

Newsletter of Concordia Lutheran Church, Preschool & Academy

A Happy and Blessed New Year to you!

At the end of Revelation, Jesus promises "*Behold, I am making all things new*." In Chapter 21, Jesus gives us a glimpse of what is to come after the resurrection in the New Heavens and the New Earth. The old things, the former things—that is, sin, its hold of corruption, death, and all enemies of God—will be no more. All Things New is a way to understand heaven's realities to come.

This future newness, St. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians, is ours already now, even as we wait for it to be revealed. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* The new life in Christ is yours through faith in Him.

Now, in this life surrounded and yet immersed by the old, as the truth is in Jesus, ...put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and... be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and...put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:21-24

This new self is granted to you by Baptism into Christ, Who is the firstborn of all creation, and the new creation, in His resurrection from the dead! *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life* (Romans 6:4).

In the New Year, many people make Resolutions toward a newness of life now. Looking forward to new things (we pray are beneficial and good for us) we have high hopes for the future. God grant all that we need for our body and life, come what may!

At Concordia, new things are coming for our building and grounds this year. While the building is already made beautiful by the preaching and teaching of God's Holy Word and the giving and receiving of His Holy Sacraments, enhancements agreed upon by voting members of Concordia, utilizing a monetary gift for the purpose of enhancements, will further beautify this special place set aside for the intersecting of Heaven and Earth. Thanks be to God!

But what good is the future newness of heaven, our newness of life, and the newness of the enhancements of our church (and Preschool and Academy) if no one knows about them? One of the main reasons people go to a church (and join it) is they are invited by friends. This New Year, who can you invite to *"come and see"* all these new things that are happening, and hear and receive the newness of life the Lord grants for all people in Christ Jesus?

As we enter the Year of our Lord 2025, God bless you that the Newness of life in Christ strengthens and grows in you and through you. Thank the Lord for all His wonderful benefits to us both in this life, and in the life of the world to come! May we steward His gifts wisely, in new ways, perhaps, focusing our lives on His will and ways.

God bless you this New Year and always!

In Christ, **Pastor Mueller**

PS-Thank you for your prayers (and various gifts and blessings) for myself and my family this year. You are blessings to us! Thank you also for your prayers and support of our church, our church family, and our Preschool and Academy! The Lord bless you!



Pew Ponderings

From the Pew: In our sinful state we struggle at loving people, don't we? To be honest, we struggle at even liking some people! Yet Jesus says, "Love one another as I have loved you" and "Love your neighbor as yourself." Wow! Do we ever fall short! What do we do? Of course, we know that God's forgiveness is always there when we fail to love as we should, but there is something we can do. We can go to God in prayer and ask Him to help us love people the way that He loves them. "Father, help us to see people the way You see them: as people for whom Jesus died." "Help us to see that You love people as much as You love me." I once read somewhere that when you pray for people you find hard to love or even like, you soon realize that your attitude towards them changes. You may even grow to love them!

From the Pastor: "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5) Jesus teaches. God reveals His heart in loving His enemies: "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us... For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, <u>now that we are reconciled</u>, shall we be saved by his life" (Romans 5:8, 10). God's attitude toward us is mercy and grace. Compassion drives Him to action. Concern for mankind's eternity drove His Son to humble Himself, take on humanity, and sacrifice Himself. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. Love begins with God, who is Love. Those who love themselves do not love God. Instead, St. Paul reminds us when addressing husbands in Ephesians 5, "He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body." Love puts others first, even when they do not put you first. Love is Christ in you!

How are we to love others? "[*W*]hoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

The way of God is hearing and obeying His Word and believing it. In this, the Old Adam, our sinful selfish flesh, is put to death. Hearing and obeying His Word is also a sacrifice of the time and gifts God gives us as we receive His Word and Sacraments, trusting He will not leave us lacking daily bread. The sacrifice of prayer and praise and offerings also show our love for God. In loving others, we learn better the heart of God as we learn His Commandments—which Jesus summarizes with "Love God and Love your neighbor". *Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God [abides in Love!], and God [Love] in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us... By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.* O Lord, send us Your Holy Spirit to lead and guide us into Your way of peace, truth, and love for all the people for whom Christ died—which is everyone! (See 1 Corinthians 13 and the short book of 1 John for more ponderings on Godly Love.)

"Pew Ponderings" will be featured monthly as long as we have Ponderings submitted to Pastor. Anyone in the congregation may share their ponderings with Pastor, who will share and respond to it. All Pew Ponderings will be kept anonymous, unless otherwise directed. To submit your pondering, email your thoughts to Pastor Mueller at pastor@geneseolutheranchurch.com.

Thank you to all who participated in and helped with our Children's Christmas Program! What a joy it was to hear the story of our Savior's birth from the youngest amongst us. God's blessings this new year!



January
20
25



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January 2025





Max Peal

Lucas Kotovsky

Members who are 18 years old and younger



9

15

22

7	David & Joy Noard	58 years
10	Henry & Krystal Larreynaga	10 years
12	Robert & Rita Fuqua	51 years



Joan Windisch & Mariane Andrews

DEACON SCHEDULE

8:00 AM: Bill Kramer & Jeremy Dodge







5th Joy & David Noard 12th This Sunday is available. This Sunday is available. 19th 26th This Sunday is available.



31 Ray Klavon



Happy New Year Concordia Church Family!

As we enter 2025, we praise God our Father for his faithfulness and steadfast love. He continues to guide and bless us in and out of the preschool classroom as we seek to carry his message to families in Geneseo and surrounding communities. I am excited for the year ahead and can't wait to see what God will do through the preschool and through you who support us.

Our December flew by! Our Christmas celebrations were filled with joy and fellowship. For our Christmas program, we partnered with our Concordia Lutheran Academy students in presenting a re-enactment of the Nativity. The CLA students told the story with Bible readings and poems (memorized!) while our preschool students were in costume and acted out their parts. Collectively they sang songs throughout the program, telling the miraculous story and praising the Lord. We treasured this partnership and loved presenting the Christmas story of our Savior's birth together.

Our classes resume on January 6th after a two-week Christmas break. As we return to the classroom, we look forward to new discoveries and continue to prepare students for the next steps in their education. We are looking forward to National Lutheran Schools week from January 26 - 31. Our theme this year is "Endure" and our scripture reference is Hebrews 12:1-3: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." (ESV)

We look forward to exploring this word with our youngest learners and sowing seeds that will grow with God's grace and truth. We appreciate your prayers and continued support at the preschool as we carry out the mission of spreading the Good News. Blessings to all of you in the year ahead!

In Christ, Amy Roberts



One of Concordia's missions is right here in our church!

Concordia Lutheran Preschool is the only preschool program in Geneseo that shares the message and love of Jesus with its students every day. What an amazing way to share the love of God with children that may otherwise not hear the word of our Lord! Want to help give the blessing of a Christian education? Donate or even sponsor a preschool student! Please contact the office for more details.



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from your CLA family!





Who's in the pew? Kendra Burnette!

Kendra is a Deputy Director in the Office of Business Operations for the U.S. Department of Energy. She recently became engaged to Robert Kiefer from Cambridge and has a 23-year-old daughter Hannah Marie. Robert and Kendra will be married in 2025. Kendra enjoy rides on their Harley, Green Bay Football, traveling, and going to country concerts. Family get togethers, church, and riding side by sides are more special activities she enjoys. Her mother is fellow Concordia member Sonia Johnson. Make sure to say hello to Kendra when you see her!



Here are some quick FAQs about our Youth on Wednesday lineup! We'll see you there!

Q: Who is YOW! for?

A: All Kids and Youth of Concordia (and their friends!).

Q: What should we expect on YOW! days?

A: 3:30pm-5:00pm the SPARKS (Pre-K-5th/6th) meet for Bible Lessons and activities. At 5:30pm, both Catechism Class (6th-8th) AND High School ROCKS (High Schoolers) Bible Study meet.

Q: Will there be a Meal for the kids?

A: Yes! Each Wednesday beginning at 5:00pm, all youth attending YOW! are invited to break bread together. The 5:30pm mealtime for the youth will take place in Concordia's Fellowship Hall. Meals will be provided and hosted by Board of Education members.

Q: Will you be serving meals of exotic-type foods?

A: No. Meals are simple and planned with kids in mind. A rotating schedule of meals can be provided upon request.

Q: Can I volunteer?

A: Yes! If any parent or family would like to volunteer to assist with SPARKS, and/or provide and host a YOW! meal, please let Pastor Mueller or Tamra Krohn know*. (Or if you would like to give a donation toward the YOW! meals, you are free to do so—but this is certainly not required).

Q: When can I pick up my child?

A: SPARKS staying for the meal can be picked up by 5:30. Catechism Class & High Schoolers are finished at 7:15.

Q: 7:15pm?

A: Yes, please. Each YOW! will end with a brief devotion in the Sanctuary for the Catechism Class and ROCKS High School Youth that they may hear God's Word, Confess the Faith, and "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18)

YOW! resumes on Wednesday, January 8th!

*Pastor Mueller's email: pastor@geneseolutheranchurch.com and Tamra Krohn's email: owieking@icloud.com





Christmas Poinsettias



Jim & Mariane Andrews: In memory of loved ones.

The Anselmi Family: In memory of our Grandparents - Valeska Combs, Gerald Anderson, Dick Whiles and Dick & Cathy Waters.

The Anselmi Family: In memory of our Dad & "Gaga" - Randy Anderson.

Kendra Burnette & Sonia Johnson: In memory of Ron Johnson, Brett Jahnson, and Jason Johnson.

Don Buechler: In memory of Mary Ann Buechler.

Carolyn Cattron: In memory of David Cattron.

Carolyn Cattron: In memory of Lucille Mowery.

Jerry & Judy Deutsch: To give thanks to God for our many blessings!

Tom Dwyer: In memory of Chris Dwyer.

The Erickson & Noard Families: In memory of Auntie.

Janett & Skip Farnam: To give thanks to God for our wonderful family.

Marshall, Karie, Taefyl & Maxhm Freeman: To give thanks to God.

Bob & Rita Fuqua: To celebrate the occasion of Jesus' birth.

The Grom Family: In memory of those that have gone before us.

The Grom Family: To give thanks to God for all blessings God has given us.

Linda Henry: In memory of Wendy Henry.

Linda Henry: In memory of Walt Henry.

Roger & Mary Hull: To give thanks to God for sending His Son to save us.

Lynn Klavon: To give thanks to God.

John & Pat Kohrell: To give thanks to God for the birth of the Savior.

Sylvan & Marta Licht: In memory of loved ones.

Dick & Rogene McMullen: To celebrate the occasion of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Don & Barb Miller: To celebrate the occasion of our Savior's birth.

The Moriarity Family: In memory of Edward "Buz" Jorgensen; Henry & Sarah Jorgensen; Mariah, David & Connie Kuelper; Pat & Myrtle Moriarity; Matthew Moriarity; Walter & Dorothy Kane; Grandpa John Everett; Dennis Everett

Bonnie Myers: In memory of Mike Myers.

Nancy Rice: To give thanks to God for Jesus, my Savior.

Linda Stockton: To give thanks to God.

Brian & Vicki Wahlheim: In memory of our parents - Donald Fleming and Gary & Pat Wahlheim.

Bob & Sherry Wechsler: In memory of Cristopher Wechsler and our parents.

Luke Wells: To give thanks to God for our many blessings.

Thank you for helping to make our sanctuary so beautiful to celebrate our Savior's birth!



Concordia LWML met on Tuesday, December 10. Kathy Kramer opened the meeting with prayer. Prayers included Roger & Mary, Paul & Teri Mosher, Janine Persefield, Reagan Anderson, Barbara Sigwalt, Pat & John Kohrell, Lois Misfeldt, Josh Bieri and missionary Joy in Michigan.

Joyce Dodge was our hostess. Hymn 344, verses 1, 2 & 5. Kathy Kramer led us in a Bible Study of The First Article.

Roll call was taken with answering "What is your favorite name for Jesus?". Minutes were read and approved. Treasurer reported a balance of \$835.84.

We received a thank you card from Josh Bieri. Anniversary cards were sent to Brad & Melody Watters, Sid & Carlene Kemmis, Jim & Sherilyn Wethington, Dean & Diane Depauw, Greg & Juanita Wisely; remembrance cards to Arline Sigwalt & Eileen Eiklor; sympathy cards to Linda Henry & Lois Misfeldt; birthday cards to Carol Kennett, Jadkson Wells & Arline Siqwalt.

If anyone has extra plastic grocery bags please bring them to church as our supply is low. Sign up sheet was sent around. Sarah Hock, Elizabeth Hock & Janea Oaks are new mail box members.

Mite box devotion was read and mikes were collected.

Meeting was adjourned. Our next meeting will be January 14 with a potluck at noon and meeting at 1pm.

Congratulations to our members who will make these marital milestones in January!



7th - David & Joy Noard - 58 years 12th - Robert & Rita Fuqua - 51 years

This is a reminder to 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.

Swaddling Clothes

For those who would like to volunteer the duties are simple - welcoming those who come to utilize our program, having them sign a waiver, and then helping them pack up the items they will take home. There may also be clothes to sort or diapers to count and package. Please consider helping and sign up on the sheet on the Swaddling Clothes bulletin board outside of the nursery! God bless you for your help! Shopping hours will be held on: January 9th from 4:00-7:00 PM and January 25th from 9:00 AM-12:00 PM



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 Brian Wahlheim (Church President) or the church office for more details. Next Voter's Meeting: January 12th - 1:30 PM

REMEMBER: Please contact the office to inform us of any name, address, marital status, email, or phone changes.

Reminder...when you enter 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 Fishbowl for the roof and window loans were so successful, it was decided we would continue with the Fishbowl in the back of the church. We will now use the funds collected to repair our musical equipment, as in our organ.

Updates on the Enhancement projects of our Church Home:

Early in the year, Concordia was blessed with a very generous monetary donation (over \$300,000) designated for nonbudgeted enhancements of our church building and grounds. The Voters have approved numerous projects so far: some have been completed, some are still in process, and some are still being explored. As shared at the October Voter's Meeting, enhancement dollars spent to date is \$50,512. This includes the parsonage fence, door security cameras, utility fence, poured playground surfacing and the climbing wall in the youth room.

We will begin 2025 with new flooring in the entryways, upstairs hallway, two classrooms, and three of our bathrooms with installation beginning January 15th. The updated door system and stairlift will follow.

Throughout the new year we look forward to presenting plans and costs for some of the new ideas that have come forward, including flooring in the Sanctuary, a kitchenette in the sacristy, a few decorative lamp posts outside, updating the kitchen, and an impressive vestibule on the east entry.

Thank you for your patience during this delightful time of renovations. As we are all one family in Christ at Concordia, if you have any ideas for the enhancement of Concordia's buildings and grounds, please share them with the Church Council, trustees or talk to Pastor. We thank God for the generosity of all His servants and the gifts that He gives us!

The Care Committee was recently made aware of our pews being hard to access by some of our senior members. To assist with this, some chairs with arms and good padding were purchased for anyone who needs them. They are located in the back of the sanctuary. By them are two stools to be used as a hymnal holder or as support during communion.

Do you know your Deacon Team?

Each deacon team is assigned a section of the alphabet that covers the last names of members. Please feel free to contact your deacon team with any matters pertaining to the welfare of the congregation!

- A C Shawn Anderson & Brian Wahlheim
- **D** G Mark Ouart & Andy Raschke

- Dick McMullen & Don Miller L - N
- Bill Kramer & Jeremy Dodge **O** - **R**
- Greg Wisely & Derek Drockelman H - K

S - Z Ryan Hull & Kenny Grom

Concordia Middle and High School youth - sign-up today! Higher Things registration is open and filling up fast!

In 2025, we will be going to the All Things New conference at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, MI - July 29-August 1. Contact the office for more details or visit: higherthings.org/events/all-things-new-2025/

Do you have a traditional IRA, SEP IRA, SIMPLE IRA, or retirement plan account and are over the age of 72? Required minimum distributions (RMDs) are the minimum amounts you must withdraw from your retirement accounts each year. Donating your RMD is a qualified charitable distribution. Tax benefits aside, earmarking this income for charity is an easy way to expand your giving portfolio. Prayerfully remember Concordia, the Preschool, or the Academy when an RMD is necessary. Thank you to a member for asking us to mention this. Please contact the office with questions.

A Meal Train has been set up for Concordia member Deb Williams after her return home from surgery. Dates to help are available through January 18th. Delivery time is at 4:00 PM to her condo at Liberty Village - 930 S. Illinois St. Questions? Contact Linda Hull. Visit the following link to sign-up: mealtrain.com/oymm1d

Offering envelopes for 2025 are available for pick-up in the Fellowship Hall.

Circle the Date - January 12th - Noon - Epiphany Youth Event RSVP to Shilpa & Ryan Hull or the office. More details to come - invite your friends and stay tuned!









Funds Status as of December 31, 2024

Approved 2024 budget was \$332,056 Approved 2025 budget is \$346,182

\$ 54,459.66	\$	371,229.59
\$ 42,035.21	\$	329,993.47
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December

Year-to-Date

Please continue to pray for Concordia and the important work planned and approved by the Voters 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.



The Geneseo-Atkinson Food Pantry is open: Mondays 9:00 am to 7:00 pm; Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00 am to 4:00 pm; & Fridays 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. Food is distributed, and donations are gratefully accepted during business hours. We also have collection boxes in the vestibule at Fareway, NOSH, and at Inspire Continuing Care for donations. The Clothing room is open on Monday, Tuesday, & Thursday.

Because of the community's generous support, the Food Pantry provided food and emergency assistance to **385** households in November and provided Thanksgiving baskets for each of these households. Thanks to the many donors who make all this possible!

Do you want to achieve significant life changes and receive help and support setting and reaching your goals? Then the **Five Loaves** program at Geneseo-Atkinson Food Pantry is for you! Call 309-944-3165 or visit geneseofoodpantry.org for more information.

The Food Pantry provided food baskets for Christmas dinner to all guests who received food in December! Many families and individuals are struggling this year, so the food baskets provided relief to their stretched holiday budgets. Thank you to all who contributed food for the Christmas baskets!



Thank you to all who contributed to the Geneseo Communications, Presbyterian Church and Atkinson Fire Department toy drives, and all those who dropped off new toys at the Food Pantry. These toy drives ensured that guests were able to choose free gifts for their children, and



they are thankful for the donations! Fifty-six families received Christmas gifts from donors through the Food Pantry's Holiday Gifts Program. The joy of giving was seen on the faces of the donors, and grateful smiles on the faces of the families picking up their gifts. Thank you to all who made this possible!

The Food Pantry partners with local nurses to provide two **Foot Care Clinics** each month. Nurses soak feet, trim and file toenails, help with ingrown toenails, and give a light foot massage with lotion. Please call 309-944-3165 or email <u>geneseopantry1@gmail.com</u> to make an appointment. Cost is \$37. Food Pantry Guests are provided with a voucher for this service.

Thank you to all 39 volunteers who assist guests in shopping for food, sort donations in the clothing room, pick up donations, pack school supplies bags, sort toys and assist in the Christmas toy room. We appreciate every one of them!



Many thanks to members of area churches who blessed the Food Pantry with Angel Tree gifts! Many needed items were donated along with monetary donations. Many generous donors make it possible for the Food Pantry to help those in need.

Food needs: Cereal, spices, canned fruit, ketchup, mustard (condiments), refried beans, salsa, tortillas, taco shells, enchilada sauce and spaghetti sauce.

Non-food needs: Toilet paper, pull ups training pants, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and denture adhesive. **Clothing room needs**: Fall & cold weather clothing items, hats, gloves, boots, snowpants, men's clothing (all sizes), men's shoes, women's XS clothing, bath towels.



Join Us for Worship at Concordia!

Important Dates to Note:

January 12 - Youth Event - Noon Voter's Assembly - 1:30 PM

January 19 - Life Sunday

January 26-31 - National Lutheran Schools Week

Worship Schedule

Sunday Services - 8:00 AM & 10:30 AM

Sunday School & Adult Bible Study - 9:30 AM

Rev. Stephen M. Mueller, Pastor Parsonage phone (309) 944-2827

Lutheran Hour Ministry Radio Program:

<u>Station</u>	<u>City, State</u>	Freq	Day	<u>Time</u>
WGEN	Kewanee, IL	1500 AM	Sun	5:30 AM
WKEI	Kewanee, IL	1450 AM	Sun	5:30 AM
WGN	Chicago, IL	720 AM	Sun	6:30 AM
WMT	Cedar Rapids, IA	600 AM	Sun	6:30 AM
KCLN	Clinton, IA	1390 AM	Sun	9:30 AM



Updating Prayer List

As we pray continually for all the saints of God and for our Church family, there have been questions, by praying members, wondering how people on our prayer list are doing. Please contact the church office and let us know how the person you asked to be added to the prayer list is doing.

Please continue to pray for:

Concordia Family: Elizabeth Erdman, Chris Grom, Paul Mosher, Jim Yerkey, Jenni DeGerengel, Wendy Grunwald, Roger Hull, Jackson Kinnard, Phil Jahn, Cindy Wagoner, Jon Grunwald, Fama Prokup, Martin Fleming, Sue Smithson, Carol Kennett, Darlene Ball, Julie Kuse, Janine Persefield, Lois Misfeldt, Brad Watters, our inactive members

Friends of Concordia: Jim Garner, Jeff McQuaid, Kathy Remick, Jayson 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, Ed Schulmeister, Stephanie Kursock, Joan McCarron