

BELLWETHER

The one that takes the lead or sets the example.
February 2026



From Epiphany to Lent: A Turning of the Season

On January 18th our congregation celebrated its congregational meeting where reports were received and finances explained. There is a bright future for Lamb of God Lutheran Church. As the season of Epiphany comes to a close, we find ourselves standing at a spiritual threshold. Epiphany has been a time of light—of recognizing who Jesus is and how God is revealed in him to the world. Through stories of calling, healing, teaching, and transformation, we have been reminded that Christ's light shines not only for a moment, but into *every corner of our lives*. As Epiphany ends, that light does not fade; instead, it guides us into the deeper, more reflective journey of Lent.

Our Lenten journey begins on February 18th with our Ash Wednesday liturgy, inviting us into a season of prayer, repentance, and renewal. Lent is not about rushing toward Easter, but about slowing down and making space for honesty before God and openness to transformation. It is a time to examine our hearts, to listen more carefully, and to remember that God's grace meets us even in the wilderness. This journey calls us, Lamb of God Lutheran Church, to walk together as a community, supporting one another as we seek to grow in faith.

To help ground us during Lent, we will gather for a Wednesday morning Bible study on the Book of Psalms. The Psalms give voice to the full range of human experience—joy and sorrow, hope and doubt, praise and lament, and they teach us how to pray faithfully before God. As we move from the light of Epiphany into the reflective path of Lent, this study will offer a meaningful way to deepen our prayer life and to stay rooted in Scripture. We invite you to join us as we continue this sacred journey together, trusting that God is at work in every season.

Pastor Greg

LAMB OF GOD LUTHERAN 901 Scenic Drive, Haines City, FL phone: (863) 421-2811

<https://lambogodhainescity.com/>

Office hours are 9-5 Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

My Sister's Closet Boutique hours as posted.

Lamb of God Community Food Pantry hours by appointment.

Service in English at 10am on Sunday, Service in Spanish at 11:45am on Sunday

Online service streamed at 10am via YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0ps8yFfbmFCVw-PCkWATow>

BELLWETHER FEBRUARY 2026 (The newsletter of LOG Lutheran Church)

On January 15, was our 2026 Annual meeting where council/committee reports were received. During the meeting, our council president, LaMar Grafft, shared the following message and noted how the Holy Spirit moved him at 1:30 am the night before to write it. It certainly seemed to meet with the Spirit's guidance for Pastor Greg's sermon that morning too. I felt it important for all to hear, so here is the text of LaMar's message.

Welcome everyone, and thank you so much for staying here with us for the meeting. We value your input and your time. I'm not going to talk about my report for the year. It's in your pamphlet in both English and Spanish. I would like to say, up front, that this is YOUR church, and no question is too small or common or unimportant to hear. If you have something to say, please feel free to say it. Also, if you think I have misspoken, say something...it's like being that the airport... if you see (or hear) something, say something.

*I want to talk a few minutes about your **time** at LOG. I believe that it is vital for our spiritual wellbeing to come to church regularly. I see most of you in church every week, and I love that. I savor Sunday mornings to hear the word preached with some fire and an unmistakable message. You may see me crying from time to time... that is healing that is happening right before your eyes. It is so vital that we come for that, and I believe we all need that.*

Part of the reason we come to church is for the connections we make, the friends and social support. Most of us could use more Christian fellowship. Part of that can occur during church with those around us, and part at planned activities by volunteering our time and talents. We have so many activities to many of you are already involved in, that I hesitate to mention them for fear that I'll miss one or three. But let me give you some examples: If you enjoy being inside the church, there's My Sister's Closet, the Sew 'n Sews, the Altar Guild, being an Usher, Greeter, Counter, Bell Choir, Sunday School. We always need more help in the ESL classes, kitchen, office, food pantry, spring cleaning, decorating, and dozens of maintenance jobs.

*If you like being outside the church, there's still dozens of maintenance jobs, grounds, the Memorial Garden, Unity in the Community, and House Blest. We would love for you to help with any of these activities, and if you'd like more information, feel free to ask any council member how you can be more involved. As you all know, our expenses are large, it's a huge building. Remember the electric bill for one month this summer was \$1,900! Our current electric bill was \$400. You have been faithful to LOG in your giving, and I thank you for that. Keep in mind you can give electronically, which can be helpful to both you and us. Also keep in mind filling out a pledge card can help us with our planning for the year. Thank you again, and there will be refreshments in the fellowship hall **after** the meeting. LaMar*

Blessed in the Light, Marked by the Cross

Walking with Christ from Epiphany into Lent

The month of February is already upon us, and this month is notable for finishing the Sundays after Epiphany, when Christ's bright light has been shining on us, and for the first Days of Lent, starting with Ash Wednesday on February 18. The end of Epiphany gives us one Sunday on Christ's great Beatitudes, one on being the light of the world, and culminates in Transfiguration Sunday, when Christ's face shines brightly on the mountain.



I love using Christ's Beatitudes when the flock is worried or fearful: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted!" (Matthew 5:4). Even in our worst moments, when we think God will never answer our prayers or cover us—such as when we are sick or dying—remember He is telling us, "regardless of what you see and feel, I am present and giving you the greatest blessing anyone can have."

What is that blessing? It is His own living presence in the body and blood, so that He will take our sin and death and give us His forgiveness and life instead. As Luther says in our Small Catechism,

"For where there is forgiveness of sin there is surely life and salvation"

(The Sacrament of the Altar).

Lent will be the time when we hear Christ absolve us from fear and anxiety. His transfiguration on the mountain means he is the bright light, even when we do not see Him. Then, one last thing for this month: Jesus will tell us not to lose our saltiness!

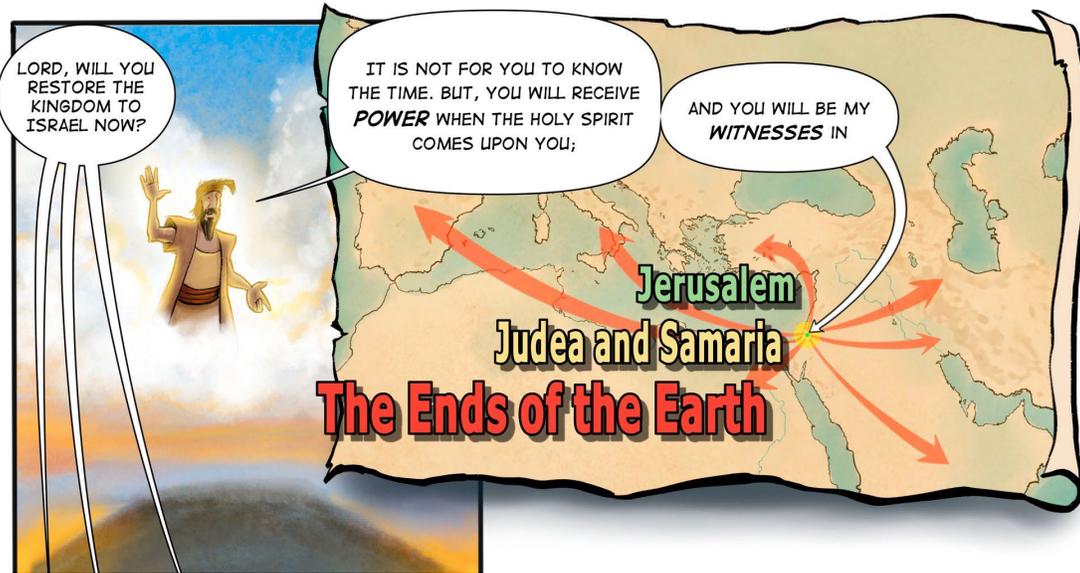
"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?" (Matthew 5:13).

You are salt because he baptized you. Now don't run around as if you don't believe this—even when you do not see or feel Christ. He will show up, and show off, but in the meantime have no fear—listen to His promise that He has already saved you and made you His own. Then none of us will lose our salt while we wait in faith to see Him in His glory, as He was revealed at his Transfiguration (Matthew 17:2).

Blessed are you, *Pr. Beatrice B. D'Angelo*

Thank You

We would like to thank everyone for their time, cards, and well wishes on our 25th wedding anniversary. LOG is such a great congregation to be a part of. Rita and LaMar Grafft



Our Adult Sunday School Class is studying the **Acts of the Apostles**. We would like to invite you to join us. We are using an illustrated text that comes from Pastor Steve Thomason, a pastor, artist and seminary teacher from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. We will look at the struggles and triumphs of the early Christian Church. Their experiences in ministry in our world have lots of similarities to living in our world today. Please join us. Class meets on Sunday Mornings at 8:45 am in the Fellowship Hall. Hey, we're Good Lutherans...There are coffee and snacks available, too.

Haines City Parks & Recreation

FOR MORE INFORMATION
 Haines City Parks & Recreation
 555 Ledwith Avenue, Haines City, FL 33844
 (863) 421-3700
 www.hainescity.com

Brushes & Bites
 VALENTINE'S EDITION

Paint a Valentine's themed canvas

\$10 per person
 \$15 per couple
 Space is Limited

February 12 | 6:00- 8:00PM
 Lake Eva Community Center
 555 Ledwith Ave
 Haines City, FL 33844

Ages 18+ | Supplies & Refreshments Provided
 Registration: Day of Event



Purple Yoga Mat

YOGA CLASS
 FOR ALL LEVELS

STARTING JANUARY 8TH!
 \$10 A SESSION

- One-time annual Parks and Recreation fee.
- Wear comfortable yoga clothes.
- Essential oil provided.
- Bring your own mat.

Chair Yoga- Tuesday
 Oakland Neighborhood Center
 915 Avenue E, Haines City, FL 33844
 11:00am-12:00pm

Slow Flow- Thursday
 Lake Eva Community Center
 555 Ledwith Ave, Haines City, FL 33844
 11:00am-12:00pm

With Professional

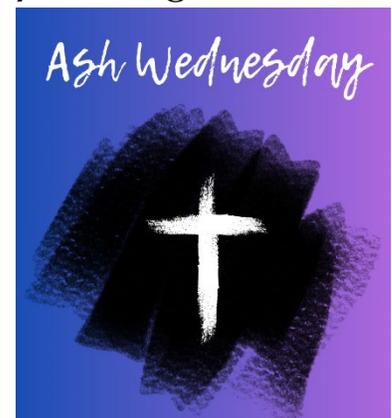
Odalis Recchia
 Owner of Purple Mat Yoga
 Yoga Instructor



Lissette is now employed part time, T, W, & TH from 9-5. Outside of those hours, please leave a message on the church phone system (863) 421-2811.

Coming into Lent we are preparing for LambFest to be held on March 27-29. Please be sure to bring in gently used (or new!) items but no TVs. Items can be received by one of the committee members on Sunday morning, Tuesday morning when Finance committee is on hand, and on Wednesday morning when David is helping in the office. We are trying to keep this off of Lissette's hands (and desk!) as her hours have been reduced due to LOG finances. She has enough work to complete in those 24 hours. In any case, our church runs on volunteers, and we can always include you in the small group that helps keep our church moving forward.

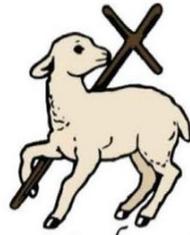
Lent (not LINT) is our holy season of atonement. It takes place the 6 weeks before Easter and begins with Ash Wednesday which is **February 18** this year. We'll gather for an evening service ([at 6pm](#)) that day for the dispensation of ashes on our forehead in remembrance that we are dust and will return to it. Subsequently, each Wednesday morning at 10:30am, we can gather to study the Psalms followed by a time of fellowship to enjoy your brown bag lunch (whatever you bring) with others at LOG. Pastor Greg is preparing this study.



Community Food Pantry

*Free food to supplement
yours when most needed.*

*Comida gratis para
complementar la tuya
cuando más lo necesitas.*



Lamb of God
CORDERO DE DIOS | LUTHERAN CHURCH



*LOG family members
support House Blest Food
Pantry by giving of time,
finances, and food.*

Have you every experience true hunger? I mean, having no food, and going without nourishment. I have had that experience when I went without a job for a few weeks and no money either. Lucky for me, the local church “let” me paint some of the inside rooms to earn some money. However, thankfully most of us attending Lamb of God do not have these issues. But, out of our plenty, and in following what Jesus said to Peter, we can help feed His sheep, those being our friends and community. LOG has a community food pantry (LOGCFP) which has now moved under the umbrella of My Sister’s Closet Boutique ministry. Jackson Eastridge has started on his Eagle Project to build a more permanent structure in the Fellowship Hall.

We appreciate all that you, the LOG family, have done in support of the LOGCFP and Jackson. We also provide food and volunteers on the 1st and 3rd Fridays at House Blest which is located at New Horizon UMC in Haines City. And, we regularly receive an email blast from the office saying there is produce available. This produce has been brought by Kathy as it was donated from a local store almost each week.

See Ruben/Marisol or Diane Kresge for more info on LOGCFP and Kathy Dierker, Lamar/Rita Graft, or Pastor Greg/Letty for more information about House Blest. This food is another way LOG supports the community and follows Christ’s commission to “Feed my sheep” John 21:17.

Speaking of Food!!!! Did you get your LOG Cookbook?

The recipes were gathered by members of the congregation and donated. All proceeds support the Fellowship Committee activities and supplies for the kitchen. See LuAnne or Pam Thomas.

THRIVENT RECEIVES ACCOLADES FROM FORTUNE MAGAZINE.

“Being named one of the World’s Most Admired Companies underscores the progress we’re making to transform Thrivent into a modern, purpose-based financial services organization,” said Terry Rasmussen, president and chief executive officer of Thrivent. “I’m proud of how our teams are strengthening client relationships, enabling lives of service and faith, and positioning us to serve future generations with even greater clarity, confidence and care — reflecting both our heritage and the momentum we’re building.”

<https://newsroom.thrivent.com/2026-01-21-Fortune-Names-Thrivent-as-One-of-the-Worlds-Most-Admired-Companies>

Here at Lamb of God Lutheran, there are several individuals who are using Thrivent (formerly Lutheran Brotherhood, and Aid Association for Lutherans) as a means to manage financial wealth. Some of us are not financially wealthy in an ordinary measure, however with Thrivent, donations from the company are regularly directed to LOG, and this provides more support. If you are a Thrivent member, please consider directing some or all of your “Choice Dollars” to LOG. Additionally, we have many projects supporting the community through LOG which could benefit from the Action Cards, just another option where Thrivent supports us. One such Action Card is being used by our Thrivent contact, Rose Pagan as you see below.

I just wanted to follow-up with you to let you know that I am donating one of my Action Team Projects to Lamb of God with the purpose of restocking the Food Pantry. With that being said, please send me a list of your needed items. I look forward to going shopping and delivering the items to you and My Sister’s Closet. Blessings, Rose Pagan, BFA™, FIC, Financial Advisor, Southeast Advisor Group

Lisette’s response to Rose:

Here are the items we are in need of:

1. Canned tuna, chicken, or Spam;
2. Parmalat (shelf-stable milk);
3. Pancake mix and syrup;
4. Peanut butter and jelly;
5. Applesauce or canned fruit.

We are truly excited and grateful to be receiving this donation from you. It is wonderful to see how Thrivent Action Team cards continue to make a meaningful impact in our community. We are also looking forward to the installation of the new shelves by Jackson Eastridge—made possible through a combination of a Thrivent Action card and fundraising efforts.

Pedro and Maritza celebrated the baptism of granddaughter, Catalina Michelle Concepcion.

Another sister is added to the family of God. Isn't she beautiful?



LOG is transitioning & it's a good place to be <https://lambogodhainescity.com/>

If you missed any of the services, please be sure to go to YouTube where you can watch the entire service, or just Pastor Greg's fantastic sermons.

<https://www.youtube.com/@lambogodhainescity/streams>

Sunday morning stream the service when you're away or unable to come to church. <https://lambogodhainescity.com/live-stream>

Please be sure to **comment, review, like, follow, or any of the social media things available.** <https://www.facebook.com/lambogodhainescity>

Review by saying what you like!

Doing so helps other find LOG so

we need your help. Whether you

are on Facebook , Instagram ,

Twitter/X , Yelp! , Nextdoor ,

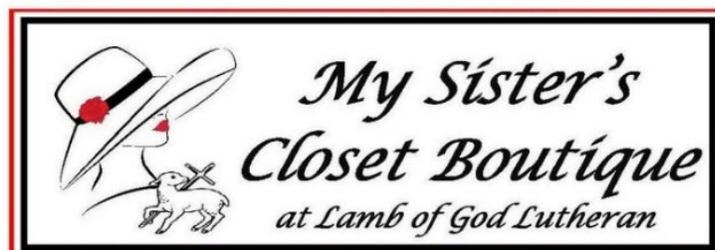
or YouTube , or any of those which I have no clue about.



LOG Outreach Efforts! MSCB & MBC – you helped!

Remember we opened MSCB to the community last month and was greatly received. The donations you provided, which may not be used for MSCB or My

Brother's Closet, go into the St. Pauly Clothing Shed off the parking lot. Please be sure to continue your donations AND to tell your friends and neighbors that LOG accepts donations. While this is focused on supporting the community, between MSCB and St. Pauly Textile, LOG has financially benefited with nearly \$1,500 added to the budget, and not having to come from your financial donations to the church. **Thank you!!!**



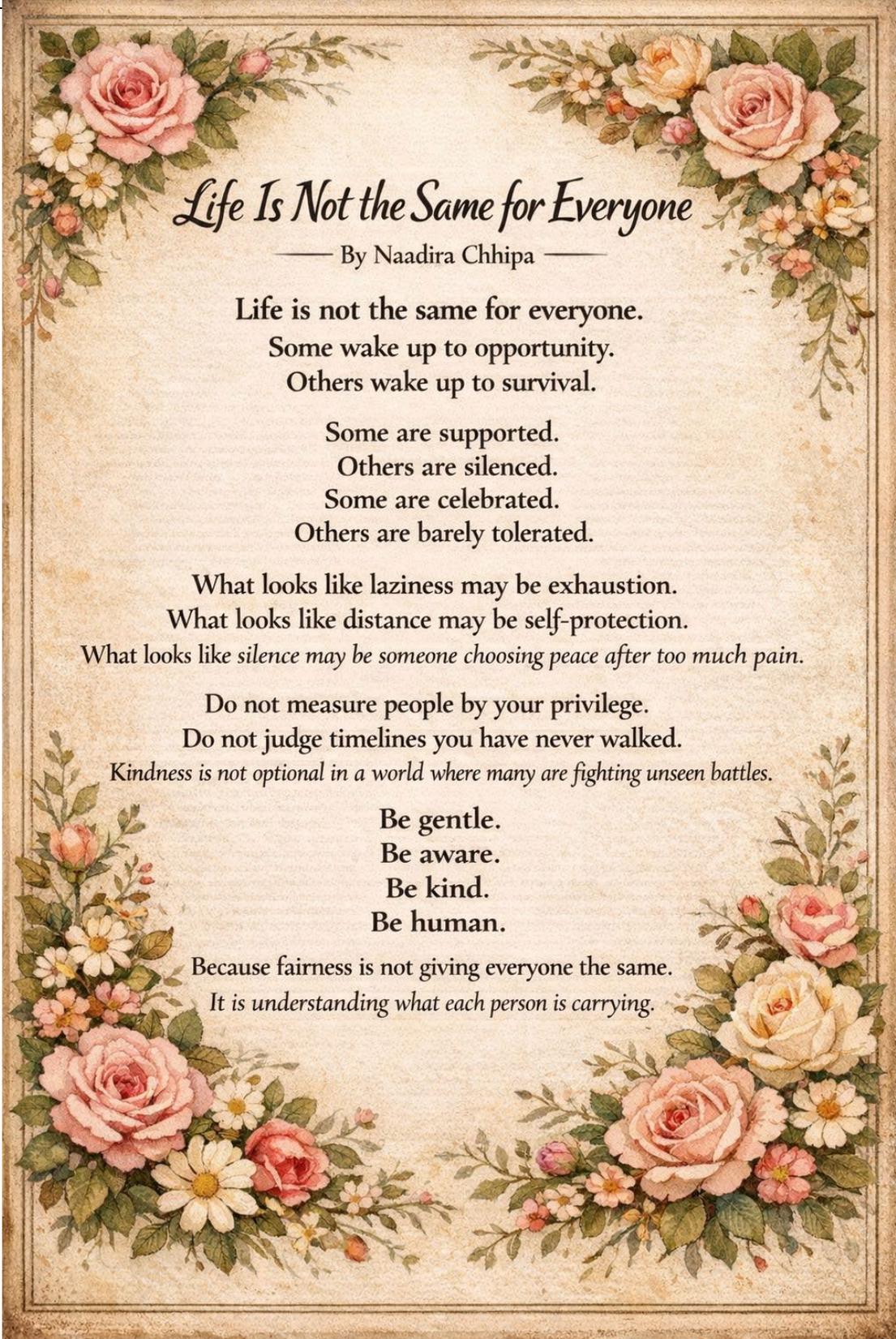
MY BROTHER'S CLOSET

A place for men & boys to buy gently used business type or casual clothing when most needed.



Your LOG Council shared with the MSCB leadership the goal of including children's and men's items in addition to the original ministry of ladies. Marisol & Ruben Arocho Velazquez, took on the mantle of leadership for My Brother's Closet as a smaller subsidiary. We thank them for their leadership and thank YOU for your continued donations. MSCB continues to be open the first Saturday each week and other times by appointment. MSCB volunteers have also taken on the job with the Lamb of God Community Food Pantry. Thank YOU for bringing your donations of food, clothing, and accessories for each of these vital ministries by the LOG family.

Each of us is different and have experienced life differently, too. Please keep this in mind when there is a disagreement with someone because you don't know what that person comes from.



Life Is Not the Same for Everyone

— By Naadira Chhipa —

Life is not the same for everyone.

Some wake up to opportunity.

Others wake up to survival.

Some are supported.

Others are silenced.

Some are celebrated.

Others are barely tolerated.

What looks like laziness may be exhaustion.

What looks like distance may be self-protection.

What looks like silence may be someone choosing peace after too much pain.

Do not measure people by your privilege.

Do not judge timelines you have never walked.

Kindness is not optional in a world where many are fighting unseen battles.

Be gentle.

Be aware.

Be kind.

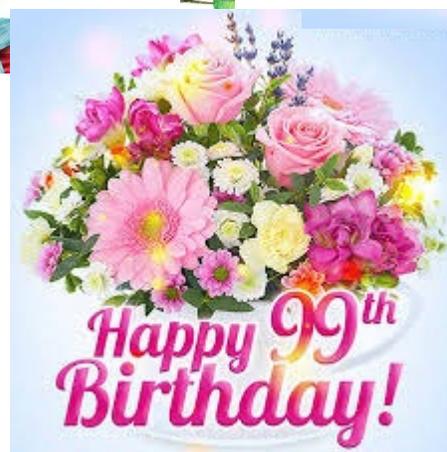
Be human.

Because fairness is not giving everyone the same.

It is understanding what each person is carrying.

February Celebrations

Bonnie Chastain	02/03
Rick Kresge	02/08
Bill Quinlan, Jr.	02/09
Paul Mahovlich	02/12
Frank Farrugia	02/18
Joyce Gulliford	02/19
Crystal Valle	02/20
Pam Thomas	02/22
Robyn Calero	02/23
Margena Howard	02/23
Annie Frederick	02/25
Bonnie Chastain	02/03
Rick Kresge	02/08
Bill Quinlan, Jr.	02/09
Paul Mahovlich	02/12
Frank Farrugia	02/18



Margena!



02/09 Joni & Kurt McLaughlin
02/17 Bill Jr. & Carmen Quinlan



Lutheran World Relief gathers and distributes many items across the world to those in need. Handmade quilts are one portion (albeit a LARGE portion) and LOG Sew 'n Sews are a part of that.

You regularly hear us beg for help, and even 1 hour is beneficial. In 2025, LWR distributed over **315,818** quilts worldwide. A total of **114,038 quilts were distributed right here in the USA** as disaster struck several times. It's with your help that LWR and our Sew 'n Sews can do this much needed work.



**MORE THAN EVER,
OUR NEIGHBORS NEED THE
COMFORT OF YOUR QUILTS & KITS!**



Dear Partner in Ministry,

Thank you for all the ways you lead your congregation to share God's love with your neighbors around the world! We are proud to have partnered with churches like yours in this calling since 1945.

If yours is one of the churches that has been making quilts and kits with us since the beginning — or even for a few months or years — you are the incredible heartbeat of this ministry. THANK YOU! Your generosity provided more than **800,000 quilts and kits** last year for people in need in 15 countries.

If your congregation has not engaged with Lutheran World Relief in this way before, the Quilt & Kit Ministry is the **perfect opportunity to get your hands busy** to love and serve your neighbors in need. (Assembling kits is a wonderful activity for 4-year-olds and 94-year-olds alike!)

Enclosed is our latest **QUILT & KIT MINISTRY GUIDE**. **Please share this guide with the appropriate groups within your congregation.** The backside of this letter highlights other important updates for group leaders.

As we navigate these unprecedented times — when crises are more frequent, disasters are more severe and conflicts affect more innocent people than ever — **your partnership in this ministry has never been more vital.**

Thank you for joining this effort to share the love of Christ with neighbors near and far ... until your love reaches every neighbor.

In Christ,



Lisa Kipp

REV. LISA KIPP

Director of
Congregational Engagement

P.S. If you have questions about the Quilt & Kit Ministry, you can always contact our incredible team at **410 230 2708** or **quiltsandkits@lwr.org**.





vanco

VANCO online giving. Why VANCO? It's safe and secure.

It's a way to give automatically. It can be taken directly from your checking account. It can also accept a credit or debit card. If you earn points on a credit card, this is a great way to support LOG through your regular giving and *earn points while doing it*. It's truly simple to set-up and use, plus you can change it every month if you'd like. Using VANCO can help cut down on time for counting and possible errors in reporting your donations (no need for expensive envelopes either). The online giving at LOG has increased 180% from last year (more folks are using it).

The "fee" for using a credit card is minimal compared to many merchants and LOG will absorb that cost if you don't want to pay it. We want to ensure you feel comfortable providing your tithes and offerings out of the Lord's abundance of love to you. Questions? See Paul or Mark Bockelman, Jane Messmer, Philippa White, or David Reedy for more info or support to get started. Give it a try by scanning the QR code to the right.



1. This includes being a greeter (a smiling face, help at the front door, and maybe a handshake).
2. Ushers (a little training, but not bad at all!).
3. Read the lessons (we help with the big words!).
4. Help with the Lamb of God food pantry distribution (open Monday-Wednesday in the morning).
5. Sing robustly during services (remember, we're going for a "joyful noise").
6. Sign up to receive our email prayer list and say a prayer or two (talk with Letty Villalón).
7. Wear your name tag as it surely makes it easier to chat (if you need one, there's a signup sheet on at the visitor station).
8. Stay for a few minutes following the service to chat (plus coffee and a snack).
9. Bring in a snack to share after the church service.
10. Share activities or things that work especially well at your church up north. We're happy to plagiarize!
11. Attend Adult Sunday School, which occurs before the worship service
12. Get on our mailing list so you can keep up with activities, even when you are back north.
13. Please consider tithing, it is truly simple with VANCO and we can use the funds to help pay for the air conditioning!!!

Thanks for being with us - we love it!