

# THE BALSAM BRANCH

February 2023

## Balsam Lutheran Church

1115 Mains Crossing  
Amery, Wisconsin 54001

Pastor Laurie Kenyon Woods



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## Pastor's Pen

Dear friends,

With February comes two important days for us: Valentine's and Ash Wednesday. Which on the surface seem just about as different as different can be!

But in a way, both days are about love. Nowadays, Valentine's seems to be all about chocolate and showy acts of affection, but it does have its base in an actual Christian saint whose life demonstrated God's love for all people and encouraged acts of sacrificial love for friends and neighbors. So in that way, maybe this Valentine's Day, we can think of all the love in our lives — the love we feel and the love we witness as a glimpse of God's care for all creation. We can then join in sharing that love with all those we meet.

And then a week later, we move from Valentine's Day on February 14th to Ash Wednesday on February 22nd. And on that day, we begin the season of Lent and move into a focus on returning to the embrace of God's love through repentance and sacrifice.



In Lent, each of us is offered the time to refocus our faith on Christ and get a “heart check”. The season of Lent invites us to intentionally improve our relationship with God and neighbor by practicing spiritual disciplines that strengthen our resolve to “seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). Make no mistake, Lent is not simply giving up something like chocolate or Facebook. Lent is removing the things that distract so that we can fill our lives with the things of God (prayer, fasting, works of piety, works of mercy, and sacrificial giving). And so perhaps at its heart, Lent is a season of love – love of God and love of neighbor.

May your February be full of love!

Blessings,  
Pastor Laurie

## **Balsam Lutheran Church**

*Unapproved Minutes of the Church Council  
January 8, 2023*

**In Attendance:** Steve Fredrickson, Gail Peterson, Barb Friese, Bruce Hammer, Sue Albright, Jon Karsten, Betty Collins.

**Absent:** Ruth Hart, Pastor Laurie  
Kenyon Wood

The meeting was called to order. Barb Friese led in devotions.

**Secretary’s Report:** The minutes from the December council meeting were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to accept the secretary’s report as presented. Motion passed.

**Treasurer’s Report:** Numerous bills were paid at the end of the year (2022). The water softener was paid first from the in/out account and then from the general fund. The mortgage loan is now approximately \$86,000. The cost for utilities is up. The cost of the multi-peril insurance went up. Please remember to turn down the heat when you leave to reduce the unnecessary use of propane. Property taxes were paid. A motion was made and seconded to accept the treasurer’s report, as presented. Motion passed.

**Pastor’s Report:** (Pastor is on maternity leave until mid-January.)

### **Committee Reports:**

Property: A new list of contacts is needed for the PerMar Security Services alarm alerts. There have been growing issues with the front door locks; a locksmith will be contacted to come and resolve the issue. The hex key for the front door is missing. Everyone is encouraged to check their pockets. A replacement has been made. The proposed budget for 2023 was presented for an initial review. It will not be ready for final approval until the change has been made to line items related to pastoral expenses. It was noted that various line items had increased.

Social Ministry: The committee will be hosting a baked potato bar fundraiser on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. Proceeds will be used for the mission work of local charitable groups.

Youth Education: Sunday morning youth sessions have resumed.

### **Old Business:**

- 1) A recommendation was made by janitor committee to hire Tammy Olson for the janitor position with a review in 6 months. A motion was made and passed to offer the janitor position to Tammy Olson.
- 2) Discussion continued regarding the use of communion cards. A motion was made and passed that we eliminate the use and collection of bi-weekly communion cards and create a different system for tracking member participation in the sacraments.
- 3) There will be a winter concert, featuring Balsam's family and friends, on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. It will start at 3:00 with a potato bar (fundraiser) to follow. If you are interested in participating in the concert or assisting with the fundraiser, please let Steve Fredrickson know.
- 4) Discussion on possible solar panels and available grants was again tabled until next month.

### **New Business:**

- 1) The Balsam Lake Association ad has come up for renewal. It was agreed that we discontinue purchasing this ad.
- 2) The proposed budget was presented to council for approval to be presented at the annual meeting. A motion was made and passed to

approve the proposed budget and compensation package for Pastor Laurie for presentation at the annual meeting in February. It was further stipulated that any changes prior to the meeting would warrant an additional council meeting and subsequent vote.

- 3) The was discussion regarding the website and if there was a possibility of making some of the more pertinent information, like event dates, more accessible. This inquiry will be passed along to those who work on the website.
- 4) The 2023 Annual Meeting is scheduled for February 5<sup>th</sup> following worship. We are in need of two individuals who are interested in serving a three year term and one individual who would serve a two year term. Contact Steve Fredrickson if you are willing to serve on the council.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned. We reviewed member and neighborhood prayer concerns and closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Barb Friese, Church Council Secretary

## **Financially Speaking**

Thank you everyone for your continued financial support of Balsam Lutheran. Our general fund balance as of January 31 is \$53,958.82. We have had some

significant expenses that were incurred and paid in January and continuing into February. These include the completion of the computer system upgrade, improvements to our sound system, and our worker's compensation insurance premium.

We face increases this year in expenses much the same as we are all experiencing in our own households. I hope that we can continue our financial stability in 2023. Please prayerfully continue your generous contributions to our general fund and special projects. All is so much appreciated.

The big news is that we have continued to reduce our building fund debt to around \$84,000. Watch the sign at church for a big change after our February payment clears! Please continue to give to the debt reduction in addition to your general fund offering. As I have said before, every extra dollar of principal that we pay means less interest expense.

In Christ,  
Gail Peterson, Treasurer

**Salvation Army & Silent Messengers: Celebrating a Savior**

Sunday March 12th 1pm Soup Lunch  
2pm Show begins! Assembly of God Church Rice Lake, WI Come for this presentation of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Doors Open at 1pm for Soup Lunch and show

begins at 2pm! Free will offering and proceeds benefit Family House of Polk and Barron County. RSVP appreciated but not required. RSVP by calling 715-912-2834

February "Birth" days	
3 Robbie LaBathe 12 Julie Hammer 14 Jon Karsten	22 Sue Bergren 24 Les Markee 26 Cherae Wilson

**THANK YOU!**  
*THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!*

**A Big Thanks you to all who took part in our first annual talent/ variety show and potato bake.** It took a bunch of folks to make it all happen. We raised over \$600 that will go to helping out the whole community! Thanks!~!

**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 about 115 households each month at the present time. (155 pounds of food) 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.

## **W/ELCA MEETING MINUTES**

January 22, 2023

The secretary's and treasurer's reports were accepted as printed.

Sue Albright is retiring as president. Jane Karsten agreed to be President, with Bonnie Corcoran as Vice President. Vicki moved to elect these two, seconded by Sue.

The spring salad luncheon was discussed, probably toward the end of April. Sue will check when the Apple River spring event takes place. The planning meeting for the spring luncheon will be on February 19.

Taunya moved to adjourn. Gail seconded. Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bonnie Corcoran, Vice President

### **Current Church Council**

Current Council members include Sue Albright, Gail Peterson, Ruth Hart, Bruce Hammer, Bob LaBathe, Steve Fredrickson, Jon Karsten and Mike Christensen.

### **Luther Point**

Luther Point Bible Camp is finding it to be very difficult to hire enough young people to staff the camp. To help with this they are asking for many adult volunteers to help for a shift or 2 or 5. If anyone can volunteer for multiple days in a row

they can provide housing and food. There is a special need for nurses.

### **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 [botolson@amerytel.net](mailto:botolson@amerytel.net).
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### **Remember to save:**

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

Aluminum cans for camperships

**In the New Testament, love is more of a verb than a noun. It has more to do with acting than with feeling. The call to love is not so much a call to a certain state of feeling as it is to a quality of action.**

**- R. C. Sproul**