

# THE MESSENGER



*From the Pastor's desk...*

## Finding New Direction

Churches that want to find new direction must begin with discerning that call. As Christians we must understand that we do not provide direction for ourselves. Direction is given by God through his call and will for us. Therefore the question for new direction is not, "Where do we want to go in our ministry?" Rather the question is, "Where is God leading our ministry?" Revelation 21:5 And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" Mark 10:27 Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God."



New direction requires being faithful. Being faithful is: Placing God first in all things, seeking God's will and doing it, showing up in weekly worship, praying daily, reading God's Word, following God's commands, giving to the church cheerfully, (tithing) sharing God's love, participating in community, and finally repenting of our unfaithfulness.

In the coming months, I will offer small group opportunities for open and candid conversations regarding the vision and mission of Fisher and Bygland Parish. As the body of Christ we have a responsibility to insure that we are living out our faithfulness and our institutional responsibility.

Instead of asking each other, "What do you think?" We will be asking, "Where do we sense God is leading?" This type of communication creates ownership by the whole congregation based on God's leading rather than personalities or personal agendas.

We will be looking at the big picture of being church together. Individual problems are often symptomatic of a larger, more comprehensive problem.

For example: Individual Problem: Not enough money. The Spiritual Problem: Few (if any) are tithing. Comprehensive Problem: Faithfulness (not just in tithing, but in all things) As we address the comprehensive issue, the individual issues will be addressed.

I am eager to engage with the Parish membership to discern how we can be church together at such a time as this.

Sharing Christ's Service, Pastor Gretchen Enoch

## Bygland Lutheran Church Sunday School NEWS



Our Sunday school year is moving right along here at Bygland Lutheran Church. All of the new and returning students arrived this fall with smiling faces and open hearts, ready to be filled with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Our Rally Sunday coincided with “God’s Work, Our Hands” Sunday on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025. The students received a special blessing of their back packs during the church service and were given a back pack tag with the Bible verse John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,”* printed on it. During class, we explained the verse to the children in that God’s love is for everyone, no matter where they live, what they look like, or what they’ve done. God loves us all. Since God loves us so much, he gave us the ultimate gift of his Son and trusting Him and accepting His love means we will have a forever home with God. Doesn’t it feel good to know that God loves us? We encouraged the kids to practice showing their love to others by sharing with others, helping others in need, and forgiving others. *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ forgave you.”*

Our September and October days were filled with classroom curriculum (the heart of our Lutheran identity) which included preschoolers learning about their Lutheran Church; our first graders learning about the Lord’s Prayer; our third graders learning about Martin Luther and the Apostles Creed; and our fourth & fifth graders learning about the Sacraments, the Ten Commandments, and exploring worship. Our newest preschooler, Cooper Kahl, received his preschool Bible and our third graders, Emma Hansen & Kyah Kahl, received their study Bibles on Sunday, September 21, 2025.

As October arrived, our Sunday school service projects continued to take shape. Each family, along with the congregation, were invited to participate in our Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Collection (where participants prepare a shoebox filled with items for a child in need of hope and good news) and in the giving a non-perishable food item donation to the East Grand Forks Food Shelf. Our collection items were shared with the congregation during the worship service on Sunday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025 for consideration and prayer prior to them being taken to their respective collection centers. For our final Sunday in October, students were given the chance to celebrate their generous hearts and compassionate hands with a special “Campfire Party.” This included gathering around the campfire, a game of “would you rather,” an opening story about the Apostle Paul, a scavenger hunt; eating s’more snacks, and viewing a Samaritan’s Purse story about Christmas Shoeboxes.

In November the students spent the month collecting spare change for the ELCA World Hunger Campaign by filling ELCA Good Gifts piggy banks. The students chose to use their collected funds to buy a flock of chicks, a goat, and a piglet. The recipients of these gifts can in turn use these sustainable gifts for much needed income. What a difference one little chick or piglet can make! They also readied themselves in November for the coming of the Advent season by decorating a class-wide nativity scene advent calendar. This also gave us opportunities to talk about how sustainable “Good Gifts” support global efforts on ending hunger and poverty.

In December, the students shared the Christmas message through a program entitled “Peace has Come.” This was a message told through the perspective of the donkey traveling along with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. This was our first interactive program where the audience was invited to help us tell the story of Jesus’ birth through music, props, and joyful participation. From the first note to the final glow of candlelight, this was a night to remember – full of wonder, peace, and celebration. The students and the audience did an amazing job! We were so happy to find the Prince of Peace together, along with you! Jesus is the reason for the season!



As a Sunday school we are looking forward to the New Year and are anticipating all the God has planned for us.

We would like to take time to thank all of those involved withing our congregation who lead and participate in our child and youth programming: our **Board of Education:** Kent & Holly Wavra, Jeff Millar, Becky Egeland, and Laura Wurden; **Teaching Staff:** Jeff Millar, Danielle & Sidney Brundin, Crystal Kahl, Laura Wurden, and Holly Wavra; **Substitute Teachers:** Laura Arnold & Becky Egeland; **Youth Group Committee:** Eric & Becky Egeland and Kent & Holly Wavra; **Easter Breakfast Coordinators:** Troy & Patty Pecka; and Sunday school parents, Pastor Gretchen Enoch and all congregational members, for their continued support.

## Christmas Greetings from your missionary in West and Central Africa

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Grace and peace to you. I pray that you are all in good health as we wait with hope for the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I greet you this time from Montana, where I am spending time with my family. I have been here on a leave of absence since October and, God willing, I will return to Cameroon in March to continue serving as the ELCA Regional Representative for West and Central Africa.

During this season, I am enjoying precious time with family and friends. Micah has been very active in cross country, and it has been a joy for me to attend different meets and watch him run. Until last month, Anne and I were driving him to school, but now that he has earned his driver's license, he is driving us around instead—fun indeed!

So far, winter has been relatively mild here in Helena, Montana. I am trying to keep warm while waiting for the real winter to arrive. A few days ago, strong winds swept across the state, causing significant destruction and leaving many trees down. In some areas, power outages lasted several hours.

In Cameroon, we also experience strong winds—usually at the beginning and end of the rainy season. Every year, these winds leave behind difficult memories for many people, much like what we have seen here.

Being in the United States at this time of year has led me to reflect on the meaning of waiting and how it is experienced differently across the world. In Cameroon, we wait for seasons, and their arrival is marked by changes in nature. When I was growing up in my village, Laan (Lassin), we knew the dry season was near when dragonflies appeared. Soon after, ashes would fill the sky—a sign that people were burning fields and countryside so new grass could grow for cattle, or carrying out controlled burning around villages to protect homes and property.

Here in the U.S., I observe that while Christians wait for the coming of the Savior, the entire country also waits for weather—weather that comes and goes,

sometimes leaving behind difficult memories, just as it does elsewhere in the world.

The coming of Christ was witnessed both by people in the East and by those in Bethlehem. The good news is that He came for everyone, bringing Good News for all, and He left us with that same Good News while promising to come again. That is why we wait in joyful hope for His return.

May His coming this time bring the most wonderful memories for you and your loved ones.



*From left to right: Mary, Willie, Micah, Anne, Neal*



*You must cut a life tree from the forest to become a real Montanan*

Merry Christmas,

Willie Langdji, ELCA Regional Representative, West and Central Africa.



**We are currently looking to fill the Parish Secretary Position.**

**Jami will be done at the end of December.**

## **PARISH NEWS**

**Fisher Bygland Parish**

**Church Secretary/Administrative Assistant**

**Job Type:** Part-time/non-exempt

Approx 15-20 hours/week

Flexible schedule; Monday – Thursday preferred with some hours end of week for printing bulletin

**Purpose:** Primary function is to provide support for all activities of the church as well as support services for the Pastor, and Congregation Council members as needed. Additionally provide a welcoming, confidential, and positive environment for all visitors to the church.

**Duties include, not limited to:**

- Edit and prepare weekly bulletins, livestream template, and other documents as requested, with the support of the Pastor. Mail out to home bound parishioners and adequately prepare for Sunday worship services (deliver to Bygland).
- Verify music copy rights.
- Send readers/confirmation students the readings and visiting Pastor when needed.
- Update Pastor's worship binder, include copy of bulletin & large print Lector reading at lectern.
- Answer the phone and check voice mail, forwarding or handling messages as needed.
- Prepare and produce monthly newsletter and calendar; update on church website and mail out to those that have requested. Communicate for weekly email.
- Send email for communicating information to church members on an as needed basis.
- Perform general office work; maintain supplies and various files; assist in keeping records and compile these into periodic or occasional reports. Accuracy and attention to detail is a must.
- Keep calendar of appointments, building use, church activities, etc. Schedule building usage and key checkout/admittance following church policies. Schedule use of buildings by community/outside groups.
- Order materials or supplies; occasionally pick up supplies.
- Coordinate call 'em all.
- Distribute mail to Fisher and Bygland, as appropriate.
- Maintain the church mailing and emailing lists in ICON. Check email and respond as necessary.
- Balance and pay bills for parish and parsonage accounts, including reimbursing Pastor expenses. Keeping accurate and detailed records in the ICON system.
- Prepare documents and assemble for council and congregational meetings. Attend all congregational meetings and joint council meetings. Attendance is requested at quarterly council meetings throughout the year, at a minimum.
- Maintain and manage congregational membership records (baptismal, marriage, 1<sup>st</sup> Communion, and confirmation certificates and see that all such ministerial acts are registered in the permanent records of the church.
- Record weekly attendance in book and ICON.
- Notify the property committee chair of any building issues. Schedule cleanings, inspections, repairs, piano, tuning, etc. as needed with property committee chair and appropriate vendor.

**Accountability:** Position is under the immediate supervision of the Pastor and ultimately responsible to the congregational council. An executive committee and the Pastor will meet annually to review performance.

**Qualifications:** Strong computer skills. Proficiency in Microsoft windows, excel, email systems, and the ability to update the parish website. Must have general knowledge of all office equipment and supplies, along with a willingness to further that training. Must possess good communication and organizational skills. Must be able to deal with various types of personalities, both on the phone and in person, in a professional manner. Must be able to work independently, managing work and communications flexibly.

### A note a thanks from Fisher Public School

Fisher/Bygland Lutheran Church members,

Thank you for your generous monetary gift that you donated to the Fisher School Backpack Program. The need for the program continues to grow. We appreciate your support which helps us sustain the program.

Our Backpack Program provides students in need with nutritional food during the school year. This allows students to have food over the weekend and return on Monday mornings ready to learn.

Donations like yours allows us to provide for all students referred to the program.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR HELP!

Kristi Bruer/Backpack Coordinator

## About Jesus

A Y L O R D O B M E W E N I V J K S W C  
R B E L I E V E T D D U Q Z E F S U A M  
I V J V R S I J G C M D W X O M F S Y W  
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- JESUS
- SAVIOUR
- HELPER
- CROSS
- RESURRECTION
- VINE
- WAY
- LOVE
- CREATOR

- MESSIAH
- HEALER
- FRIEND
- SINS
- LIGHT
- FIRST
- TRUTH
- BELIEVE
- RIGHTEOUSNESS

- KING
- FORGIVENESS
- LORD
- TEACHER
- GATE
- LAST
- LIFE
- LEADER