

January 2026

# The GOOD NEWS



Monthly Newsletter for Faith Lutheran Church and St. John's Lutheran Church-Hamburg

## *Time Is A Passing Gift From God*

The Bible teaches us that God has allotted us a certain number of days and as the Bible says in Psalm 90:12 "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." And Psalm 31:15 "My times are in Your hands".

### **What Is A Waste of Time? – Worry**

Jesus teaches that worrying is a waste of time and energy. Matthew 6:27 "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

In Luke 10:40-42 - the story of Mary and Martha, the Bible teaches that in a crazy, hectic, and a world fraught with frustrations it is important to faithfully take quiet time with God. God's Word and prayer. It will give you the strength to go through all things that your time in this life will throw out at you. In Luke 5:16, we read "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

### **What Is Not A Waste Of Time?**

#### **A. Prayer**

A prayer that I need to pray is for God to help me with the constant challenges of balancing time of work, and family and friends. Remember a father's

*that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed us in us." And 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light*

and mother's love, as well as any other relationship, is spelled T.I.M.E.

We all need to ask ourselves - am I using my time to the best of my ability?

#### **B. Praise**

Above all, I can take time to praise God because of the time that Christ spent here on earth and suffered so much for me. I can praise God for the time He bowed His head in death for me. I can praise God for the time He took His very first breath on Easter morning. Because of those moments in time, we know for sure that all our sins have been paid for, and sin, death, and devil have finally lost and have no lasting hold on us.

#### **C. Remembering Context**

Finally, for this newsletter article, we must understand everything that happens in our lifetime is in the context of eternity. If you are going through trying times, all of it must be calculated with reality that all this too shall pass and there is real joy in the gift of Eternal Life through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In Romans 8:18, the Holy Spirit teaches so beautifully through the Apostle Paul, "*I consider momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*"

At the beginning of 2026, I would encourage you to pray this prayer:

### **The New Year**

*Dear Lord,  
As this new year is born  
I give it to Thy hand,  
Content to walk by faith  
What paths I cannot understand.*

*Whatever coming days may bring  
Of bitter loss, or gain,  
Or every crown of happiness;  
Should sorrow come, or pain.*

*Or, Lord, if all unknown to me  
Thine angel hovers near  
To bear me to that farther shore  
Before another year,*

*It matters not - my hand in Thine,  
Thy light upon my face,  
Thy boundless strength when I am weak,  
Thy love and saving grace!*

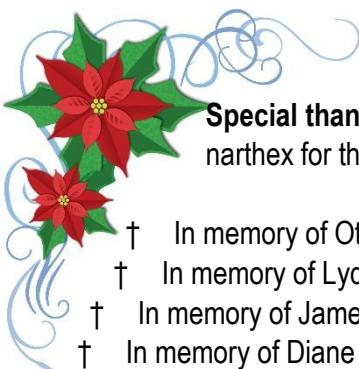
*I only ask, loose not my hand,  
Grip fast my soul, and be  
My guiding light upon the path  
Till, blind no more, I see! ~ M. S. Nicholson*

May God always be with you, richly blessing you at all times, with an everlasting saving faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Your Shepherd under Christ, *Pastor Don Love*



## *Poinsettias*



**Special thanks to all who supported the Poinsettia Fund to help decorate the Faith sanctuary and narthex for the Advent and Christmas season.**

- † In memory of Otto and Selma Porath from the Mark Porath family
- † In memory of Lydia Goetsch from James Goetsch
- † In memory of James Schlueter from Judy Schlueter
- † In memory of Diane Calmes Ostrowski and Geneva Calmes from Joe Calmes and Gayle Klotzbuecher
- † In memory of Harold Rusch from Joyce Rusch
- † In memory of Lloyd and Doris Grueneberg and Leonard and Lavine Woller, and in honor of Lillie and Steven's engagement and upcoming wedding from the Leon Bartelt family
- † In memory of Bruce and Judy Schield with love from daughter Sarah and Matt Thomas, Ben, Madison, Nate and Owen
- † In honor of Mary Bolder and her friend Karen Love from Dale and Linda Janisch
- † In memory of Cindy Luedtke from Tim and Vickie Bartelt
- † In memory of Bruce Hein from Carol Hein
- † In memory of Norman and Mabel Marquardt from children, grandchildren and great grandchildren
- † In memory of Cindy Salzman from Sherrie White
- † In thankfulness for the blessings of the season from Chris and Debbie Stogbauer
- † In honor of the Newborn King, several gifts from anonymous givers



# A “New” You in Jesus

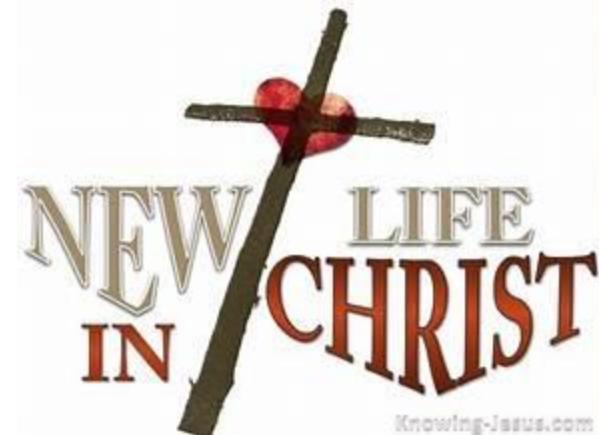
*“And he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new. Also, He said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true’ (Revelation 21:5).*

In January there is a great deal of “new” talk. Parties are held to ring in the “new” year. “New” year’s resolutions are made to set a “new” course of life in the “new” year. There is date forgetfulness as checks and other forms are filled out without using the “new” year on the dateline.

We use all this “new” talk because there is very often so much wrong with the old in us. We think back to the “new” resolutions from the previous year that only lasted a few weeks. That “new” person did not shed any pounds and instead, picked up a few. The “new” habits of going to the gym were soon replaced by even more time on the couch binging on Netflix. The “new” person who does not lose their temper, use sarcasm as a lethal weapon and spend more money than necessary, but who worships, prays and serves the Lord and the neighbor, never seemed to stick around. We need “new” talk because the Old Adam is alive and well within every one of us.

But this promise of “new” is a matter of stewardship. It is the Lord Himself who makes the promise of all things being new. These words recorded by St. John are not pious wishes or hopeless promises. They do what they say. YOU, that one baptized into Jesus’ death and resurrection, are NEW! These words are indeed trustworthy and true. This “new” comes to you in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It comes free of charge, even without our prayer.

This stewardship of “new” is not a vague, someday kind of stewardship either. You are NEW now! Forgiven. Reborn from above. The old is gone, nailed to Calvary’s cross and buried and rotting in a tomb that was only borrowed by Jesus for His resurrection rest. The Gospel is what makes us NEW every morning. Remembering your baptism, you are new. Confessing your sins and receiving absolution makes you new. Hearing the Gospel filling your ears makes you new. Feasting on Christ’s body and blood in the Holy Supper makes you new.



These mercies, totally undeserved as they are, are entrusted to us to steward TODAY even as we long for the Last Day. But we know how often we fail in this stewardship. We hoard God’s creation as if it belongs to us. We belittle and devalue our neighbor because they look or sound or act in a way that we do not like. We seek to make the Holy Word of God softer and more palatable for those, or even ourselves, who refuse to confess sin as sin and repent. We value our comfort over truth, our reputation over faithfulness and our treasure over making sure that people get to hear of the Jesus who has done so much for the world and us.

We, as stewards of the Gospel, need to be made new every day. This is exactly what the Lord does. We failed in stewardship of the Gospel last year, so He gives us a new year. We failed in stewardship of the Gospel yesterday, and He gives us a new day. We failed in stewardship of the Gospel in the last few minutes, and yet in mercy our newness comes with each tick of the clock! Because that is how the Lord works.

As we see this working of all new things in us, it then calls us to be stewards of this newness to the world. This starts right in our own homes. It radiates out to our neighbors. It beams out from our congregations. This newness is teamed at the circuit, district and Synod levels all to shine the newness of the Gospel to those who need it.

Your new talk starts in the newness of the Gospel. Steward this treasure in this new year and this new day. It starts with a new you in Jesus. This is indeed trustworthy and true.

# Faith Lutheran Church

15425 South County Road K

Church e-mail: [faithmerrillwi@gmail.com](mailto:faithmerrillwi@gmail.com)

Merrill, WI 54452

Church website: [faithlutheranmerrill.com](http://faithlutheranmerrill.com)

## Pastor Donald Love

Office Phone 715-536-5443  
Home Phone 715-722-0540  
Cell Phone 715-350-3871

## Pastor's Office Hours

Mon. and Tues: Home  
Wednesday: Faith  
Thursday: St. John's

## Church Office Hours

Tues. and Thurs. 9 a.m.-12 noon  
Mon., Wed., and Fri. varies

## Emergency Contacts

Terry Seidler 715-536-9742 (home)  
715-203-5736 (cell)

## ALTAR GUILD JANUARY SCHEDULE

January 1 - 12 Susan Pankow & Karen Olsen

January 13 - 26 Jeri Raddatz & Sandy Laabs

January 27 – February 9 Phyllis Buch & Deb Stogbauer

## January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
<b>4</b> 10:15 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion 11:15 a.m. Stewardship and Evangelism Meeting	<b>5</b> 6:30 p.m. Worship with Holy Communion	<b>6</b> 1:00 p.m. Women of Faith 1:00 p.m. Trustee's Meeting	<b>7</b> 5:30 p.m. Confirmation Class at Faith	<b>8</b> 10:30 a.m. Community Bible Study at St. John's	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b> 9:15 a.m. Sunday School <b>10:15 a.m.</b> Worship 11:15 a.m. Bible Study 12:15 p.m. Inspired Singles Study Group 4:30 p.m. ISI at Czech's' cabin	<b>12</b> 5:30 p.m. Choir <b>6:30 p.m. Worship</b> 7:30 p.m. Elders' Meeting	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> 10:00 a.m. Ablelight 5:30 p.m. Confirmation Class at Faith	<b>15</b> 10:30 a.m. Community Bible Study at St. John's	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>18</b> 9:15 a.m. Sunday School <b>10:15 a.m.</b> Worship with Holy Communion 11:15 a.m. Bible Study	<b>19</b> 5:30 p.m. Choir <b>6:30 p.m. Worship</b> with Holy Communion	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> 5:30 p.m. Confirmation Class at Faith	<b>22</b> 10:30 a.m. Community Bible Study at St. John's	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b> 9:15 a.m. Sunday School <b>10:15 a.m.</b> Worship 11:30 a.m. Annual Meeting	<b>26</b> 5:30 p.m. Choir <b>6:30 p.m. Worship</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> 10:00 a.m. Ablelight 5:30 p.m. Confirmation Class at Faith	<b>29</b> 10:30 a.m. Community Bible Study at St. John's	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>

**Faith Lutheran Church  
Council Meeting Minutes  
Monday, December 8, 2025**

Present: Pastor Love, Terry Seidler (President), Mike Baumann (Vice-President), Lillie McCulloch (Secretary), Bonnie Grueneberg (Evangelism), Barry Krenz (Trustees), Cindy Braatz (Treasurer), and Kim Young (Education).

Vice-President, Mike Baumann called the meeting to order. Pastor opened with a prayer and devotion. Meeting minutes from October were reviewed. A motion for approval was made, seconded, and passed.

Treasurer – The balance reports for October and November were reviewed, the ending balance for November was \$29,542.49. All bills have been paid in a timely manner.

Trustees - Light bulb updates are still being worked on. We received money back from Church Mutual on the Workers Compensation Policy of \$183. Snow plowing and sanding services have been secured for this winter. The furnaces were checked over, inspected and determined to still be in good working order. The Scott cemetery is in need of a new lawn mower, this was not included in the budget because there are funds available in the cemetery fund to cover this. A motion will be made to use those funds when the time comes to purchase a new mower.

President – Terry would like to create a committee to scout potential candidates to fill officer and board member positions. It is in the bylaws to have a committee to do this, however, instead of trying to form a new committee it was decided to have each committee recruit more candidates to replace their members. The names of potential candidates need to be sent to Terry so they ballot can be made for the Annual Meeting.

Board of Education - The Christmas Program is this Sunday, there are 9 children participating.

Stewardship/Evangelism - The trip to Appleton went very well. There is interest in attending the Easter program, dates are being looked at. The donated items were delivered to Pine Crest today, they were very excited and grateful to receive these things. The angel tree had 24 tags, all tags were taken and arrangements have been made to have the gifts delivered to Thomas Jefferson. Systems Technologies assessed out technology issues, it was suggested that we add an Uninterruptible Power Supply for the computer system as well as the AV rack. The cost for this would be \$747.45 including labor/setup. A motion was made and seconded to go forth with the uninterrupted power supply upgrade. It was decided to go forth given the amount of issues we have repeatedly had. Nick Schoch (from Systems Technologies) has gone out of his way to help us and troubleshoot the problems on his own time, to show our appreciation it was decided to gift Nick with a \$100 VISA gift card. Bonnie has the gift cards ready for the parochial school teachers, 25 teachers will be getting \$150 gift cards for Christmas. Bonnie brought up the church cancellation protocol. Typically this is determined by Pastor and the head elder. Communication protocols were reviewed and we will work to continue to improve this. The Living River Quartet will perform here at Faith at 6:30pm on April 26th. This will be a community outreach event, attendees will be asked to bring a non-perishable food item in lieu of a fee to attend this concert. Christmas cards for the shut-ins are ready and will be mailed this week as well. Christmas Caroling is this Sunday well, there are 7-8 stops planned.

Pastor - ISI is going well, they have gained a new member and have good attendance numbers. Inspired Singles went well, there were 10 attendees. The young woman who previously contacted pastor seeking financial assistance appeared to be an artificial intelligence scam, no money was given or lost to this. The district convention went well. The church decorations look great!

Old business: None to discuss.

New Business: None to discuss.

The Board of Trustees budget changes for 2026 were reviewed. Adjustments were made on a 3 percent basis.

The Board of Elders budget changes for 2026 were reviewed.

The Board of Education budget was reviewed with no changes.

The Youth Group budget was reviewed. It was decided to increase the budget to include appreciation gifts for Terry, Jeremy and Sara.

The Labor of Love Fund is done. It was discussed that we consider changing it to a "Labor of Love in the Community" type fund and direct it to local programs such as HAVEN Womens Shelter.

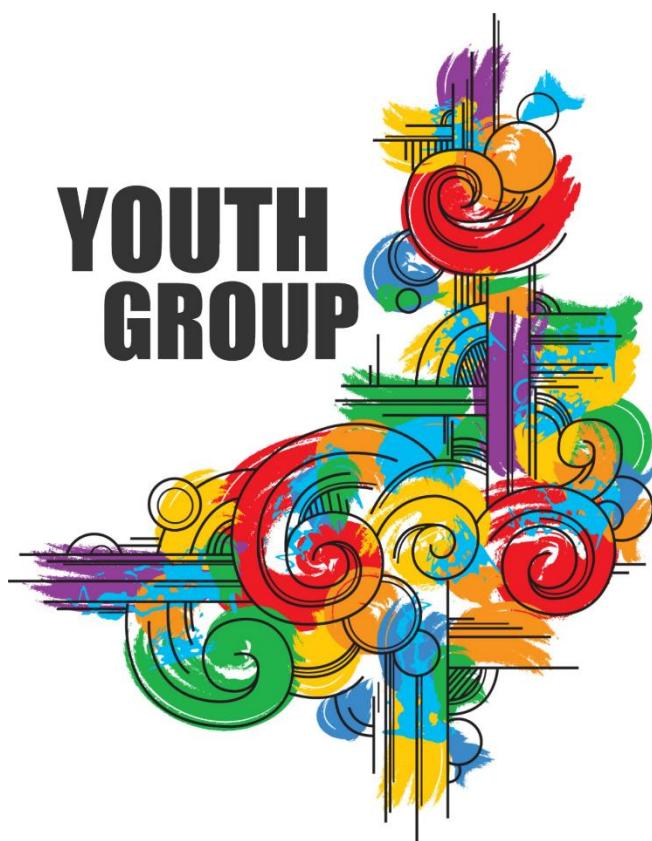
A motion was made, seconded and passed to approve the budget as it stands.

The Annual Meeting is scheduled for January 25th, 2025 following the church service.

The next regular council meeting will be February 9th at 7:30pm.

A motion for adjournment was made, seconded, and passed. The meeting closed with a prayer from Pastor Love.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lillie McCulloch, Council Secretary



## **YOUTH ACTIVITIES**

**Sunday, January 11**

**CIRCUIT VOLLEYBALL/DODGEBALL EVENT**

St. John – Merrill

Watch for details

**Sunday, February 8**

**CIRCUIT WINTER RETREAT at Camp Forest Springs**

Begins at Trinity – Merrill for 10:30 a.m. Contemporary Worship Service.

Quick lunch following worship.

Then off to Camp Forest Springs for their Communion Day

**Friday, March 27**

**CIRCUIT ROLLER SKATING**

Christian Music Skate Night from 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Melody Gardens in Marshfield

Planning for bus transportation

Planning events:

Thrivent sponsored **evening at Sylvan Hills**

**Sleep in Heavenly Peace Bed Build** next June

# January 2026 Elder, Usher, Greeter, Scrip Schedule

## Sunday, January 4      10:15 a.m.

Elders      Mark Porath, Mike Bielke  
Ushers      Leroy Laabs, Beth Bartelt  
Greeter      Leroy Laabs  
Scrip      Cindy Krenz  
Audio      Bonnie Grueneberg

## Monday, January 5      6:30 p.m.

Elders      Jason Westfall, Keith Wendt  
Usher      Ed Stiver  
Greeter      Ed Stiver  
Scrip      Debbie Stogbauer  
Audio      Lee Pfaff

## Sunday, January 11      10:15 a.m.

Elders      Lee Pfaff, Jeff Laabs  
Ushers      Carol Hein, Bernice Porath  
Greeter      Carol Hein  
Scrip      Bernice Porath  
Audio      Evan Roubal

## Monday, January 12      6:30p.m.

Elders      Kyle Young, Rodney Dahlke  
Usher      Chris Stogbauer  
Greeter      Chris Stogbauer  
Scrip      Cindy Braatz  
Audio      Bonnie Grueneberg

## Sunday, January 18      10:15 a.m.

Elders      Joe Heisinger, Mike Bielke  
Ushers      Brian and Lynn Klug  
Greeter      Brian Klug  
Scrip      Lynn Klug  
Audio      Bonnie Grueneberg

## Monday, January 19      6:30 p.m.

Elders      Mark Porath, Jeff Laabs  
Ushers      Ed Stiver  
Greeter      Ed Stiver  
Scrip      Debbie Stogbauer  
Audio      Rodney Dahlke

## Sunday, January 25      10:15 a.m.

Elders      Kyle Young, Lee Pfaff  
Ushers      Leroy Laabs, Beth Bartelt  
Greeter      Beth Bartelt  
Scrip      Becky Rajek  
Audio      Bonnie Grueneberg

## Monday, January 26      6:30 p.m.

Elders      Joe Heisinger, Jason Westfall  
Ushers      Amanda Heisinger  
Greeter      Amanda Heisinger  
Scrip      Debbie Stogbauer  
Audio      Lee Pfaff

## Sunday, February 1      10:15 a.m.

Elders      Joe Heisinger, Jeff Laabs  
Ushers      Amanda Heisinger, Carol Hein  
Greeter      Amanda Heisinger  
Scrip      Cindy Krenz  
Audio      Bonnie Grueneberg

## Monday, February 2      6:30 p.m.

Elders      Lee Pfaff, Keith Wendt  
Usher      Ed Stiver  
Greeter      Ed Stiver  
Scrip      Debbie Stogbauer  
Audio      Cindy Braatz

### HOLY COMMUNION

Sunday, January 4	10:15 a.m.
Monday, January 5	6:30 p.m.
Sunday, January 18	10:15 a.m.
Monday, January 19	6:30p.m.
Sunday, February 1	10:15 a.m.

### ELDERS

Rodney Dahlke, chairman  
Mike Bielke, secretary  
Joe Heisinger, Jeff Laabs,  
Lee Pfaff, Mark Porath, Jason Westfall,  
Keith Wendt, Kyle Young



# St. John's Lutheran Church

134058 County Road L

Athens, WI 54411

715-536-1810

## Pastor Donald Love

Office Phone 715-536-5443  
Home Phone 715-722-0540  
Cell Phone 1-715-350-3871

## Pastor's Office Hours

Mon. & Tues. Home  
Wednesday Faith  
Thursday St. John's  
Friday Off (Family Day)

## Elders

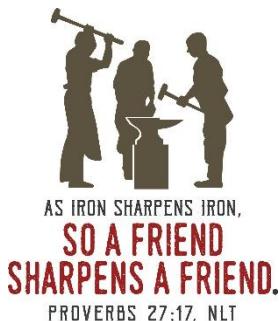
Mark Czech 715-409-9174  
Bob Burish 715-573-7078  
Don Gille 715-573-8197  
Jeremy Fromm 715-574-2003

## Elder of the Month

Mike Schultz 715-539-0995  
Setting the Lord's Table  
Misty Vogel

## January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 8:30 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion	5	6	7 5:30 p.m. Confirmation Class at Faith	8 10:30 a.m. Community Bible Study	9	10
11 8:30 a.m. Worship 12:15 p.m. Inspired Singles Study Group at Faith 4:30 p.m. ISI at Czech's cabin	12	13 6:00 p.m. Church Council 7:15 p.m. Elders' Meeting	14 5:30 p.m. Confirmation Class at Faith	15 10:30 a.m. Community Bible Study	16	17
18 8:30 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion	19	20	21 5:30 p.m. Confirmation Class at Faith	22 10:30 a.m. Community Bible Study	23	24
25 8:30 a.m. Worship	26	27	28 5:30 p.m. Confirmation Class at Faith	29 10:30 a.m. Community Bible Study	30	31



**ISI**  
**Sunday, January 11**  
4:30 p.m.  
Czech's hunting cabin  
W10661 Cedar Road,  
Merrill



**LIVING RIVER**  
**COMMUNITY CONCERT**  
**Sunday, April 26 at Faith**  
(tentative)  
*Non-perishable food item to be given to local food pantry*  
*Watch for details*

# Bible Memory Verse



Week of January 4, 2026

## **Psalm 37:23–24**

The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand.

Week of January 11, 2026

## **Ephesians 1:7**

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.

Week of January 18, 2026

## **1 John 2:2**

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Week of January 25, 2026

## **Leviticus 19:18**

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.



**thrive<sup>nt</sup>**  
Making  
generosity easy

with Thrivent membership can contribute to organizations with a personal donation. Recently Faith received Thrivent Choice Dollars from **SUSAN PANKOW**. Thank you, Susan. For more information, call 1-800-847-4836.

# JANUARY

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

### **ST. JOHN'S BIRTHDAYS**

January 3	Russell Bloch
	Craig Jahnke
January 4	Kathryn Henrichs
January 5	Deb Wiederhoeft
January 8	Karyn Blasky
January 10	Eric Vogel
January 11	Rolly Koppa
January 21	Mikaela Wood
January 22	Chris Blasky
January 24	Mark Czech
January 26	Kristine Punke
January 27	Amy Hinz
January 28	John Sturm

### **FAITH BIRTHDAYS**

January 3	Donna Schulz
January 4	Marlene Krenz
	Joshua Klug
January 7	Nicholas Gaeu
January 9	Sherrie White
January 10	James Goetsch
	James Beilke
January 14	Jason Westfall
	Ivan Hein
	Emily Klug
January 15	Debra Grueneberg
January 17	Jordan Knoble
January 21	Ryan Baguhn
	Rev. Hans Heisinger
January 22	Raegan Zuelsdorff
January 23	Joseph Zuelsdorff
January 24	Laney Zuelsdorff
January 25	Karen Pagel
January 26	Linda Janisch
January 27	Sharon Kleinschmidt
	Timothy Bartelt
January 28	Sherry Frazier
January 29	Kovyn Young
January 30	Deborah Stogbauer
January 31	Karissa Karau

### **FAITH ANNIVERSARY**

January 3	Joseph and Amanda Heisinger	16 years
-----------	-----------------------------	----------

**FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**15425 South County Road K**  
**Merrill, WI 54452**

NON-PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT 44  
MERRILL, WI 54452



**MAY YOU SHINE  
THE LIGHT OF  
CHRIST IN THE  
NEW YEAR!**