

# The Prairie Willow

A joint newsletter for Shepherd of the Hills and West Zion Lutheran Churches

SOTH March 2026

## Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church (SOTH)

201 Falcon Avenue  
Benson, MN 56215  
320-843-3408

[soth2008@live.com](mailto:soth2008@live.com)

[www.shepherdofthehillslc.com](http://www.shepherdofthehillslc.com)

Facebook: 

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church ELCA



## West Zion Lutheran Church (WZ)

29190 357<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Hancock, MN 56244  
320-239-4195

[wzlutheranchurch@gmail.com](mailto:wzlutheranchurch@gmail.com)

[www.westzionlutheranchurch.com](http://www.westzionlutheranchurch.com)

Facebook: 

West Zion Lutheran Church



## Information & Contacts

*Pastor Steve Carmany*

507-828-3702

[carmanysteve@gmail.com](mailto:carmanysteve@gmail.com)

### Office Secretaries

*Betsy Anderson*

320-444-2425

[betsyanderson3@hotmail.com](mailto:betsyanderson3@hotmail.com)

*Jim Ostlie*

320-444-1113

[jtostlie@yahoo.com](mailto:jtostlie@yahoo.com)

### Custodians

*Stephanie Smith – SOTH*

320-766-3945

*Gary & Connie Williams – WZ*

320-843-4417

## Pastor's Message



By Pastor Steve Carmany

### Greetings from Pastor Steve: *For Such a Time as This!*

*“Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.” Esther 4:14*

This year, our season Lent is being filled with inspiring stories of everyday people from the Bible. We are learning about and learning from: parents in slavery; skilled craftsmen and seamstresses; elderly men and women of deep faith; disgraced grandsons and orphaned daughters. Many of these Biblical names may be rather unfamiliar to us, like: Jochebed, Jethro, Bezalel, Anna, Phoebe and Epaphroditus.

And yet all of them have lives of faith that can show us God's calling in our lives..... God's work in the midst of great challenges..... and God's guidance everyday as we too can hear God's voice saying: ***“Who knows? Perhaps you too are here for just such a time as this!”***

All Wednesday services are 6:30pm @ SOTH, while the Sunday services remain at our regular times and rotations. Also, all service s will be live streamed on the Facebook Pages of each host congregation. ***Continued on next page...***

# Pastor's Message Continued...

Here is a listing of the people, the scriptures and the services we get to enjoy this year throughout Lent:

## Lenten Bible Stories and Services:

Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18: Esther: Esther 2:15-18; 3:8-10; 4:13-17

Sunday, Feb. 22: Jochebed, Mother of Moses: Exodus 1:8-16; Exodus 2:1-10

Wed., Feb. 25: Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses's father-in-law: Exodus 18:1; 10-27

Sunday, Mar. 1: Bezalel & Oholiab & Artisans Exodus 31:1-11; 37:1-7; 39:32-33; 43

Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>: Zelophehad's Daughters - Numbers 27:1-13

Sunday, Mar. 8<sup>th</sup>: Ruth & Naomi - Ruth 1:1-19

Wednesday, Mar. 11<sup>th</sup>: Anna & Simeon Awaiting Jesus's Birth - Luke 2: 25-38

Sunday, Mar. 15<sup>th</sup>: "In Memory of Her...the Unnamed Woman" - Matt.26:1-16

Wednesday, Mar. 18<sup>th</sup>: A Centurian, Nicodemus & Joseph of Arimathea - John 3:1-10; 19:38-42

Sunday, Mar. 22<sup>nd</sup>: Phoebe, Christian Deacon & the Church in Rome - Romans 1:1-7; 16:1-16

Wednesday, Mar. 25<sup>th</sup>: Timothy & Epaphroditus: Faithful Companions - Philippians 2:19-30

Palm Sunday, Mar. 29<sup>th</sup>: (SOTH – 9am; WZ – 11am)

Maundy Thursday, Apr. 2: (EZ @ 4pm; SOTH: Meal @ 5:30-6:30pm; Service @ 6:30pm)

Good Friday, Apr. 3: (WZ @ 6:30pm)

Easter Sunday, Apr. 5<sup>th</sup>: (SOTH @ 7:30am, Breakfast afterwards; WZ @ 9:15am; EZ @ 11am)



## Maundy Thursday Meal

April 2, 2026

5:30-6:30PM

Free Will Offering

Hosted by the  
Shepherd of the Hills  
Luther League

Worship follows at 6:30PM

Shepherd of the Hills  
Lutheran Church



**SONRISE  
EASTER BREAKFAST**

**FOLLOWING THE 7:30AM  
WORSHIP SERVICE**

**FUNDRAISER BY THE LUTHER LEAGUE**

**FREE WILL DONATION**

201 FALCON AVENUE, SWIFT FALLS, MN



# Parish Calendar

## SOTH

Sunday, March 1	9 am - Worship, fellowship to follow 10 am - Sunday School
Wednesday, March 4	6:30 pm Lenten Service 7 pm - Church Council
Wednesday, March 11	6:30 pm Lenten Service
Sunday, March 15	9 am - Worship, fellowship to follow 10 am - Sunday School 10:30 am – Church Council
Wednesday, March 18	6:30 pm Lenten Service
Sunday, March 29	Palm Sunday: 9 am - Worship, Fellowship to follow 10 am – Sunday School
Thursday, April 2	Maundy Thursday – Meal at 5:30 pm, Service at 6:30 pm.
Sunday, April 5	EASTER – 7:30 am Worship followed by Easter Breakfast No Sunday School

## WEST ZION

Sunday, March 1	11 am -WZ Worship
Sunday, March 15	11 am - Worship
Sunday, March 29	11 am - Worship
Friday, April 3	Good Friday – 6:30 pm Service
Sunday, April 5	EASTER – 9:15 am Worship

## EAST ZION

Sunday, March 8	11AM -EZ Worship
Sunday, March 22	11AM -EZ Worship
Sunday, March 8	11AM -EZ Worship
Sunday, March 22	11AM -EZ Worship
Thursday, April 2	Maundy Thursday – 4:30 pm Service
Sunday, April 5	EASTER – 11 am Worship

## Palm Sunday Event

Our Redeemers Lutheran is inviting all singers to join them at 4PM on Sundays, March 8, 15 and 22 and be part of the Benson Community of Christians Palm Sunday Program on March 29 at 7PM titled, "Who Do You Say That I Am." Contact Rachel Wilcox at Our Redeemers with questions. 320.760.7227

## Annual Report Correction

**SOTH had one baptism in 2025.  
Kinsley Marie Lagred, born 1/16/25  
and baptized on 4/13/25  
We apologize for not realizing we had  
left it out of the annual report.**

**Worship services are live streamed on the Facebook page of each specific church.  
Search and follow East Zion Lutheran, West Zion Lutheran or Shepherd of the Hills ELCA.**

# Schedules

## SOTH Computer Operators & Acolyte Schedule

	<u>Computer</u>	<u>Acolyte</u>
March 1	Jacey Reich/Blake Larson	Aletta Larson
March 15	Aletta Larson/Shelbie Anderson	Jacey Reich
March 29	Coy Kobbermann/Logan Hight	Lily Wrobleski

## SOTH Fellowship Schedule

March 1	Lori Tostenson/JR & Jenny Trump
March 15	Steve & Roxanne Nelson/Jim & Laura Ostlie
March 29	Keith & Debbie Flaten/Randy & Kim Skare
April 5	Luther League Easter Breakfast
April 12	Lynn & Shellie Larson/Chris & Laura Larson
April 26	Troy & Michelle Nelson/Jason & Betsy Anderson
May 10	Confirmation Sunday

## SOTH Altar Guild

February	Carrie Anderson/Jenny Trump
March	Debbie Flaten/Ashley Skarsten
April	Betsy Anderson/Michelle Nelson
May	Gail Svor/Janet Mitteness

## Scandi Haven Lenten Bible Study

Wednesdays, 12:45pm; Mar. 4 – Mar. 25



**SUPPORT LOCAL FOOD SHELVES**

**March 1 - April 6, 2026**

Find your local food shelf or donate at [gmcc.org/march-campaign](http://gmcc.org/march-campaign).

**MN Food Share**

**MARCH CAMPAIGN**

General Mills Foundation, CenterPoint Energy, BlueCross BlueShield Minnesota, AgriBank, C.H. ROBINSON, Furniture MART, LAND LAKES INC.

# Prayer Requests



LAURA JERGENSON, MARGE ANDERSON, SARA & JON REICH, SUE CARSON, DICK SEIBERT

# Announcements

## **EAST ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH INFORMATION**

28745 County Road 10

Starbuck, MN 56381

**Phone:** 320-239-4195

**Email:** [office@eastzionlutheranchurch.org](mailto:office@eastzionlutheranchurch.org)

**Interim Administrative Assistant:** Mary Jo Forbord

**Custodian:** Sandy Knutson, 320-843-4342

**Website:** [eastzionlutheranchurch.org](http://eastzionlutheranchurch.org)

**Facebook:** East Zion Lutheran Church

## **SOTH CHURCH RENTAL**

Make sure to visit the website, speak with a church secretary or grab a facility use policy contract from the church office door to reserve the church, its tables and or chairs for your special events!

## **ON-LINE GIVING OPTIONS**

To make it easier to give, SOTH and West Zion have partnered with Tith.le. Tith.le offers automatic withdrawals from an account of your choice or from a credit card. Visit the Shepherd of the Hills website under giving or the West Zion website under give to learn more and sign up! Tith.le is recommended by the Southwest Synod of the ELCA and is notably safe!

## **BULLETIN DEADLINE**

Announcements for bulletins must be emailed to [soth2008@live.com](mailto:soth2008@live.com) or call/text 320-444-1113 by noon Tuesday prior to church service.

## **NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**

All items for the Prairie Willow newsletter need to be emailed to [soth2008@live.com](mailto:soth2008@live.com) by noon on the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month. You can also text or call 320-444-1113.

## **CONFIRMATION DURING LENT**

Our confirmations students will help with each of the 6:30pm Wednesday services at SOTH. They will divide up the weekly tasks of: Computer Operators, Acolytes, Bell Ringer, etc. And on Maundy Thursday, Apr. 2, they and their families will serve a **Maundy Thursday Meal** from 5:30pm-6:30pm. Many thanks for all their help, parents included!!!

## **GLACIAL RIDGE CONFERENCE ANNUAL MEETING**

Each of our three congregations are encouraged to have at least 4-6 people attend our annual GRC meeting. This year it should prove to be quite informative and beneficial to our churches because of its emphasis on what other congregations have learned as they look for new pastors and leaders. The meeting will be held at Kongsvinger Lutheran Church, rural Donelly, 3pm-4:30pm, on Sunday afternoon, March 15<sup>th</sup>. Please let your council president know if you'd like to attend.

# Church Council Reports

## From the Secretary...

### February 11, 2026 Congregational Council Minutes

The meeting was called to order by President, Stephanie Smith.

#### Members Present:

#### **Secretary's Report by Janine Ellingson**

- The minutes from the January 2026 meeting were reviewed. Laura Ostlie made a motion to approve the minutes with a second by Laura Larson. No further questions. Motions approved unanimously.

#### **Treasurers Report by Roxanne Nelson**

- Roxanne presented the treasurer's report. Laura Ostlie made a motion to approve the January Treasurer's report. Troy Nelson seconded. No further questions. Motion approved unanimously.

#### **Pastor's Report by Steve Carmany:**

- Lent begins on Ash Wednesday February 18th. (next week!) Which is 3 weeks earlier than last year. We will have a soup/sandwich meal served on Ash Wednesday before the 6:30 service. Food to be served starting at 5:30. Served by the Luther League. Donations accepted towards the Luther League. This year's Lent Theme: From Queen Esther: Lifting Up the Stories of lesser-known people of the bible. SOTH will have a 6:30 Wednesday service each Wednesday of lent. Every Wednesday and Sunday service during lent will follow this theme. Pastor will also provide "his people" of Scandihaven the same Lent theme weekly on Wednesdays at 1pm during this season.

#### **SERVICES:**

##### **Maundy Thursday Services:** April 2nd

EZ - 4pm

SOTH - 6:30pm

##### **Good Friday Service:** April 3rd

WZ - 6:30pm

##### **Easter Morning Services:** April 5th

SOTH - 7:30am with breakfast to follow

WZ - 9:15

EZ - 11am

***Continued on next page...***

## Council Secretary Report Continued...

### President's Report by Stephanie Smith:

- No Report.

### Trustee, Deacon and Board of Education Reports:

- **Trustee Report:** Furnace filters will be changed by trustee's quarterly. Have been monitoring fuel this winter.
- **Deacon Report:** No Report.
- **Board of Education Report:** Luther League will serve the Ash Wednesday soup and sandwich meal Feb. 18th. Sunday school remains in session. Children will be learning the 10 Commandments.

### Old Business:

- Looking to purchase one new/used lap top. Pastor will get the specs on what is needed to Jim and then we can move forward with looking for one.

**New Business:** No New Business.

**Announcements:** None.

Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

**Motion to Adjourn** by Stephanie Smith.

Next council meeting will be March 15, 2026 following church service.

Respectfully submitted by Laura Larson.

## Church Council Reports

### From the Treasurer...

Please see the last few pages of the newsletter for account balances.

Please note to take advantage of a bit more interest, we are also

Utilizing a money market account through BMO where

We can easily transfer funds as

Needed.

Sincerely,

Jim Ostlie, Treasurer



**SPRING FORWARD**  
Change Your Clocks

Remember to Spring forward the clock one hour  
on March 8!

## 2026 Budget

				2026 Budget	Spent to date
<b>1100 Missions/Donations/Memberships</b>				<b>\$910.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
1101	Benson Fire Department			\$50.00	\$0.00
1102	Glacial Ridge Conference			\$160.00	\$0.00
1103	Glenwood Retirement Village			\$200.00	\$0.00
1104	Luther Crest			\$100.00	\$0.00
1105	Lutheran Social Service			\$100.00	\$0.00
1106	Misc. Missions	<i>Based on donations</i>		\$0.00	\$0.00
1107	SW Minnesota Synod			\$300.00	\$0.00
1108	Love Fund	<i>Based on donations</i>		\$0.00	\$0.00
1109	Other			\$0.00	\$0.00

*Note Love Fund budget is carryover from previous year plus any new money given in current year*

<b>1200 Staff and Ministry</b>				<b>\$66,377.50</b>	<b>\$6,427.59</b>
1201	Church Custodial Salary			\$6,095.16	\$1,011.01
1202	Office Secretary Salary (incl. WZ portion)			\$9,142.68	\$1,518.34
1203	Organist Salary			\$1,700.00	\$303.32
1204	Pastoral Salary			\$44,511.46	\$3,286.10
1204.1	Pastoral Benefits			\$6,079.62	\$796.65
1204.2	Pastoral Mileage			\$1,800.00	\$0.00
1204.3	Pastoral Professional Development			\$525.00	\$0.00
1204.4	Pastoral Salary			\$36,106.84	\$2,489.45
1204.5	Other			\$0.00	\$0.00
1205	PowerPoint Creator Salary (incl. WZ portion)			\$1,108.20	\$183.82
1206	Pulpit Supply (sub Pastors)			\$300.00	\$0.00
1207	Employee Quarterly Taxes			\$3,200.00	\$0.00
1208	Sub organist fees			\$220.00	\$0.00
1209	Tax Prep			\$100.00	\$125.00

<b>1300 Congregational Life</b>				<b>\$6,530.64</b>	<b>\$716.88</b>
1301	Altar Supplies			\$500.00	\$40.09
1302	Church Worship Material			\$500.00	\$101.74
1303	Convention (Synod Assembly)			\$700.00	\$0.00
1304	Office Supplies/Rentals			\$3,930.64	\$575.05
1304.1	Copier Lease			\$2,805.64	\$547.53
1304.2	Copier staples/paper			\$400.00	\$0.00
1304.3	Other			\$250.00	\$27.52
1304.4	Postage			\$250.00	\$0.00
1304.5	Website Fee			\$225.00	\$0.00
1305	Other (Kitchen)			\$300.00	\$0.00
1306	Living Lutheran			\$0.00	\$0.00
1307	Transfer to Building Fund			\$0.00	\$0.00
1308	Transfer to Memorial Fund			\$0.00	\$0.00
1309	Youth Programs			\$600.00	\$0.00
1309.1	Sunday School			\$0.00	\$0.00
1309.2	Confirmation			\$0.00	\$0.00
1309.3	Graduation			\$0.00	\$0.00

1309.4	Other (VBS)			\$600.00	\$0.00
1309.5	Youth Mission Trip & Luther League expenses			\$0.00	\$0.00

**1400 Church Building/Property** **\$23,588.20**    \$4,976.09

<b>1401</b>	<b>Dept of Labor (Elevator Inspection)</b>			<b>\$100.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>1402</b>	<b>Insurance</b>			<b>\$5,500.00</b>	<b>\$756.08</b>
<b>1403</b>	<b>Mowing</b>			<b>\$700.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>1404</b>	<b>Repairs/Maintenance</b>			<b>\$1,500.00</b>	<b>\$270.25</b>
<b>1405</b>	<b>Supplies (custodial) *</b>			<b>\$500.00</b>	<b>\$25.98</b>
<b>1406</b>	<b>Utilities*</b>			<b>\$15,238.20</b>	<b>\$3,923.78</b>
1407.1	Electricity			\$4,000.00	\$500.00
1407.2	Fuel			\$5,000.00	\$2,300.70
1407.3	Phone/Internet			\$1,150.00	\$266.63
1407.4	Propane			\$4,200.00	\$660.00
1407.5	Water			\$888.20	\$73.60
1407.6	Garbage Service			\$495.00	\$122.85
<b>1408</b>	<b>Flowers</b>			<b>\$50.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>

**1500 Fundraiser Expenses** **\$200.00**    \$0.00

<b>1501</b>	<b>Harvest Dinner</b>			<b>\$200.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>1502</b>	<b>Other</b>			<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>

**Proposed Operating Budget:** **\$97,606.34**    \$12,120.56

**1600 Income** **\$97,606.34**    \$10,764.48

<b>1601</b>	<b>Youth Programs (i.e. SS &amp; VBS)</b>			<b>\$600.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>1602</b>	<b>Church Rentals</b>			<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>1603</b>	<b>Grants</b>			<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>1604</b>	<b>Interest</b>			<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.26</b>
<b>1605</b>	<b>Memorials</b>			<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
1605.1	Love Fund			\$0.00	\$0.00
1605.2	Other			\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>1606</b>	<b>Missions</b>			<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>1607</b>	<b>Mowing</b>			<b>\$700.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>1608</b>	<b>Offering-Regular (includes loose offering &amp; online)</b>			<b>\$85,286.34</b>	<b>\$9,027.22</b>
<b>1609</b>	<b>Offering-Lunch</b>			<b>\$500.00</b>	<b>\$130.00</b>
<b>1610</b>	<b>Other Income</b>			<b>\$3,000.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>1611</b>	<b>Harvest Lunch</b>			<b>\$1,300.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>1612</b>	<b>Thrivent Grant Funds</b>			<b>\$1,000.00</b>	<b>\$302.00</b>
<b>1613</b>	<b>Youth Mission Trip</b>			<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>1614</b>	<b>West Zion (shared costs)</b>			<b>\$5,220.00</b>	<b>\$1,305.00</b>

## February 2026 Financial Report

### Checking Account

Line Item	Date	Check #	Description	Payment	Deposit	Balance
1201	1/26/2026	14873	Stephanie Smith (Feb custodial)	\$503.08		\$11,438.93
1203	1/26/2026	14873	Stephanie Smith (Feb organist X4)	\$201.73		\$11,237.20
1202	1/26/2026	14874	Betsy Anderson (Feb. secretarial)	\$377.31		\$10,859.89
1202	1/26/2026	14875	Jim Ostlie (Feb. secretarial)	\$379.13		\$10,480.76
1205	1/29/2026	14876	Melissa Wroblewski (Feb. powerpoint)	\$91.47		\$10,389.29
1407.2	1/29/2026	14877	GPC (dyed fuel)	\$1,313.04		\$9,076.25
1407.4	1/29/2026	14877	GPC (propane budget plan)	\$440.00		\$8,636.25
1608	1/29/2026		Tithely-offering-regular		\$89.84	\$8,726.09
1402	1/29/2026	A	North Star Mutual Insurance	\$378.04		\$8,348.05
1612	2/2/2026		Thrivent Grant		\$276.00	\$8,624.05
1608	2/4/2026		Tithely-offering-regular		\$365.34	\$8,989.39
1407.3	2/9/2026	Auto	Federated Telephone	\$90.18		\$8,899.21
1304.1	2/9/2026	Auto	Great America Financial Services	\$211.89		\$8,687.32
1407.6	2/9/2026	Debit	West Central Sanitation	\$122.85		\$8,564.47
1407.5	2/10/2026	Auto	Culligan	\$73.60		\$8,490.87
1608	2/10/2026	Auto	Tithely-offering-regular		\$180.34	\$8,671.21
	2/10/2026	14878	Voided check wrote in error	\$0.00		\$8,405.87
	2/10/2026	14851	Voided lost check #14851		\$492.00	\$8,897.87
	2/10/2026	14879	Reissue check from 2025 (#14851)	\$492.00		\$8,405.87
1608	2/17/2026	Auto	Tithely-offering-regular		\$89.84	\$8,495.71
1209	2/18/26	14880	CDS (taxes)	\$125.00		\$8,370.71
1404	2/18/2026	14881	American Welding and Gas (Finance Charge)	\$1.00		\$8,369.71
1407.1	2/20/2026	Auto	Agralite	\$250.00		\$8,119.71
1304.1	2/26/2026	Auto	Great America Financial Services	\$211.89		\$7,907.82
1407.3	3/5/2026	Auto	Federated Telephone	\$90.18		\$7,817.64

Total Income to date 2026:

**\$9,422.82**

Total Income to date 2025:

\$7,469.98

\$1,952.84

## February Financial Report

### Savings Account

Line Item	Date	Description	Withdrawal	Deposit	Balance
1604	1/30/2026	Interest		<b>\$0.26</b>	\$26,252.03
1608	2/10/2026	Offering-Regular (1/18/25)		\$1,245.00	\$27,497.03
1609	2/10/2026	Offering-Lunch (1/18/25)		\$31.00	\$27,528.03
1608	2/10/2026	Offering-Loose (1/18/25)		\$20.00	\$27,548.03
1614	2/10/2026	West Zion shared costs (Feb)		\$435.00	\$27,983.03
1608	2/10/2026	Offering-Regular (2/1/25)		\$1,550.00	\$29,533.03
1609	2/10/2026	Offering-Lunch (2/1/25)		\$57.00	\$29,590.03
1608	2/10/2026	Offering-Loose (2/1/25)		\$30.00	\$29,620.03
1614	2/10/2026	West Zion shared costs (Mar)		\$435.00	\$30,055.03
	2/19/2026	To BMO Money Market Account	\$25,000.00		\$5,055.03

#### Mission Investment Funds

<b>6 Year Term Building Fund</b>	<b>\$78,206.45</b>
----------------------------------	--------------------

<b>Demand Checking Building Fund</b>	<b>\$9,819.29</b>
--------------------------------------	-------------------

<b>Demand Checking Memorial Fund</b>	<b>\$128.22</b>
--------------------------------------	-----------------

<b>BMO Money Market Account</b>	<b>\$25,000.00</b>
---------------------------------	--------------------