

Vermont Lutheran Church

Now the Work of Christmas Begins...

The busyness of Christmas has gently faded. The decorating and shopping, the baking and gatherings, the wrapping and unwrapping of gifts—all now lie behind us. With the Feast of the Epiphany on January 4, the Christmas season draws to a close, leaving behind a quiet glow.

In this stillness, my thoughts return to a piece of music our community choir sang in December—*The Work of Christmas*, a choral setting by Dan Forrest, and poem by Howard Thurman.

Howard Thurman, a professor, pastor, and civil rights leader, and a mentor to Martin Luther King Jr., wrote this poem in 1948. Its words continue to speak with clarity and urgency today, reminding us that Christmas is not an ending, but a beginning.

At Christmas, we welcome the incarnate God, the Prince of Peace, into our world. And as followers of Christ, we are invited to walk the path he walked: to bind up the brokenhearted, to bring good news to the poor, and to proclaim liberty to the captives. In this kingdom, mercy, justice, and love quietly take root. Now, as the glow of Christmas lingers and the days grow ordinary again, we remember that the work of Christmas is only just beginning.

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.*

*"The Work of Christmas" is from Howard Thurman's *The Mood of Christmas and Other Celebrations**

by Janet Dahl

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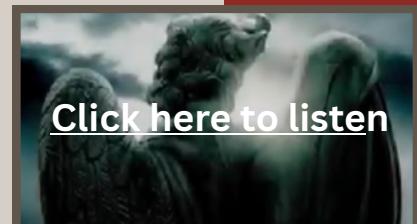
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[Click here to listen](#)



PRESIDENT: Peter Antonie
VICE-PRESIDENT: Debbie Krebs
SECRETARY: Tracy Yaktus
TREASURER: Karsten Haugen
MEMBERS: Nancy Berkas, Jamie Hallick, Andrew Lonsdale, Frannie Parrell
YOUTH MEMBER: Luke Herrling

From The President's Desk, January 2026

Peter Antonie

Happy New Year!! We say that to our friends, family, neighbors, business associates, and to almost everyone at this time of year. And we mean it. My wish, hope and expectation are that 2026 will be a happier year for you and us as a congregation.

Transitions: As 2025 ended, several tasks that keep our day-to-day operations running smoothly and efficiently experienced transitions.

Tracy Yaktus, who has been a ball of energy and new ideas for getting the word out about Vermont Church, decided that she would step down as our Social Media Coordinator, chairperson of the Visibility and Marketing team, and secretary of the Council. Tracy and her husband, Mike, spend the winter in Arizona and Tracy decided that when they return, she wants to spend more time with her father and take him to church at St. Luke's, in Middleton. We'll miss Tracy and fully understand her need to be with her father as well as attending to her mother who has her own health care needs. Please keep Tracy and her family in your prayers.

I am happy to report that Ellie Boebel has agreed to become our new Social Media Coordinator, replacing Tracy, effective January 1st. Ellie is well suited for the position, especially since she performed some of the social media duties last spring.

In addition, Jamie Hanson recently joined the Visibility and Marketing team and stepped right in to take over the chairperson's role. Jamie's day job is marketing, and he has lots of good ideas for how to use marketing strategies to grow our membership, especially to attract younger people with families.

Finally, to fill Tracy's position as secretary for the council, that will be addressed at the first meeting of the new council after our annual meeting when the new officers are elected by the council, including the role of secretary.

Another position that has been open since late summer is our bookkeeper. Joanie Haugen, our Financial Secretary, has been ably filling in. Effective January 1st, Debbie Krebs has accepted the position and will be our bookkeeper going forward.

Annual Meeting: I encourage you to attend and participate in our annual meeting on Sunday, January 18th in the fellowship hall immediately following worship service. We will present several options for our 2026 budget, review the reports from our teams and committees, and discuss how we plan to fill the current void of not having a pastor. Printed copies of the annual report will be available at the church January 4th for you to review in advance.

Council (cont.)

END OF YEAR REMINDERS...

DECEMBER 31: Year-End Giving. Thank you for your ongoing generosity throughout the year. If you would like to make a year-end contribution, please note that all gifts must be received in the church office or postmarked by December 31 to be recorded on your 2025 giving statement. Contributions may be made by check, through our online giving portal, or dropped off at the church. We are deeply grateful for your support.



Vermont Lutheran Church Monthly Financial Report November 30, 2025

11/30/2025 FINANCIAL REPORT

Contributions

Monthly	\$ 9,241.00	\$ 16,350.00	\$ (7,109.00)
YTD	\$189,959.00	\$179,850.00	\$ 10,109.00

Operating Expenses

Monthly	\$ 13,825.00	\$ 28,103.33	\$ (14,278.33)
YTD	\$237,682.00	\$309,136.63	\$ (71,454.63)
	\$ (47,723.00)	\$ (129,286.63)	

Worship

January Service Teams

Thank you for assisting with worship. If you are unable to serve on your designated Sunday, please find a replacement and inform the office (vermontoffice@vermontlutheran.org).

	JANUARY 4	JANUARY 11	JANUARY 18	JANUARY 25
ASSISTING MINISTER	Klover Schafer	Laura Winchip	Joel Oines	Peter Antonie
GREETERS/ USHERS	Jim Herrling Stuart Dybdahl	Dennis Schafer Bruce Case Bob Johnson	Steve Holzhueter Jon & Margaret Kann	Nancy Berkas Kristin Oines
READER	Laura Winchip	Tee Parrell	Larry Ziemer	Joanie Haugen
COMMUNION PREP	Paul Dybdahl	N/A	Larry & Pat Ziemer	N/A
HOSPITALITY	Anna Herman Stuart & Krista Dybdahl Janet Dahl	Klover Schafer Gale Kennedy Sue Case	Pat Ziemer Julie Endres Jon & Margaret Kann	Eric & Joanie Haugen Kristin Oines
MUSICIAN				
ALTAR	Bonnie Dauck Sue Schaub	Bonnie Dauck Sue Schaub	Bonnie Dauck Sue Schaub	Bonnie Dauck Sue Schaub

The Lectionary Cycle



The lectionary provides a three-year series of readings for Sunday starting with the season of Advent, four weeks before Christmas Day. For each Sunday and festival, three readings and a psalm are suggested and include: a Gospel reading, an Old Testament reading, and a New Testament reading. Each year of the Revised Common Lectionary centers on one of the synoptic Gospels — Matthew, Mark and Luke.

With Advent, we began Year A of the three year lectionary cycle focusing on the Gospel of Matthew. Second readings are drawn from the New Testament letters, including Romans, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians.

The Christmas season then runs from December 24, 2025, through January 6, 2026.

Epiphany is observed on Tuesday, January 6, marking the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of the Time after Epiphany.

The first Sunday after Epiphany, the Baptism of Our Lord, is January 11. This season emphasizes the manifestation of Christ and uses white or gold liturgical colors.

The Time after Epiphany continues from January 7 through February 17, 2026.

Sunday School

2025 culminated with 13 children participating in our Christmas Pageant, three confirmands and ten Sunday School students. In this program, the children taught two harried shoppers the true meaning of Christmas. See the pictures on the next page of the joy on the children's faces as they shared the story.

We're excited to welcome the children back to Sunday School after the Christmas break! Throughout January, we'll be learning about Jesus' childhood.

Upcoming Dates

January 4 thru January 25 – Jesus' Childhood

February 1- Share in Worship what was learned and start February lessons

Sunday School is available for all children ages 3 through 5th grade, and we are delighted to welcome each child into a caring and supportive learning environment. Parents or older siblings are more than welcome to attend alongside their child, especially for our younger students, if having a familiar face nearby helps them feel more comfortable, secure, and ready to participate in class activities. Our goal is to make Sunday School a positive and encouraging experience for every child.

Sunday School Pageant



Vermont Sunday School
present their Christmas
Pageant during worship...

There's More to the Story



Teams



Our winter clothing drives continues through January 4th.

As you prepare for the new year, now is a great time to go through those closets and share your new and gently used winter gear with those in need. All donations will be given to either Madison Area Jail Ministry or Heights Unlimited.



Piece It Together!

The 3rd Annual Jigsaw Puzzle Contest Is Back



Ready to put your puzzling skills to the test? Our 3rd Annual Jigsaw Puzzle Contest kicks off December 26 and runs through February 22—plenty of time to enjoy some cozy, piece-by-piece fun. Now's the perfect moment to start warming up!

Winners will be announced on Sunday, March 1, during Fellowship Hour, so be sure to stick around and celebrate with us. Get ready to puzzle your way into friendly competition. See the next page for more information.



Teams (cont)

THE PUZZLE PLAYBOOK

WHEN? December 26, 2025-February 20, 2026

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE? Anyone interested can participate.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

1. Pick up Registration Card at Puzzle Display..
2. You can choose to partner with others or puzzle solo.
Use one card whether one or more puzzlers working on same puzzle.
3. Record each puzzle completed. Verify with photo or voucher.
4. Puzzles can be from Vermont Lutheran Puzzle Library or from another source.
5. Return Card to Vermont Lutheran by February 25.

*You may drop off at church or mail it to
Vermont Lutheran Church
9886 Vermont Church Road
Black Earth, WI 53515*

**Winners will be announced on Sunday, March 1 in
Fellowship Hall at 10:30 am**

HOW DO I OR WE WIN?

The judges will give weight in their decision to:

1. the number of puzzles completed.
2. the size of the puzzle (# of pieces)
3. the age bracket of the participant

ARE THERE PRIZES?

YES Winners in the various Age Brackets

Will win FABULOUS PRIZES!

And Every participant will get Recognition!



This gorgeous organ console now resides in Bruce's shop, where he is carefully installing the electronics that will allow the console to "talk" to the pipes. We expect the pipes to arrive in late January, and with them comes growing anticipation and gratitude. As the psalmist proclaims, *"Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!"* Soon, new breath and sound will fill our sanctuary, lifting hearts and voices in joyful song.

Teams (cont)

A New Year in God's Care

Numbers 6:24-26

"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."

As we begin a new year together, January invites us to reflect, renew and recommit to caring for our whole health—body, mind, and spirit. My hope is that this year we continue walking together in faith, caring for one another with compassion and practical love.

Cold temperatures, shorter days, and icy roads can affect our health in many ways. Please keep these **winter wellness tips** in mind:

- *Prevent falls:* Wear sturdy footwear, take small steps on ice, and use handrails when available. Keep walkways well-lit and sanded.
- *Stay warm:* Dress in layers and protect hands, feet, and head when outdoors. If you are concerned about home heating or insulation, please reach out—help may be available.
- *Hydration matters:* Even in winter, our bodies need fluids. Warm drinks like water, tea, or broth can help.
- *Check on one another:* A phone call or short visit can mean so much, especially during winter isolation.

For some January can feel quiet and sometimes lonely. It is okay to acknowledge feelings of sadness, stress, or fatigue. God meets us in every season.

If you or someone you love is experiencing:

- Persistent sadness or anxiety
- Trouble sleeping
- Loss of interest in usual activities

Please know you are not alone. Support, prayer, and resources are available. I am happy to listen and help connect you with care.

Please join me in prayer—

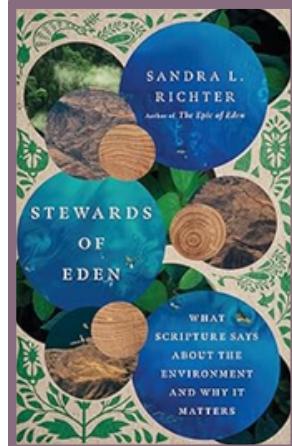
Lord, guide us as we begin this new year, bless our homes, our families, and our church. Grant us safety through winter roads, strength for daily work, and hearts ready to care for one another. Grant us wisdom to care for our bodies, peace to calm our minds, and faith to trust in your healing presence. May our congregation continue to be a place of refuge, hope, and healing. Amen.

If you have questions, concerns, or would like a visit, please reach out.

in His service,

Hannah Clingman
Faith Community LPN
PH- (608) 400-7038

Happenings Around Vermont



Book Club: Stewards of Eden

The January Vermont Book Club will be reading Sandra Richter's *Stewards of Eden: What Scripture Says About the Environment and Why It Matters*.

Sandra L. Richter cares about the Bible. She also cares about creation. An expert in ancient Israelite society and economy as well as biblical theology, she walks readers through passages familiar and not-so-familiar, showing how significant environmental theology is to the Bible's witness. She then calls Christians to apply that message to today's environmental concerns. Here's a [video](#) of her speaking about the topic of her book.

We will meet Monday, Jan. 26, 2026 in The Gathering Place to discuss. All are welcome. Please contact Kristin Oines for more information.

With Grateful Thanks ❤️ CIA Food Pantry Delivery

Many thanks to the generous hearts at Vermont! Your recent delivery of baking supplies was a true blessing to CIA Food Pantry clients, helping families create warm, nourishing moments during the season.

Your kindness makes a meaningful difference, and we are deeply grateful.



🎄 A Joyful Christmas Tradition! 🎄

The third annual Christmas Breakfast at Base Camp was once again a resounding success! With delicious food, warm fellowship, and plenty of laughter, the morning truly captured the spirit of the season. Good food and good company made the day bright.

Mission Meatball Dinner-- served by men of VLC.

Mark your calendar! Everyone is invited to attend the Mission Meatball Dinner - served by men of the church on Sunday, **February 15, 2026**. This is a free-will donation fund raiser for the ongoing mission outreach of the congregation. There is one seating, at 11:30 AM, for 100 diners. Enjoy a dinner of Norwegian meatballs, lefse, potatoes, beans, dessert and plenty of hospitality.

Reservations should be made by calling Peter Antonie (608 767-2641) or sign up at church.



Happenings Around Vermont

CABIN FEVER RELIEVER

LET THE SPARKS FLY

January 25, 2026, 6:30 pm

Is it time to get an Electric Car? This presentation will look at the development of Electric Cars and their expanding sales. It also includes the current worldwide manufacture and use of Electric cars as well as the Environmental impact and related considerations.

Finally, we'll talk about the other trade-offs when considering a purchase. As a bonus, there will be a discussion of "Robo-taxis" and other Self Driving Cars.



❤️ Thank You for Making a Difference! ❤️

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who collected can tabs for Ronald McDonald House Charities.



On December 22, 7.5 pounds of tabs were delivered—a meaningful contribution that truly adds up. We'll continue collecting tabs and plan to deliver them twice a year. Each tab contains more aluminum than the can itself, making every small piece a valuable gift. While we were there, two families checked into the house before taking their child to Children's Hospital and personally thanked us for the donation—a powerful reminder that even simple acts of generosity can bring comfort and hope. Thank you for being part of this kindness.

🍂 Woodlands Update: A Season of Renewal 🌳

With the leaves off the trees, winter is the perfect time to hike our trails and see the exciting work taking place in the Woodlands. Recent forestry clearing has removed unwanted trees and invasive species such as black locust and honeysuckle, allowing mature oaks to stand out and revealing signs of a remnant oak savannah beneath the canopy.

In the coming seasons, the cleared understory will be planted with prairie grasses and wildflowers, helping restore the Woodland to its original, vibrant ecosystem. Bundle up, take a walk, and enjoy a glimpse of renewal in progress.

Community

Month at a Glance

QUILTING 1 st & 3 rd Monday's, 8:30 am
CHOIR Wednesday's, 6:30 pm
YOGA Thursday's, 10:00 am
CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED Dec. 30 & Jan 1
CONFIRMATION CLASS January 4, 10:45 am
QTLY TEAM/COMMITTEE MEETING January 4, 10:45 am
CONFIRMATION CLASS January 18, 10:45 am
ANNUAL MEETING January 18, 10:45 am
COUNCIL MEETING January 25, 10:45 am
CABIN FEVER RELIEVER January 25, 6:30 pm
BOOK CLUB January 26, 2:00 pm
SUNDAY SCHOOL In Worship February 1, 9:30 am

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

January 01	Jane	Mickelson
January 01	Henry	Olsen
January 03	Jude	Powers-Orth
January 06	Cora	Hanson
January 08	Susan	Schaub
January 12	Peter	Jones
January 14	Richard	Johnson
January 16	Cara	Boebel
January 20	Joanie	Haugen
January 20	Nancy	Berkas
January 21	Bob	Johnson
January 22	Ashlee	Adler
January 23	Angela	Humphrey
January 23	Candy	Severson
January 24	Amanda	Hefty
January 26	Reed	Adler
January 27	Jamie	Hallick
January 28	Gregory	Herrling
January 31	Kristin	Antonie

May God bless you this day with joy, peace, and deep assurance of love.

May the year ahead be filled with grace and light. Amen.

PRAYER CHAIN REQUESTS

Prayer requests are received by Laura Winchip.
Please text/call prayer requests to (563) 940-8468.



Have you ever heard a whisper?

“Hello!”

Can you all whisper back to me?

Whispers are quiet, gentle, almost like a secret. You have to lean in close to hear them. And I wonder if it's possible for the heavens to whisper at Christmas?

One silent night, far away, in a town called Bethlehem, the stars twinkled brighter than ever. And the angels were there, too. It was as if the whole sky was whispering: “Something wonderful is happening ...”

Despite hearing no more carols on the radio or seeing no more Christmas specials on television, we can continue celebrating Christmas and our Lord's coming to earth many more days.

If you haven't heard Bishop Curry's Christmas children's message, describing the night when Jesus was born...

Listen here: <https://www.facebook.com/reel/2481691322225653>

Can you think of one kind thing you could whisper to someone this week?

So, this Christmas, listen closely. The heavens are still whispering:

“Jesus is here. God loves you. Share that love with the world.”

Let's all whisper together: “Jesus is here.”

Now say “God loves us” in a joyful voice! Amen.

Merry Christmas
from **Living
Lutheran**

Visit livinglutheran.org/create-account and sign up for your free digital membership today to stay connected with unforgettable stories of God's people living their faith.



Contacts



OFFICE

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Peter Antonie

BOOKKEEPER

Debbie Krebs

CHOIR DIRECTOR

Laura Winchip

CUSTODIAN

Bo Olson

ANNOUNCEMENTS & NEWSLETTER ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

If you would like an announcement included in Sunday's bulletin or the weekly e-mail (News From the Pews), please e-mail it to the church office by 8:00 am on Wednesday. Announcements should be brief (a couple sentences) and will run for two weeks, unless space allows for longer.

Longer articles should be submitted to the church office by the **25th of each month** for publication in the Newsletter.

Late submissions will be included in the next issue.

The church office will be closed from December 23 - January 6.

CHURCH LINKS



Donate and Support our ministry

JANUARY CALENDAR of EVENTS



28	29	30	31	1	2	3
9:30 am, Worship Service 4 pm, Reservation	AA Meeting		6:30 pm Choir	Reservation		AA Meeting
9:30 am, Worship Service 10:45 am Confirmation Class 10:45 am, Quarterly Team/Committee Meeting	8:30 am, Quilting AA Meeting	6	7 6:30 pm Choir	8 Reservation	9	10 AA Meeting
9:30 am, Worship Service	AA Meeting	13	14 6:30 pm Choir	15 Reservation	16	17 Reservation AA Meeting
9:30 am, Worship Service 10:30 am, Annual Meeting 10:45 am Confirmation Class	8:30 am, Quilting AA Meeting	20	21 6:30 pm Choir	22 Reservation	23	24 AA Meeting
9:30 am, Worship Service 10:45 am, Council Meeting 6:30 pm, Cabin Fever Reliever	2:00 pm, Book Club AA Meeting	27	28 6:30 pm Choir	29 Reservation	30	31 AA Meeting

You can find the calendar on the [website 'Events Calendar'](#). If you need contact information for Vermont's members, please remember you can always go the '['Members'](#) Tab on the church's website. Here you will find church contacts as well as member contacts. We have almost complete updating this section. If you need help or have questions, please reach out to the church office.