

THE BALSAM BRANCH

January 2022

Balsam Lutheran Church

1115 Mains Crossing
Amery, Wisconsin 54001

Pastor Laurie Kenyon Woods



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Pastor's Pen

Happy New Year!

Growing up one of my favorite Christmas songs was “The 12 Days of Christmas” and I was always trying to see how well I truly had each day memorized. For how popular that song and its accompanying images are in our culture, it’s clear that we don’t actually celebrate the 12 days of Christmas. Because advent is the season leading up to Christmas, December 25 is not the end of the Christmas, but rather it’s the beginning. In the church, we celebrate Christmas for 12 days up until January 6th.

January 6th marks the Day of Epiphany, sometimes called “Three Kings Day”, when we remember the wise ones who

followed the light of the star to find Jesus. Epiphany itself means “showing

forth”, and Epiphany begins a season where we are called to look for how God makes Godself known throughout the world and in our lives.

In some cultures around the world, January 6 is a large and festive end to the Christmas season—a day of presents, parades and celebration. Here in the United States, some churches mark Epiphany with a midweek service, but often this important holiday gets overshadowed by our collective exhaustion post-Christmas.

At its essence, Epiphany is an invitation to follow stars, listen to dreams, and step out of what we have always known. The Gospel of Matthew (Mt 2:1-12) tells

us this is the day the magi, also known as kings and also known as wise men, arrived in Bethlehem. Having been directed by angels and guided by a star, they brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the young child Jesus.

On Epiphany, consider participating in an ancient tradition known as "Chalking the Door." This practice consists of marking a blessing in chalk in a specific pattern of letters and numbers, to invite God's blessing on a home, church, or other entryway and on all who enter its doors during the year. All you need is chalk and a doorway. The markings are usually made above the front door or main entrance, in this pattern:

20 + C + M + B + 22

The numbers change each year to reflect the new calendar year. The letters C, M, and B are given two meanings: the initials of the traditional names of the three magi, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, and the initials of the Latin phrase *Christus Mansionem Benedicat*, which means, "Christ bless this dwelling." The + signs are for the Cross of Christ.

Seeing the symbols over our door during the year remind us, even as life goes back to a regular routine after Christmas, that our homes and all those who dwell there belong to Christ. They are also reminders of the welcome the magi gave to Jesus. They call us to wonder each day who we might welcome into our hearts this coming

year. With time the chalk will fade. As it does, my prayer is that the meaning of the written symbols sink into the depths of our hearts and shine forth in our words and actions.

Epiphany Blessings,
Pastor Laurie

Balsam Lutheran Church

Approved Minutes of the Church Council
December 12, 2021

In Attendance: Steve Fredrickson,
Pastor Laurie, Betty Collins, Marlyn Bottolfson, Bruce Hammer, Barb Friese, Sue Albright

Absent: Michelle Stone

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

Treasurer's Report: Accepted as submitted.

Pastor's Report: Accepted as submitted.

Secretary's Report: Accepted as submitted.

Financial Report: Accepted as submitted.

Committee Reports:

Youth Education: Sunday school Christmas Program Dec. 19th

Worship and Music Committee: Music for worship has been chosen through the month of January.

Old Business:

UMOS repairs are almost done.

New Business:

Annual Meeting is scheduled for Feb.6, 2022.

Bernice Fox is turning 90 on January 16. The family has requested traditional hymns that day and a small coffee celebration after church.

The Dick Nelson family has requested use of the church on Jan. 1st for their annual family Christmas celebration.

Walking Together at Eau Claire is scheduled for March 26th. (The only walking required is from room to room!)

Gail Peterson joined the meeting for a short time to present the new budget for 2022. Some new expenses were presented in the building maintenance section.

There being no further business, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned. Reviewed area prayer concerns and closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Albright, acting secretary

January "Birth" days	
01 Connie Fredrickson 16 Bernice Fox	22 Jeff Johnson 23 Merle Bergren 29 Brad Fougner

The size, intensity and nature of problems do not matter as long as you have your faith in God intact. Almighty will be with you and help you to overcome all your problems.

THANK YOU!
THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Thank you to the youth of Balsam and Elim who participated in the Christmas presentation, "Come to Bethlehem and See". You all did a wonderful job! Thank you to Lisa Carlson for providing the music. Thank you to Tammy Polta for serving as the teacher for our primary youth, PK - grades 1-2. Your dedication to the program is appreciated. Thank you, also, to Gail Peterson for volunteering as a substitute teacher and for assisting with the Christmas presentation. Thank you to Lila Christensen and Eileen Markee for the Christmas treat bags given out to the youth. To all parents and caregivers, thank you for supporting your youth in their faith journey. Finally, a big thank you to the congregation for its continued support of the youth programs. Blessings to all!

Barb

Thank you so much for your overwhelming support of our three Secret Santa families. We made Christmas so very happy (and warm) for 7 children and their families. In total, the program served 82 families with a total of 208 children from the Amery School District!
Gail Peterson

Thank you to Barb Friese for all the time, talent and love she invested in the program and our children of Balsam!

On behalf of the Amery Area Food Pantry, we wish to thank you for your donation to our pantry. Because of your generosity, we are able to provide food assistance to the many families in need in

the Amery area. We are serving over 150 households each month at the present time. (\$150 from W/ELCA)

It is with deepest appreciation that we acknowledge your donation. We are very blessed to have your support. Your donation will assist many families in our area and please know that they are very appreciative of your kindness and generosity.

Thank you (W/ELCA) for your gift of \$150, for your generous support helping people in our community live longer and happier at home, through Interfaith Caregivers.

On behalf of The Salvation Army and the families who will benefit from our services here in Polk County, we want to **thank you** for your gift of \$150 (W/ELCA).

Annual Meeting

Balsam's Annual Meeting will be held after worship at 11:30 AM on February 6, 2022. All confirmed members who have communed and made a contribution of record to the church during 2020 and 2021 are welcome to attend.

Annual Reports Needed

It's time to put together your Annual Report information. All committees and church organizations should submit a report to Bonnie Corcoran no later than January 17. If you are able, please submit your reports via e-mail (balsamlutheran@amerytel.net). Thank you for your attention to this.

Information for Auditors

Treasurers of the following: **WELCA, Cemetery Board, Social Ministry, Youth Ministry, Scrip: Please get all this information to Gail Peterson by January 15.** Please keep in mind that your books will need to be audited before annual reports are printed. As you assemble your materials for audit, please remember to include:
Your 2065 Financial Report
Your check register
2021 Bank Statements & Reconciliations
2021 Savings Account Statements
2065 Investment Account Statements
Receipts for all expenses

W/ELCA MEETING MINUTES

December 5, 2021

The current balance in the checkbook is \$2551.55. To fulfill the mission support pledge of \$1000 annually \$285 is currently needed. More contributions to this may come in before the end of the year.

It was voted that W/ELCA contribute to the following:

Lutheran World Relief \$150
Salvation Army \$150
Interfaith Caregivers \$150
Amery Area Food Shelf \$150
Luther Point Bible Camp \$150
Mission Support – amount needed on Dec 30 for completion of \$1000 commitment.

The officers for 2022 will be:

Sue Albright President
Jane Karsten Vice President
Vicki Hammer Treasurer
Ruth Hart Secretary

Balsam W/ELCA will host the Apple River Fall Gathering on August 20, 2022.

Meeting adjourned
Bonnie Corcoran, acting secretary

Youth

There are no youth sessions (Confirmation or Sunday School) on January 2nd; classes will resume on January 9th. Weekly sessions begin at 8:45AM and end at 10:00AM. Please contact me (715.222.8272 or balsamyouth@yahoo.com) with any questions or concerns.

Thank you!
Barb Friese

Financially Speaking

The annual meeting will be held very soon. We will need to audit all the financial records prior to the annual meeting. **I am asking treasurers of WELCA, youth, cemetery, social ministry, and Scrip program to finalize their 2021 records and have them to the church office by Sunday, January 15 for audit.**

Thank you everyone for your continued financial support of Balsam Lutheran. We have maintained a solid general fund balance while also meeting our budgeted pledges to entities and people providing services and conducting very important work of the church locally and around the world. We also continued to reduce our building fund debt.

I hope that we can continue our financial stability in 2022. Please prayerfully

continue your generous contributions to our general fund and special projects. All is so much appreciated.

In Christ,
Gail Peterson, Treasurer

Council Members Needed

We will be needing members interested in being on Balsam's council, who want to be involved in the decisions made for the benefit of the congregation and business of Balsam Lutheran as a whole. If interested contact Steve or any council member.

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

Remember to save:

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

Aluminum cans for camperships

Used ink-jets, eyeglasses, labels, stamps, milk caps, box tops for Social Ministry.