



FEBRUARY 2026

# THE FORTRESS

Newsletter of Concordia Lutheran Church, Preschool & Academy

## DATES TO NOTE

- 2.15 . Resource Center
- 2.16 . CLP & CLA  
Registration Opens  
- LCMS Members
- 2.17 . Shrove Tuesday  
Service & Breakfast
- 2.18 . Ash Wednesday  
Services & Supper
- 2.23 . CLP & CLA  
Registration Opens  
- Current Families
- 2.25 . Lenten Supper &  
Service

## SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

*Swaddling Clothes*  
Sign-up or contact  
Jamie Kotovsky

*YOW!*  
Contact the Board of  
Education

## LENTEN ENCOURAGEMENT

*From Pastor*

Dear Saints,

Beginning Ash Wednesday (February 18th this year), Lent is a 40-day period in the Church of penitential preparation for Easter. The number of days mirror Jesus' time in the wilderness, when He was tempted by the devil, fasted, and prayed.

Each year on Ash Wednesday, the liturgy of the Church calls us to begin "a holy season of prayerful and penitential reflection," when "our attention is especially directed to the holy sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The words used in the Ash Wednesday rite of the Lutheran Service Book Agenda also remind us that "from ancient times the season of Lent has been kept as a time of special devotion, self-denial, and humble repentance born of a faithful heart that dwells confidently on His Word and draws from it life and hope."

Lent is a challenge for Christians (at least, it should be). We make ourselves feel and realize our need for Holy Week, Good Friday, and Easter – our Savior's passion, suffering death, and resurrection. While our world overlooks these, we glory in them. While our world is busied and distracted by the ease of life, fleeting images, and sinful pleasures, we avert our eyes, guard our hearts and minds, and focus every more on conforming our lives to Christ.

An historical practice of Lent is to "give-up" something during the season to feel a personal lack and suffer a little with Jesus. Fasting, totally or in some form, is the traditional Lenten practice of this. Suffering can and does teach.

Another practice of Lent is adding times of prayer and meditation in the church. On Wednesdays in Lent, we add a meal at 5pm and a service at 7pm for your prayer, meditation, and growth. While restraint and self-denial are part of Lent, so also is adding and giving greater effort to pious practices. It does take extra effort for prayer and meditation when temptations, distractions, and the noise of the world vie for your attention. Lent brings us opportunity to grow in faith and life. Make a

greater effort to pray more during Lent (there are numerous prayers in the front of our hymnal, Lutheran Service Book, to aid personal prayer). Make a greater effort to read the Bible (find a reading plan or select a couple books of the Bible to read through). Read and study the Small or Large Catechism or another good theological book (I can share some suggestions). Attend the services in the church. Reflect on your daily life and grow in your Baptism and the image of Christ in the example you show others as a Christian. Lent ends with Easter, and life ends in resurrection.

But, above all, heed the encouragement of Lent from Joel 2, "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

### To Thee, Omniscient Lord of All - LSB 613 - Text: Public domain

1 To Thee, omniscient Lord of all, In grief and shame I humbly call; I see my sins against Thee, Lord, The sins of thought and deed and word. They press me sore; I cry to Thee: O God, be merciful to me!	2 O Lord, my God, to Thee I pray: O cast me not in wrath away! Let Thy good Spirit ne'er depart, But let Him draw to Thee my heart That truly penitent I be: O God, be merciful to me!	3 O Jesus, let Thy precious blood Be to my soul a cleansing flood. Turn not, O Lord, Thy guest away, But grant that justified I may Go to my house at peace with Thee: O God, be merciful to me!
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Peace in Christ, our Suffering Savior,

*Rev. Stephen M. Mueller*

Pastor Mueller



NOW AVAILABLE



**LCMS publisher Concordia Publishing House has some wonderful resources to aid in your reflection, study, and prayer during Lent. Check out their new Bible App or stop by our own Concordia Resource Center on February 15 between services to select physical items available for purchase.**



**CLA is looking for volunteers to help during lunch and recess time on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:20 am to 12:30 pm.**

If you or someone you know is interested, please contact Rachel Kramer.

**Concordia's LWML would like to invite our church family and friends to the Shrove Tuesday Prayer Service and Breakfast on February 17<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM.**

Pastor will lead us through this special service in the Fellowship Hall and then we will enjoy breakfast together. All are welcome - men and women - to join us as we prepare our hearts for Lent.



**OPEN FOR SHOPPING - FEBRUARY 12<sup>TH</sup> 4-7 PM & FEBRUARY 28<sup>TH</sup> 9-NOON**

# SWADDLING CLOTHES

Sharing the mercy of Christ with our neighbors through the gifts of clothing, food, friendship, and the forgiving Word of God.





## PRESCHOOL PRESS

Concordia Staff

### Blessings to our Concordia Church Family!

January has been filled with joyful learning and sweet moments of growth in our preschool classrooms. We thank God each day for the blessing of sharing His love with these little ones and for the faithful partnership we have with you through your prayers, gifts, and encouragement.

During National Lutheran Schools Week, our classes enjoyed special times of faith and fun together as we celebrated with daily themes like "Backwards Day," "Pajama Day," and "Favorite Character Day."

It was a week filled with joyful noises. There was lots of singing, student-built guitars, laughter, and even a visit to a CLA music camp session to hear some brass horns!

In our Jesus Time, students focused on the early life and ministry of Jesus, hearing how He grows, teaches, calls His helpers, calms fears, heals, and cares for people in need. Through these stories, our children continue to learn that Jesus loves them and is always with them.

Thank you for your continued support of our preschool families and staff. We are grateful to serve alongside you as we plant seeds of faith that, by God's grace, will grow for years to come.



Concordia Ladies League met on January 8, 2026 with 8 members present. Hosting were the officers and there was a potluck lunch before the meeting. Our speaker was Michael Sigwalt, director of the Geneseo/Atkinson Food Pantry, who gave a very interesting overview of how the food pantry operates and changes he has made. Sherry Wechler called the meeting to order. Mary Hull took attendance and we answered the question of the day which was: What is something you'd like to do this year? Sherry Wechsler read the minutes from the November meeting, which were approved. Janett Farnam gave the treasury report and it was approved. New officers were decided upon. Arline Sigwalt will be president, Nancy Specht will be vice president, Mary Hull will continue as secretary and Janette Farnam will continue as treasurer. Sherry will have the office print new booklets. Programs for next year were discussed. Anyone with suggestions for programs should bring them to Arline. We also discussed playing Bunko sometimes when there is no official program. Joy Noard sent a "thinking of you" card to Christine Grom. Our next meeting will be February 12 at 1:00 at the church with Marta Licht & Arline Sigwalt hosting. We closed our meeting with The Lord's Prayer. Respectfully submitted, Mary Hull, Secretary

# ACADEMY ANNOUNCEMENTS

From Mrs. Coppejans

January was a month of creativity and celebration at Concordia Lutheran Academy. We reached our 100th day of school milestone at the end of the month! All month long, scholars explored balance and symmetry in art, discovering the beauty of order and design in God's creation. Then, we celebrated National Lutheran Schools Week with a special music camp, filling our days with learning, song, and joyful fellowship. We give thanks for these opportunities to grow together in faith and learning.

We would like to especially thank the following people for sharing their talents with our scholars during our NLSW Music Camp. This special celebration would not have been possible without them!

Mrs. Carmen Pamperin, Organ  
Mr. Tony Hernandez,  
Percussion & Flutes  
Mr. John Puentes, Ukulele  
Mr. Luke Larson, Brass Horns  
Mrs. Stephanie Prochaska,  
Handbells & Chimes

Please keep Concordia Lutheran Academy especially in your prayers. We are feeling the need for additional hands and hearts to support our classroom and are actively seeking volunteers and substitute teachers. This ministry depends on the faithful support of the church family, and any help you can offer would be deeply appreciated.

We trust the Lord's provision and continue to "make a joyful noise" in gratitude for all He has done and will do for our school.



*Memorize a verse with us!*

*Make a joyful noise to the Lord,  
all the earth;  
break forth into joyous song  
and sing praises!*

*Psalm 98:4*



# NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK 2026



Joyful Noise all  
TOGETHER

Concordia LWML began the January meeting at 12:00 and we all enjoyed a potluck at 12:00. After the potluck we had a Bible study given to us by Diane Ouart titled "Not the World's peace" written by Sara Gifford.

Kathy gave the devotion from Treasury of Daily Prayer from writings of Luther.

Hymn #395, "Oh Morning Star, How Bright and Fair" was our hymn for the day and we spoke each verse together.

Our roll call was answered by sharing what we learned this past year about prayer. There were 11 members present. The minutes from the December meeting were read and approved. Our treasurer reported a balance of \$3,322.76 in our checking account. Correspondence was shared from Josh Bieri and Kathy reported that she sent several anniversary and birthday cards.

There was no Old Business.

#### New Business:

Thanks be to God every year in January after the cookie walk we vote to send the money earned from that walk to several charities. This year we voted to send each charity \$300. Following is a list of the charities:

Christian Care Center, Rock Island, IL  
 Lutheran Braille Workers, Yucaipa, CA  
 Cristo Rey, East Moline, IL  
 Orphan Grain Train  
 Lutheran Heritage Foundation, Macomb, MI  
 Dakota Boy and Girls Ranch, Fargo, ND  
 Pregnancy Resource Center, Moline, IL  
 Woman's Choice Center, Bettendorf, IA

Our day ended with the Mite Box devotion and offerings were collected.

Our next meeting will be February 10, 2026. Coming up will be our Shrove Tuesday Bible Study and breakfast. Watch the bulletin for the time. Everyone is invited.

Respectfully submitted, Patricia Kohrell



# 2026

## LENT & EASTER AT CONCORDIA

Shrove Tuesday 2.17.26	Service & Breakfast - 9:00 AM
Ash Wednesday 2.18.26	Services - 12:00 & 7:00 PM  Supper - 5:00 PM
Wednesday Lenten Services	Suppers - 5:00 PM Services - 7:00 PM
Palm Sunday 3.29.26	Services - 8:00 & 10:30 AM 
Holy Monday 3.30.26	Vespers Service - 7:00 PM
Holy Tuesday 3.31.26	Service of Evening Prayer - 7:00 PM
Holy Wednesday 4.1.26	Service of Confession - 7:00 PM
Maundy Thursday 4.2.26	Senior Service - 11:00 AM  Service - 7:00 PM 
Good Friday 4.3.26	Chief Service - 12:00 PM  Tenebrae - 7:00 PM
Easter Vigil 4.4.26	Service - 7:00 PM 
Easter Sunday 4.5.26	Sunrise Service - 6:30 AM  Easter Service - 10:30 AM 

IT IS FINISHED - THE HOLY WEEK PROPHECIES OF ZECHARIAH  
THEY WILL LOOK ON ME, THE ONE THEY HAVE PIERCED... ZECHARIAH 12:10



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 (309) 944-3993

# In our prayers...

**Concordia Family:** Marc Motzer, Marcia Himmelman, Nash, Mary Miller, Joline Parrish, Lenore Vandevoord, Jenni DeGerengel, Wendy & Jon Grunwald, Lola Helke, Roger Hull, Jackson Kinnard, Phil Jahn, Cindy Wagoner, Fama Prokup, Martin Fleming, Sue Smithson, Julie Kuse, Janine Persefield, Lois Misfeldt, Brad Watters, our inactive members **Friends of Concordia:** Donte Nystrom, Renee Hull, Colin, Dan & Lisa Gordon, Tammy Bruns, Craig, Jim & Jennifer Garner, Jeff McQuaid, Tammy Sheldon, Barbara Sigwalt, Joe Moriarity, Debbie DelFiacco, Debbie Hardesty, Justin Rittenhouse, Megan & Daxton Crain, Ann Key, A.J. Gale, Judy & Gary Magnuson, Julie Fiers, Karen Wright, Helen Stewart, John Cross, John Gravitt, Tony Snell, Cameron Mayo, Joan Maier, Chris Frisk, Connie Wagner, Alice Wright, Stephanie Kursock, Joan McCarron

**Our church workers. Our Synodical leaders:** Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison - Synod President, Rev. Michael Mohr - CID President. **Our nation's leaders:** especially President Trump and Governor Pritzker. **The Armed Forces, law enforcement officers, and firefighters.**

If you wish to submit a prayer request, please contact Pastor or the office. If you or a member of your family have a medical procedure planned or are admitted to the hospital, please call the church office. In the event of an after-hours emergency please contact Pastor at (309) 944-2827.

Please continue to pray for the mission of Concordia.

As Christian stewards, let us constantly be reminded and thankful that all gifts - **time, talent, and treasure - are gifts from God;** and be encouraged to use them in God pleasing ways.



**Funds Status as of December 31, 2025**  
**The 2025 budget was \$346,182**

**The approved 2026 budget is \$367,948**

	<b>DEC</b>	<b>YTD</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>46,207.72</b>	<b>378,453.90</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>27,051.31</b>	<b>349,047.85</b>
<b>Income Less Expense</b>	<b>19,156.41</b>	<b>29,406.05</b>

## Odds and Ends - Some things remain the same but are important none the less!

**Please put your name on pew envelopes.** We want to give you credit for all your contributions on your year-end records. We appreciate your generosity to all the various missions/activities we sponsor and support!

**Large Print Portals of Prayer** are available to our members with vision difficulties. If you are in need of one, please contact Linda Hull or the church office.

**Voter's Meetings** - Become a voting member of our congregation and help make decisions for our church! The only conditions are being 18 years of age and a current member at Concordia. Please talk to Mark Ouart (Church President) or the church office for more details.

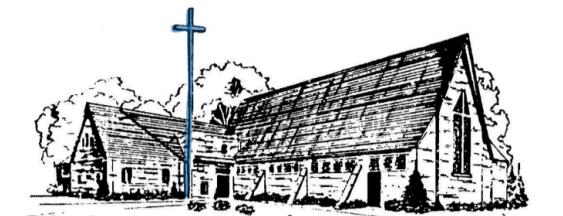
**Next Voter's Meeting: May 10, 2026 - 1:30 PM**

**Remember:** Please contact the office to inform us of a name, address, marital status, number, or email change.

**If you admitted to a hospital,** be sure to say you are a member of Concordia Lutheran or have a family member or friend call the office or Pastor Mueller. Otherwise, we may not be aware of your hospitalization. Thank you.

**Check out the greeting cards** in the display rack! For only \$1.00 you can get a pretty card for your occasion and the money goes to LWML missions.

**The little House** in the back of the sanctuary is a collection for A Dollar for Missions! What is A Dollar for Missions? The Central Illinois District (CID) encourages its congregations to invite their members to contribute one dollar per member per week for missions, in addition to their ordinary offerings. This kind of over-and-above giving is called "A Dollar for Missions". These gifts will aid the CID in caring for different needs of its missions such as university churches and student centers.



# CONCORDIA

## EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

*Hear, live & share with heart.*

316 S Oakwood Ave, Geneseo, IL 61254  
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[www.concordiageneseo.com](http://www.concordiageneseo.com)

### CHURCH LEADERSHIP:

Mark Ouart - President  
 Allison Drockelman - Secretary  
 Mindy Brown - Treasurer

### DEACONS & MEMBER LAST NAMES:

Shawn Anderson & Brian Wahlheim	A-C
Mark Ouart & Andy Raschke	D-G
<b>Derek Drockelman</b> & Greg Wisely	H-K
Dick McMullen & Don Miller	L-N
Bill Kramer & Jeremy Dodge	O-R
Kenny Grom & Ryan Hull	S-Z

### NEXT FORTRESS DEADLINE:

Sunday, February 15

### OFFICE HOURS:

Monday-Friday  
 School Day - 9am-3pm  
 Non-School Day - 9am-Noon

### DIRECTORY

#### **Rev. Stephen Mueller**

[pastor@concordiageneseo.com](mailto:pastor@concordiageneseo.com)  
 Parsonage: (309) 944-2827

#### **Stephanie Prochaska & Allison Drockelman**

Office Staff

[office@concordiageneseo.com](mailto:office@concordiageneseo.com)

**Amy Roberts**, Preschool Teacher  
[preschool@geneseolutheranchurch.com](mailto:preschool@geneseolutheranchurch.com)

**Katie Coppejans**, Academy Teacher  
[kcoppejans@concordialutheranacademy.com](mailto:kcoppejans@concordialutheranacademy.com)

**Mindy Brown**, Treasurer  
[bookkeeper@geneseolutheranchurch.com](mailto:bookkeeper@geneseolutheranchurch.com)

**Erica Johnson**, Custodian  
[custodian@concordiageneseo.com](mailto:custodian@concordiageneseo.com)

# MONTHLY SCHEDULE

Every Monday (Sept-May)  
 6:30 PM - Bible Study

Every Tuesday (Sept-May)  
 10:00 AM - Bible Study

Every Wednesday (Sept-May)  
 YOW!

3:30 PM - SPARKS  
 5:00 PM - Breaking Bread Meal  
 5:30 PM - Catechism Class  
 5:30 PM - ROCKS

1<sup>st</sup> Thursday  
 6:30 PM - Board of Education Meeting

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday  
 1:00 PM - LWML Meeting  
 4:00 PM - Stewardship Board Meeting

2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday  
 1:00 PM - CLL Meeting  
 4-7 PM - Swaddling Clothes Open  
 6:00 PM - Care Committee Meeting

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Jan, May, Oct  
 1:30 PM - Voters Assembly

2<sup>nd</sup> Monday (Aug-May)  
 Pastor at Circuit Pastor's Winkel

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday  
 12:30 PM - Board of Deacons Meeting

3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday  
 6:30 PM - Church Council Meeting

4<sup>th</sup> Thursday  
 6:30 PM - Evangelism Board Meeting  
 6:30 PM - Trustee Board Meeting

4<sup>th</sup> Saturday  
 9 AM-Noon - Swaddling Clothes Open

### February Special Dates:

15 <sup>th</sup>	Resource Center Open	9:15 AM
16 <sup>th</sup>	CLP & CLA Registration - LCMS Members	
17 <sup>th</sup>	Shrove Tuesday Service	9:00 AM
18 <sup>th</sup>	Ash Wednesday Service	12:00 PM
	Ash Wednesday Supper	5:00 PM
	Ash Wednesday Service	7:00 PM
23 <sup>rd</sup>	CLP & CLA Registration-Current Families	
25 <sup>th</sup>	Lenten Supper	5:00 PM
	Lenten Service	7:00 PM