

# THE BALSAM BRANCH

March 2021

## Balsam Lutheran Church

1115 Mains Crossing  
Amery, Wisconsin 54001

*Laurie Kenyon Woods, Pastor*



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Church Website: [www.balsamlutheranchurch.org](http://www.balsamlutheranchurch.org)

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Parish Secretary: *Bonnie Corcoran* Balsam Branch Editor: *Bonnie Corcoran*

Church Phone: 715-268-9291

Pastor Laurie's phone: 269-552-8245

## Lenten Prayer and Reflection Continues

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.

## Pastor's Pen

Dear people of God,

The traditional epistle reading for Ash Wednesday is one of my very favorite passages in all of scripture, and I am never truly sure why. It is not particularly hopeful, but even so it always fills me with hope.

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything."  
(2 Cor 6:10)

As I returned to this passage in the middle of Lent, in the midst of a year

that has perhaps felt too much like Lent all along, these verses continue to help me make sense of the paradox of Christian faith generally and the paradox of our current stage in the ongoing coronavirus pandemic more specifically.

Pandemic fatigue is real. And I think we're about to face the worst of it. The fatigue comes from simultaneously grasping for the real glimpses of hope caused by vaccine distribution and decreasing case numbers and deaths. At the same time, we continue to have to do what we have been doing for the past year to protect the vulnerable among us.

Even in the midst of all that good news, we are still reminded of the pain, the struggle, the stress, and the death that has been our constant companion this past year. Just last week, we reached a chilling milestone - over 500,000 coronavirus deaths in the United States. In the past year since our country saw its first COVID-19 case, there has been nearly one death per minute. We don't need to be reminded of all that we have lost. This has been a difficult year and one that has left its scars on all our hearts.

In the coming weeks, as we come to the one year anniversary of so many things - of first cases, of lockdowns, of closures and cancellations - notice how that might be affecting you, your family, or your neighbors. These are

unprecedented waters in the midst of an already unprecedented time. Be gentle with yourself, with one another. Simultaneously, hold life loosely and cling to its blessings tightly.

Lent teaches us to hold postures of hope in the face of despair. Lent is a season of simultaneousness and paradox. Lent, I believe, calls to us to keep moving forward and saying together. We have to go through it, but we go together. When we reach the final days of Lent, we are met not by what we've done or accomplished but rather by the work God has done on the cross.

So right now, in the midst of this particular Lenten season, I encourage you to feel all your feelings, dig deep into the story of Jesus' life and death, and know that you are not alone.

Take deep breaths, read good books, sing songs of faith and fun, do something nice for your neighbors, get outside and feel the sunshine on your face, pray with and without words, and rest in God's presence.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, give yourself grace as God does. Lent is not about achieving or doing but about resting in the God who calls us and walks with us through life, death and life beyond death.

Wherever you find yourself in the unprecedented-ness, simultaneousness, and paradoxes of this Lent, know you're

not alone. We'll go through it together and, best of all, with God.

Blessings,

Pastor Laurie

### **Greetings and God's Blessings from the Balsam Church Council**

We continue to pray and act to protect the health and safety of all our members and neighbors. We are all feeling the fatigue of Covid and miss each other and especially the opportunity to come together. Remember the Lord's message "to run with patience the race that is set before us".

We are presently looking to open the church doors again towards the end of March. One criteria recommended is to have at least 50% of members vaccinated, so with that in mind we are encouraging all members to get vaccinated when its available to you. Pastor Laurie has gotten her second Covid vaccine so that is a great step forward for us.

When we do open it will be with masks, social distancing and other recommendations for a safe worship.

Please remember to support each other: reach out with a phone call, an e mail, a letter, keep sharing the good news of the Gospel and soon we will be back together!

Steve

## **Balsam Lutheran Church**

### *Unapproved Minutes of the Church Council*

February 21, 2021

In Attendance: Betty Collins, Marlyn Bottolfson, Sue Fougner, Mike Judge, Steve Frederickson, Barb Friese, Bruce Hammer, Pastor Laurie and Michelle Stone.

Absent: Dawn Costello.

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

**Secretary's Report:** Accepted as submitted.

**Treasurer's Report:** Accepted as submitted.

#### **Committee Reports:**

Property: The sprinkler test was done and was ok. Propane was ordered.

Youth Education: Confirmation continues to meet weekly at the church. Sunday school via zoom was discontinued for the year as there were some issues with the internet.

**Pastor's report:** Reviewed as submitted.

#### **Old Business:**

- 1) Still looking for some volunteers to be trained on the sound and projection systems, for the church
- 2) There are two members of the council that finish their terms in April.

We need some nominees for the positions on council.

- 3) Annual reports are due ASAP to Bonnie. The Annual meeting will be April 25th.
- 4) The plans for the Anniversary celebration are on hold until the reopening of the church.
- 5) We did a second application for PPP, this is pending.
- 6) We are in need of one more person to help audit the church books. If interested contact Steve.

### **New Business:**

1)The current Church web site builder system is soon going to be non-useable, so we need to update the website. Diane Morel and Pastor have looked at other web sites and have found one that is church oriented and easy to use. The cost of the old website was about \$150.00 a year which the Morels covered. The new website will be about \$350.00 a year. After some discussion, a motion was made and seconded to go with the new website.

2) There is/was a webinar Love Thy Neighbor. It talked about Outreach for the church, the fact that we have closed means that we are loving our neighbors in keeping each and every one safe.

3) Regarding the reopening Pastor Laurie has had the second COVID vaccine and will be able to do hospital visits in two weeks, with her being able

to do that, and the positivity rate in Polk County being down to 6.1% we are talking about possibly reopening around Easter. March 21st is the earliest that Pastor feels comfortable with. More discussion on this topic will take place at the next Council meeting in March.

4) It was brought to the Council's attention that the Church Roll needs to be updated. This will be looked at in the future. It could possibly be done if /when we do a new directory.

5) Pastor requested a subscription to Sundays & Seasons. This is about \$300.00 a year. This will help Pastor, Bonnie and the worship committee with the planning of the services. A motion was made and seconded to purchase a subscription to Sundays & Seasons for Pastor. Motion Passed.

There being no other business a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed; meeting adjourned.

We reviewed area prayer concerns and closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sue Fougner, Church Council Secretary

**“The will of God will never take you to where the grace of God will not protect you. To gain that which is worth having, it may be necessary to lose everything else.” – Bernadette Devlin**

## Directory

Usually the directory is completed in March, but this year it won't be done until May so that it can have the new Council included in it.

## February Financial Report

General Fund 2/1/21	\$71,732.30
Offerings*	+9,015.97
Total	\$80,748.27
Expenses	<u>-11,845.20</u>
General Fund 2/28/21	\$68,903.07

All expenses have been paid for the month. However, there may be additional online offerings that have not been reported yet

\*Offerings include monthly payments from UMOS and Elim.

## Attention Treasurers!

Just a reminder to get your financial records to the church by March 4th for the annual audit.

## Collection items for back-packs:

March: bar soap

April: deodorant

## Remember to save:

Sheets, blankets, fabrics, tablecloths, etc for mission quilts

Aluminum cans for youth camperships

Used ink-jets, eyeglasses, labels, stamps, milk caps, boxtops

## Prayer Ministry

- **Prayer Shawl Ministry** – Please let Pastor Dan, 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.
- **Prayer Requests** – Prayer Chain, please contact: Nancy Bottolfson at 268-8244 or email her at [botolson@amerytel.net](mailto:botolson@amerytel.net) or call Esther Nelson at 268-8223.

**“But God doesn’t call us to be comfortable. He calls us to trust Him so completely that we are unafraid to put ourselves in situations where we will be in trouble if He doesn’t come through.” – Francis Chan**

**“At least at times of loss, we are reminded of our priorities, of our many blessings. In times of gain, we can so often lose our way.” – Mindy Starns Clark**

March “Birth” days	
09 Mary Peterson	16 Lynn Johnson
10 Norman Fougner	17 Adam LaBathe
11 Vivian Moltzer	18 Brady Kobernick
13 Carlene Swanson	20 Lisa Duden
14 Marge Hallquist	22 Aricka Stream
	31 Janice Petersen