



2026



*"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."
– Ephesians 2:8*

Ever spend time around a little kid who liked to ask the question, "Why?" When they get on a roll it can really get obnoxious. "Why? Why? Why?" It seems like an endless loop that never ends. Legend has it that is what inspired Martin Luther to write his small catechism. It was written to help parents answer some of the "Why's" of our faith for their little children.

Since then, the small catechism, along with the Bible, have become the basis for our confirmation curriculum. I've had the privilege of teaching confirmation at some larger congregations where we have needed adult small group leaders. Nearly every time I've done that I've had parents come up to me and say something like, "I wish we had this when I was in confirmation." I've always been tempted to answer with something along the lines of, "You probably did, but you were in 7th grade and didn't realize it." I don't say that because that would be obnoxious... like the little kid asking "Why" on an endless loop.

In just a few short weeks we will be starting the season of Lent, starting with Ash Wednesday on February 18. One of the traditions of Lent is to return to the "basics" of faith. Many congregations will look at Luther's small catechism. We will be asking, "Why?" of some of the basic tenants of our Lutheran Theology. Or maybe better yet, asking, "What does this mean?" I hope you will join us on Wednesday evening for worship as we dive into topics like: Saint and Sinner, Justification by Grace, Law and Gospel, Theology of the Cross, and much more. Perhaps you have heard a pastor refer to some of these phrases and you may have even wondered, "What does this mean?" Join us Wednesday's throughout lent and find out.

Blessings,

Pr. Brad <><



PRAYER LIST

Gyneth Ness, Laura Chambers, Rich Neely, Jim Hayward, Jeanette Anderson, Carolyn Gibbons, Jim Loehr, Norm Peterson, CarolAnn Peterson, Marcy Bell ALL THOSE MOURNING THE LOSS OF LOVED ONES, MILITARY – and all loved ones serving overseas.

ST. PETER'S VOLUNTEERS FOR FEBRUARY

ALTAR CARE: Leslie Peterson, Mary Peterson, Sara Stanek

CHURCH CLEANING: Leslie Peterson, Mary Peterson, Sara Stanek

ST. STEPHEN'S VOLUNTEERS FOR FEBRUARY

USHERS: Mike Macrafc

READER: JoAnn Salava

COMMUNION ASSISTANT: Tom Woggon

PREPARE COMMUNION: Helen Laehn, Nancy Lauden

DECEMBER FINANCES

St. Stephen's

General Fund Income	\$10,395.88
Expenses	5,894.31
Balance of Funds	
General	3,690.89
Building	2,725.72
Memorial	12,117.91
Parsonage	12,136.71

St. Peter's

Income	6,457.27
Expenses	6,018.68
Balance of Funds	
General	437.88
Memorial	10,047.95
Congregational Care	1,047.21
Parsonage – Savings	10,678.23
Checking	4,892.41
Sabbatical Reserve Fund	2,263.61

REMINDER – If you would like to set up an automatic donation to your congregation, please contact Ruth Kemp or Jeannine Russell to get the information.



ST. PETER'S WELCA NEWS

No WELCA meeting in February.

Women of the ELCA will meet Thursday, March 12th at 7 p.m. Devotions: Liz P. Do you have ideas for 2026? Who would be interested in holding women's meetings after church service? Let your thoughts be known. All women are welcome. A Reminder: If you are on Altar Care, it is your responsibility to clean up after communion.

SUPER BOWL/SWEET AUCTION is Sunday, February 8th, after 10:30 service, with potluck. We are still at the point of looking for an auctioneer, non professional is accepted. Donations are being welcomed.

Men are being invited to the start a Men's Breakfast, the second Wednesday of the month, at 9:30 at Perkin's Restaurant. It will co-exist with the Women's Breakfast.

LENT is around the corner. Women will serve Soup Supper on Wednesday, February 18th. There is a clipboard with a sign up sheet in the entryway. Also, helpers will be needed for setting and cleaning up.



Your Ministry Impact 2025 by the Numbers

Together in mission, we celebrate **60 years** of partnership with churches across the Midwest. You make a lasting difference through Sugar Creek Bible Camp's programs for all: children, youth, families, adults, and congregations. You inspire stronger connections to your church with fun, Christ-centered adventures, cultivating skills for faith and life together. Thank you for the amazing "God stories" represented in the numbers:

Summer Bible Camp

20 unique and powerful **Summer Camp Adventure Programs** for K-12 & Families
30 Summer Youth Ministry Staff + **32 Professional Leaders Volunteering** (pastors, youth leaders, nurses, doctors, helpers, and builders) at Summer Bible Camp
376 Overnight Summer Campers
135 Explorer/Forester Day-Campers onsite + **120** more at traveling Day Camps
201 Family Campers

Special Programs led by Sugar Creek for your Congregation

- **26 Programs & Events for Adults:** craft retreats, bus trips, special events & more
- **6 Weekend Youth Retreats** including church lock-ins & synod youth events
- **3 Family Camp** sessions with **41** families attending
- **33 Church Visits** – preaching, council visits, WELCA, Sunday worship leadership
- **16 Full-Time Equivalent (F.T.E.) Youth & Family Ministry staff** employed by Sugar Creek for 2025, offering *experiential* Christian Ed. for our youth, adults & families

Meaningful Retreats & Events

- 175 unique Retreats & Events** at Sugar Creek... *beyond* Summer Camp:
- **907** guests at multiple **Outdoor Education Days**
 - **193** guests at other **Christian Youth Retreats** at Sugar Creek
 - **33** hard-working supporters at **2** Volunteer Weekend programs
 - **3461** guests at **143 events** for Churches, Families, Schools, and Hobbyists
 - **53** Volunteer Day events: Volunteer Tuesdays, Mass Mailings, & more
 - **3791** guest-nights and **7170** guest-days graciously hosted
 - = **ALL 52 Weeks** hosted guests & events at your Camp & Retreat Center

All are Welcome

219 Summer Camp kids in our communities received Camperships (**financial aid**) from Sugar Creek directly, totaling **\$102,770**

Sugar Creek summer staff alumni attending Lutheran Seminaries in 2025: **3**

Contact Hours of intentional **Christian Education** this year at camp: **53,958***

* a conservative (low) estimate

Thank you for your ongoing work to GROW this important ministry!

SugarCreekBibleCamp.org ☎ 608-734-3113 ☎ office@SgrCreek.org ☎ **ACA Accredited**



The Hidden Cups: A Story of Life-Giving Relationship and Creation Care

The work of creation care doesn't always involve grand solar panel arrays or massive fundraising drives. Sometimes, it happens through a small, intentional choice made in the sanctuary—and a generous act of **collegiality** made across county lines.

This is the story of two congregations, Holmen Lutheran in Holmen, and Faith Lutheran of Black Hammer in Spring Grove, and the simple, yet profound, way they embodied our call to **cultivate life-giving relationships rooted in God's love**.

A Choice Rooted in Stewardship

At Holmen Lutheran Church, leadership decided to take a small but meaningful step toward reducing waste: returning to the use of reusable glass communion cups during their worship services. This decision affirmed their commitment to Christian stewardship and caring for God's creation.

The challenge soon became clear: they needed more cups to accommodate their congregation, but the style of cups their trays required were a specific, vintage size that had been discontinued. Purchasing new trays and cups would be costly and wasteful, defeating the purpose of the initial sustainability effort.

A Call to the Network

Facing a roadblock, Holmen Lutheran reached out to the Synod office, hoping the larger network might offer a solution. The request was simple: Did anyone have unused communion cups of this specific vintage size?

This is where the power of the **larger church** came to life.

A message went out across the Synod to congregations. Soon after, Pastor Len Liptack of Faith Lutheran of Black Hammer in Spring Grove, MN, responded with a happy solution.

Treasure in the Closet

"We have them!" Pastor Len confirmed.

It turned out that Faith Lutheran had a large bucket of the exact vintage communion cups safely tucked away in storage. The cups hadn't been used in years, and the congregation was thrilled to know they could be given a new life rather than sitting idle or being disposed of.

This was more than just a donation; it was a tangible act of **life-giving relationship**. Pastor Len recognized an opportunity for resource-sharing that served two purposes: clearing unused items from their own closets and actively supporting a sister congregation's mission to care for creation.

Collegiality in Action



To complete the exchange, Pastor Len Liptack personally delivered the donated bucket of cups to the Synod office. From there, representatives from Holmen Lutheran came and picked up the **newly acquired supply**.

The cups, once considered surplus and discontinued, are now back where they belong: in active service during worship at Holmen Lutheran.

This story beautifully illustrates how the Synod network functions—not as a bureaucracy, but as a bridge connecting resources, intentions, and ministries. Holmen Lutheran made a choice for **creation care**, and Faith Lutheran of Black Hammer provided the **collegiality** needed to make that choice sustainable.

It serves as a powerful reminder that our mission to cultivate life-giving relationships often leads to unexpected blessings for both our neighbors and the planet.

Article by Brianna Iverson, utilizing AI Gemini tools for drafting and structure.

	February 2026					
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:00(P)Worship/ HC 10:30(S) Worship/HC (S)Jeannie Ormson (P) Gabrielle Brueck	2 (P) 6:00 Wrestling with the Word (S) Kevin Niles (P)Laura Chambers (P)Sara Stanek 	3 (P) 5:30 Quilting	4 6:30 Confirmation @ Peace (P)Cliff Bartholomew	5 (P)Larry Grilley	6	7 (S) 9:00 Quilting
8 9:00(P)Worship/ HC 10:30(S) Worship/HC (P)Sweet Auction/ Potluck (P)Nicole Krause	9 (P) 6:00 Wrestling with the Word (P)Marion Christenson (P) Callen Linenberg	10 (P) 5:30 Quilting	11 9:30 Women's Birthday Breakfast 6:30 Confirmation @ Peace 9:30 Men's Breakfast (P)Liz Pierce	12 (P)Ty Waltemath	13 (S) Tracy Kemp Community Bon Fire @ Nelson Park	14 (S) 9:00 Quilting (P) Chloe Lien 
15 9:00(P)Worship/ HC 10:30(S) Worship/HC	16 (P) 6:00 Wrestling with the Word	17 (P) 5:30 Quilting (S) Brady Kemp (P)Perry West	18 (S) 1:00 pm WELCA Bible Study ASH WEDNESDAY (P) 5:15 Soup Supper 6:30 Worship (S)Knolan Kemp (P)Candy Bennet	19 (S)Nancy Lauden	20 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE (S)Nathan Gunther (S)Amanda Talbert	21 (S) 9:00 Quilting
22 9:00(P)Worship/ HC 10:30(S) Worship/HC	23 (P) 6:00 Wrestling with the Word	24 (P) 5:30 Quilting (P)Annie Jones	25 (P) 5:15 Soup Supper 6:30 Worship (S)Mandy Brockman	26	27 (P)Marty Alexander	28 (S) 9:00 Quilting (P)Dan Meseberg