

THE BALSAM BRANCH

February 2021

Balsam Lutheran Church

1115 Mains Crossing
Amery, Wisconsin 54001

Pastor Laurie Kenyon Woods



Church Website:

www.balsamlutheranchurch.org

Church email: balsamlutheran@amerytel.net

Balsam Branch Editor: *Bonnie Corcoran*

Church Phone: 715-268-9291

Pastor's phone: 269-552-8245

Pastor's e-mail: pastorlauriekw@gmail.com

Lent at Balsam

With Ash Wednesday on February 17, Lent is just around the corner!

Ash Wednesday

For Ash Wednesday, we will be offering a short online service for your own personal use, and two opportunities for the imposition of ashes.

1) We will mark Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent, through Drive-Thru Ashes. This will be available between 12-1pm and 5-6pm at Balsam. You may drive through the church parking lot to receive the imposition of ashes. The ashes will be applied by a Q-tip to be safe. Please, wear your masks while receiving the ashes to keep everyone safe.

2) Additionally, we will have a few "Ash Kits" available so that families and individuals can impose ashes at home. Those can be picked up at the church starting on Sunday, February 7.

Lenten Prayer and Reflection

At Balsam, we will be observing Lent as a community focused on personal devotion and quiet prayer, with guided reflections that will focus on the theme Created for Community.

Each Wednesday, beginning with the 17th, Balsam's sanctuary will be open from 12-6 pm for individual prayer and quiet time, with some contemplative music, art displays, and suggested scripture passages for reflection. Pastor Laurie will also be available during this time for conversation, pastoral care, and prayer.

We imagine that with such a large window of time, we won't have to worry too much about sanctuary traffic jams, but please remember to keep your distance from anyone else who is present - not only for health and safety concerns, but also for respect of private prayer and reflection.

The scripture passages and reflection materials will also be sent out to the church

via email each Wednesday, in case you would prefer to participate from home.

The invitation to Lent spoken on Ash Wednesday reminds us that we enter this season together “with the whole church”, and that “we are created for communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation.” Though many common Lenten practices rightly invite us to individual acts of “repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love,” Lent is also a time for the deepening of our sense as a community.

Using readings from Mark’s gospel, this series invites the assembly to reflect on what it means to be in community with one another, with the world, with creation, and with God.

Feb 24, Week 1 - In community with creation

Mark 4:35-41 Jesus calms a storm
The Sunday readings for Lent 1, year B highlight the destructive power of the flood as well as the power of God’s promise represented there. In the gospel reading Jesus is with the wild animals in the wilderness. While we often think of community as limited to human beings, our human existence is interdependent with all the created world. This theme is especially apparent in Mark 4:35-41, the account of the fishermen whose lives depend on the sea but who become afraid of its power in the storm.

Mar 3, Week 2 - In community with all the saints

Mark 9:2-8 Jesus is in conversation with those who have gone before him
The Sunday readings for Lent 2, year B highlight God’s promise to many generations; the passage from Romans reminds us that our faith is intertwined with

those who have gone before us. The understanding of community expressed in our creeds extends beyond the present time to include those whose faith has influenced our own and those we influence after us. We hear this connection to what has been established before us echoed in Mark 9:2-8, the account of the transfiguration.

Mar 10, Week 3 - In community with our neighbor

Mark 2:1-12 A community comes together to bring a neighbor to Jesus
The Sunday readings for Lent 3, year B center us in the ten commandments, which serve, among other things, as a way of living in community with our neighbor. Jesus’ actions in the temple are, in part, a reaction to dishonest dealings with neighbors from near and far who have come to worship. Being in community with our neighbor is complicated and beautiful. Mark 2:1-12, the story of the paralyzed man brought to Jesus through the roof of a crowded room, highlights the way in which it takes a community to care for one another.

Mar 17, Week 4 - In community with those on the margins

Mark 5:1-20 Jesus crosses barriers to attend to those on the margins
The Sunday readings for Lent 4, year B include the visit of Nicodemus to Jesus at night. Though he is a leader in the community, his interest in Jesus pushes him to the outside of his own group and to the edges of Jesus’ followers. We continue to read of the Hebrew people wrestling with their wandering in the wilderness, not being part of a settled community. Those on the margins are also a part of our communities. When Jesus crosses over to the land of the Gerasenes in Mark 5:1-20, he encounters and brings healing to a man who has been left on the margins and restores him to community.

Mar 24, Week 5 - In community with Christ

Mark 10:32-45 Jesus reminds us that we are walking the way of the cross

The Sunday readings for Lent 5, year B remind us where we are headed in this season and always—to the cross. When we are at the limits of our own power, overwhelmed by guilt or shame, or confronted with death, we find ourselves in the company of Jesus, who is our community even when all else fails. In Mark 10:32-45, Jesus once again reminds the disciples and us that our call will lead us to the cross.

Blessings,

Pastor Laurie

Notes from Council

Greetings and God's Blessings from the Council. We continue to thank the Lord for our new pastor. Pastor Laurie has been a breath of fresh air for our church, and she showed her toughest standing out in the bitter cold on Christmas Eve to lead a short outdoor service and deliver Communion to those who attended. We continue to keep all of you in our prayers during this pandemic and ask you to please let us know of any situation where we might be able to lend our support.

The Synod recently let us know that due to the current situation we can delay our annual meeting, The council has chosen April 25 for our annual meeting. A reminder to all groups and organization to get your annual reports in ASAP.

Please keep the Salvation Army in your prayers and consider a donation if possible as they are lagging way behind their goals for fund raising. Also don't forget your support for Balsam as we still need to meet

our obligations even though we aren't meeting in our usual setting. We still need your support.

Again, keep each other in your prayers, reach out with phone calls, e mails, or even letters to lift each other up and encourage each other through these difficult times.

God Bless and Prayers for a brighter 2021,
Steve Fredrickson for the Balsam Church Council

Balsam Lutheran Church

Approved Minutes of the Church Council
December 13, 2020

Present Betty Collins, Marlyn Bottolfson, Sue Fougner, Mike Judge, Steve Fredrickson, Barb Friese, Dawn Costello, Bruce Hammer, Pastor Laurie and Michelle Stone.

Steve called the meeting to order, determining a quorum. Steve led in devotions.

Secretary's Report: Accepted as submitted.

Treasurer's Report: Accepted as submitted.

Committee Reports:

Property: Regarding the tuning of the piano, the repair person thought he was just here and tuned it, Lisa said it sounded better for the installation service, will wait and see how it sound for now. The painting crew will be here to start patching the wall in the classrooms on December 18th, they will start painting on December 24th and finish up the week between Christmas and New Year's. The yearly water test has been done and the results came back with no issues. The yearly fire test and sprinkler test have been done. The result are good. The propane tanks have been topped off.

Youth Education: Confirmation continues to meet weekly at the church.

Pastor's report: Reviewed as submitted

Old Business

- 1) Pastor Laurie's Installation and Ordination services went very well.
- 2) We are still looking for sound and video help. Volunteers are much appreciated.
- 3) The Christmas family donations were awesome. Thanks to everyone that donated.
- 4) There was \$5,700.00 budgeted for mortgage reduction. Question about paying part or all of that amount. A motion was made and seconded to pay the full amount. Motion passed.
- 5) The PPP loan was totally forgiven.

New Business:

- 1) Welcome to Pastor Laurie.
- 2) There will be two services for Christmas this year one will be a Blue Christmas service that will be pre recorded and can be viewed of You-Tube. Balsam is partnering with 2 other churches for it. The other will be the Christmas Eve service, The first part of that one will be recorded and viewable on line, the 2nd half will be a hymn sing with communion in the parking lot of the church with it being broadcast over your car radio.
- 3) The offer to purchase a box of 500 individual celebration cup wafer and juice set was extended to us, from another church that had purchased too many. Motion was made and seconded to make the purchased. Motion passed.
- 4) Our regular zoom account will only allow us about a 40 minute use time per meeting/ use, we are looking to upgrade to the premium zoom account. A motion was made and seconded to upgrade to the premium account which will give us long meeting time. Motion passed.

5) Regarding the Annual Meeting, the Synod said that it is ok for us to do a Virtual Zoom meeting. With this you will be able to call in you will not need a computer to join the meeting. A date for the Annual meeting will be set in the near future. The financial reports need to be in to Gail Peterson as soon as possible.

6) Update on the scrip program, you can still purchase scrip cards by email telephone or regular mail. Payment and delivery can/will be this way to. Other arrangements maybe possible any questions feel free to contact Lisa or Mike Markee

There being no other business a motion was made and seconded to adjourn. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned.
We reviewed area prayer concerns and closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Fougner, Church Council Secretary

Balsam Lutheran Church

Unapproved Minutes of the Church Council
January 10, 2021

Present Betty Collins, Marlyn Bottolfson, Sue Fougner, Mike Judge, Steve Fredrickson, Barb Friese, Dawn Costello, Bruce Hammer, Pastor Laurie and Michelle Stone.

Steve called the meeting to order, determining a quorum. Steve led in devotions.

Secretary's Report: Accepted as submitted.

Treasurer's Report: Accepted as submitted.

Committee Reports:

Property: The painting in the classrooms is complete. There is an issue with the sprinkler system that will need to be repaired sometime in the future. The system has a

wet system and a dry system, there is a leak in the dry system. The pump that runs the dry system has been running more often. We will monitor the situation for not.

Pastor's report: Reviewed as submitted
Old Business

- 1) The Salvation Army is still taking monetary donations. They are looking into a building 3 miles north of Hwy 8 near Poskin, as they are no longer able to be in Balsam Lake.
- 2) We are still looking for sound and video help. Volunteers are much appreciated.
- 3) A reminder that offering envelopes are in your church mailboxes.
- 4) The anniversary plans are still on hold. The celebration is to be in 2022

New Business:

- 1)The Synod has stated that it is okay to postpone the Annual meeting if we need/want to. The Council weighed the pros and cons, and decided to postpone the Annual meeting until April 25, 2021. There are 2 council members that will be leaving council. They are Dawn Costello and Sue Fougner. They have both agreed to stay on until the Annual meeting in April.
- 2)There is a possibility that we may be able to get a second PPP Loan. A motion was made and seconded to fill out an application for a second PPP Loan, to pay salaries and or utilities. Motion passed.
- 3)Continuing with services as they have been. Pastor Laurie would like to include more families/individuals in the service. Please let her know if you are willing to do a reading or maybe special music. We will look into the possibility of having the church service broadcast on the WPCA radio station and the local cable station.

There being no other business a motion was made and seconded to adjourn. Motion

passed. Meeting adjourned. We reviewed area prayer concerns and closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Fougner, Church Council Secretary

Financial Report

We ended the year fiscally healthy for several reasons. Our mortgage balance is getting smaller thanks to your efforts in debt reduction. We need to continue to support our church and the work of our congregation in this community. Please continue to mail or drop off your weekly offering.

The finance committee will be working on the 2021 budget soon. Please make sure to get your budget requests to me or Steve Fredrickson for incorporation into the 2021 budget.

We will need to audit the 2020 church financial accounts and records in preparation for the annual meeting. Committee and program treasurers, please notify me when you have completed your records for 2020 so that we can arrange for me to get your books for the audit. As usual, we will need 3-4 people to audit these financial records which we will conduct with COVID precautions in place. Please let me know if you can help with the audit. My phone is 715-220-2587 and my email is gailpete@amerytel.net.

Thanks for your continued support of our congregation.

General Fund Balance 12/31/20
\$69,557.93
January Offerings
\$11,102.02
January Expenses
\$ 9,125.00

General Fund Balance 1/31/21
\$71,534.95

Things to note:

We will have some additional large expenses such as insurance in February. We prepaid for a large amount of propane this past fall.

Our mortgage balance is down to \$151,534.55! We made some extra principal payments in 2020 which really made a difference!

Gail Peterson, Treasurer

Annual Meeting

Balsam’s Annual Meeting will be held after worship at 11:15 AM on April 25, 2021. All confirmed members who have communed and made a contribution of record to the church during 2019 and 2020 are welcome to attend.

February “Birth” days	
03 Robbie LaBathe	22 Sue Bergren
04 Ruben Johnson	24 Les Markee
04 Liz Sigsworth	24 Valerie Schultz
12 Julie Hammer	25 Rick Ashley
17 Henrietta Swager	26 Cherae Wilson
19 Shawn Sigsworth	

support, villages in Africa are receiving access to safe water. Your gift changes lives around the world.

Christmas Families

Thank you so much for your support of the Amery School Christmas Family sponsorship program. Through your generous contributions, we were able to make this a wonderful Christmas for 8 children in the Amery area. I continue to be blown away by the generosity of this congregation and feel so blessed to be a part of it. Thank you again.

Gail Peterson

90th Birthday Celebration

Henrietta Swager turns 90 on February 17. Due to strokes she can no longer live at home, but we can still make her birthday special by sending a card, messages or video to her son/nephew:

Brad Swager

13800 Chestnut Dr., Apt 208

Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Phone No. 952-688-7275

Please send these well before the 17th, so her family can put together a presentation for Henrietta.

Prayer Ministry

- **Prayer Shawl Ministry** – Please let Pastor Laurie, Bonnie Corcoran at 268-9881 or Nancy Bottolfson at 268-8244 know if there is someone in need of personal prayer, a visit and a prayer shawl. You are also welcome to take a prayer shawl or pocket prayer to folks in need of care; you can then pray with them.
- **Prayer Requests** – Prayer Chain,



THANK YOUs to WELCA:

On behalf of the Amery Area Food Pantry, we wish to thank you for your donation of \$150. Please know that we are very appreciative of your kindness and generosity.

On behalf of Lutheran World Relief, our partners and those we serve, please accept our thanks for your gift of \$150. With your

please contact: Nancy Bottolfson at
268-8244 or email her at
botolson@amerytel.net or call
Esther Nelson at 268-8223.