@gmail.com
Church Office Hours: Call before driving to office.
Office: 507-365-8222
Secretary: eastwest@kmtel.com
Websites: eaststolaf.org OR weststolaf.org

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HAPPENINGS

