

The Prairie Willow

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

SOTH June 2026

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church (SOTH)

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Benson, MN 56215
320-843-3408

soth2008@live.com

www.shepherdofthehillslc.com

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Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church ELCA




West Zion Lutheran Church (WZ)

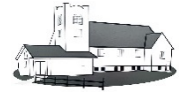
29190 357th Avenue
Hancock, MN 56244
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West Zion Lutheran Church



Information & Contacts

Pastor Steve Carmany

507-828-3702

carmanysteve@gmail.com

Office Secretaries

Betsy Anderson

320-444-2425

betsyanderson3@hotmail.com

Jim Ostlie

320-444-1113

jtostlie@yahoo.com

Custodians

Stephanie Smith – SOTH

320-766-3945

Gary & Connie Williams – WZ

320-843-4417

Pastor's Message



By Pastor Steve Carmany

"Grateful & Blessed"

"Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.1 Thessalonians 5:11
I am so grateful to have been able to share these last seven years with all of you! After announcing my retirement plans a week or so ago, it has really struck me how blessed Leanne and I have been to be included in your lives. We have felt loved and appreciated, lifted up and inspired. We thank you and will continue to think of you as friends.

And yet, I am also aware of how often you make many other people feel this same way! You are congregations and families and individuals who build up one another, and include others into your circles. You are good at being the Body of Christ in this corner of God' s Creation!

Continued on next page...

Schedule Assignments

SOTH Computer Operators & Acolyte Schedule

	<u>Computer</u>	<u>Acolyte</u>
June 7	Aletta Larson & Adult (TBD)	
June 21	Lily Wrobleski & Adult (TBD)	
July 5	Adult (TBD)	
July 19	Logan Hight & Adult (TBD)	
August 2	Coy Kobbermann & Adult (TBD)	
August 16	Jacey Reich & Adult (TBD)	
August 30	Blake Larson & Adult (TBD)	

SOTH Fellowship Schedule

No fellowship during summer months.

SOTH Altar Guild

June	Marge Anderson/Roxanne Nelson
July	Linda Amlie/Jane Petrak
August	Tammy Thompson/Doreen Thompson
September	Sheri Fahl/Brenda Nelson
October	Janine Ellingson/Laura Ostlie
November	Joyce Lagred/Tammy Thompson
December	Dee Baird/WELCA Officers

Please.note?
if.you.are.unable.to.
fulfill.a.scheduled.
duty?please.find.
someone.to.take.
your.place*

Prayer Requests



STEVE NELSON, MARGE ANDERSON, SARA & JON REICH, SUE CARSON & PHILIP SKARSTEN

Thursday Zoom Bible Study starts a New Series: *The Book of Genesis*

Everyone is encouraged jump on board this weekly, 6pm Zoom Bible Study. They are starting a New Adventure, walking through the Old Testament Book of Genesis. This will be sure to give plenty of new insights and fun conversation, surrounding the variety of stories contained in this First Book of the Bible, including: *The Creation of the World; Noah and the Ark; Abraham & Sarah; Isaac & Rebeckah; Jacob & Esau & Rachael & the 12 Sons...*

Here' s the Zoom Link for all the sessions:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87481147239?pwd=ouZwghZ84aO7jPQxnZXRPEwBqrPGgZ.1>

Announcements

MAY 10 SOTH CELEBRATED THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION OF 6 MEMBERS

2026 graduates include (L-R):

Tate Kobbermann, Benson, son of Dan & Tiffany Kobbermann

Riley Ostlie, Benson, son of Jim & Laura Ostlie

Tanner Nelson, Benson, son of Troy & Michelle Nelson

Landon Skarsten, Benson, son of Bryant & Ashley Skarsten

Shelbie Anderson, KMS, daughter of Jason & Betsy Anderson

Emily Reich, Benson, daughter of Jon & Sara Reich



CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES! BEST WISHES IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS!



MAY 10 SOTH CONFIRMED 5 MEMBERS

The 2026 Confirmand class include:

BR L-R: Pastor Steve Carmany, **Blake Larson**, the son of Chris & Laura Larson, **Coy Kobbermann**, the son of Dan and Tiffany Kobbermann, **FR L-R:** **Jacey Reich**, the daughter of Jon & Sara Reich, **Lily Wrobleski**, the daughter of Bobby & Melissa Wrobleski, & **Aletta Larson**, the daughter of Trista Hess & Justin Larson

**Congratulations in affirming
your faith on this day!
Our congregation is proud of
your accomplishment!**



Announcements

FREE PIANO AT WEST ZION

If interested, contact a council member!



EAST ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH INFORMATION

28745 County Road 10

Starbuck, MN 56381

Phone: 320-239-4195

Email: office@eastzionlutheranchurch.org

Interim Administrative Assistant: Mary Jo Forbord

Custodian: Sandy Knutson, 320-843-4342

Website: 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

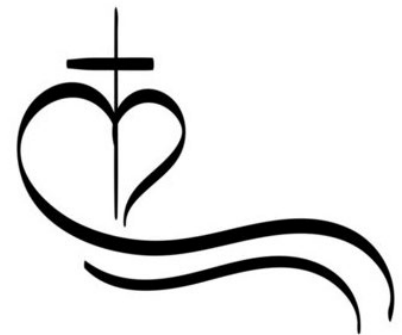
To make it easier to give, SOTH and West Zion have partnered with Tith.le. Tith.le offers automatic withdrawals from an account of your choice or from a credit card. Visit the Shepherd of the Hills website under giving or the West Zion website under give to learn more and sign up! Tith.le is recommended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

BULLETIN DEADLINE

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

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Material for newsletters must be emailed to soth2008@live.com or call/text 320-444-1113 by the 20th of each month.



MAY 10 PRE-SERVICE PIANO RECITALS

Piano teacher Stephanie Smith had three of her students participate in a recital before worship service on May 10. Students playing were Lane Larson, Claire Larson and Ellis Felt.

Claire



Lane



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL AT SOTH

VBS at SOTH will take place the first full week of June (June 1-4) from 5:00-7:30PM. Free to all youth grades K-6. Each evening a meal will be provided from 5-5:30pm, followed by Bible Stories, Music, Crafts, Fun & Games, and a lot of Christian Love!



Volunteer sign-up sheets will be on the SOTH Narthex table. Also, let Laura (320-760-4203) or the church office know (soth2008@live.com) the names and ages of children planning to come. Friends are always welcome to register as well! Thank you, Laura, for organizing this looked forward to event for our youth!

2026 SWMN SYNOD ASSEMBLY

Begins at 1130AM, Friday, June 5 and ends at 5PM, Saturday June 6 at Gustavus Adolphus College and online via Zoom. This year's theme is Grounded in Hope. The synod asks that we have one or two voting members in attendance based on our congregations size, plus one youth voting member (under 18) and one voting young adult (ages 18-30). Early rate registration by April 10 is \$175 per person. Price increases to \$225 on April 11. There are options to stay on the Gustavus campus for \$60 (single room) or \$45 (double twin bedroom) or there are motel (Americinn, Best Western Plus, Konsbruk Hotel) options in St. Peter. On campus housing does include bedding or private bathrooms.



LUTHER CREST BIBLE CAMPS

Do you have youth interested in attending summer camp? Luther Crest in Alexandria has camps for all ages and can be for a single day, a week or anywhere in between! Visit www.luthercrest.org for details and registration. Information is also available on the Narthex table. Scholarships are also available for those who qualify and can be found on the Luther Crest website. Swimming, campfires, games, crafts, bible study, great food and great friends! With that said, bring a friend! Happy camping!



SCANDI HAVEN BIBLE STUDY CONTINUES!

Wednesdays, 12:45pm. May 27, June 10 & 24

We will continue to hold mid-day Bible Studies in the chapel at Scandi Haven, every other Wednesday through June, from 12:45-1:45pm. This is a series on the Bible stories describing Jesus' appearances throughout the 40 days after his resurrection. All Are Welcome!!

Announcements

Swift County Brain Health Tour June 15-17, 2026 with Prairie Five and Countryside Public Health



INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ON:

- Brain health
- Memory loss
- Caregiver support
- P5 programs and other health resources

BOARD THE BUS FOR:

- Health screens

Two \$10 gift certificate (food only) winners will be drawn at each stop!

**Monday
June 15
3-4pm**

Danvers

Danvers Liquor Store

**Tuesday
June 16
1-2pm**

Swift Falls

Brinks Beer Joint

**Wednesday
June 17
3-4pm**

De Graff

De Graff Liquor Store



Questions: Call P5's Laura Thomas at
320-226-8861



Sponsored in part by
Southwest Initiative
Foundation, Minnesota River
Area Agency on Aging and
the Minnesota Board on
Aging



Church Council Reports

From the Secretary...

May 21, 2026 Congregational Council Minutes

The meeting was called to order by President, Stephanie Smith at 07:05 pm.

Members Present: Pastor Steve, Stephanie Smith, Rick Davidson, Ryan Davidson, Troy Nelson, Brenda Nelson, Jim Ostlie, Laura Larson, Laura Ostlie, Janine Ellingson

Secretary's Report by Janine Ellingson

- The minutes from the April 2026 meeting were reviewed. Betsy Anderson made a motion to approve the minutes with a second by Brenda Nelson. No further questions. Motion approved unanimously.

Treasurers Report by Jim Ostlie

- Jim presented the treasurer's report. We are on track with where we were last year. Ryan Davidson made a motion to approve the Treasurer's report. Betsy Anderson seconded. No further questions. Motion approved unanimously.

Pastor's Report by Steve Carmany:

- A week ago Pastor Steve announced his retirement. July 19 will be his last Sunday.
- Pastor had an opportunity to visit with several members from our congregation he hadn't visited with in a while. In addition, he was able to visit with the confirmation students and the graduates.
- Pastor Steve is going to be on vacation on June 21. We have coverage for our services that day.
- Bible Charts, Maps & Timelines book was brought to our council meeting as a "show and tell" item.
- May 21 church service will be indoors now.
-

President's Report by Stephanie Smith:

- No Report.

Trustee, Deacon and Board of Education Reports:

- Trustee Report: No report.
- Deacon Report: No Report.

Secretaries.report.continued.on.next.page•

Secretaries.report.continued•

- Board of Education Report: Laura has been planning VBS which is set for June 1-4. The confirmation students expressed some interest in a short adventure to Sioux Falls again at the Banquet. They are looking at early July. Laura Larson balanced the Luther League budget and we are sitting very good - \$8,219.07 between checking and savings.

Old Business:

- Succession planning. There has been some discussion about an interim pastor in a near congregation that will be completing his interim. The synod is aware of this and is on the radar for a possible consideration for our congregations. There is a “call” process for replacing a retiring pastor. A member of congregation cannot do the recruiting as it has to come from the Synod.
- There was a Parish advisory meeting on April 28th. This meeting’s focus was to provide information on various ways of attracting new pastors and what pastors are looking for. The discussion was around different models that work, sharing a pastor, and looking ahead to prepare lay members for interim leadership roles as well as other preparations prior to Pastor Steve’s departure.
- Emergency Plan: Laura Larson is still working through the emergency management plan

New Business:

- Jim Ostlie made a motion to purchase four of the Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps & Time Lines books presented by Pastor Steve. Betsy Anderson seconded. No further questions. Motion approved unanimously.
- Motion was made to approve Pastor Steve’s vacation request for June 21 by Rick Davidson and seconded by Laura Larson. No further questions. Motions approved unanimously.

Announcements: None

Closed with the Lord’s Prayer.

Motion to Adjourn by Stephanie Smith at 8:02 pm.

Next council meeting will be June 10, 2026 at 7 pm.

Church Council Reports

From the Treasurer...

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

Sincerely, Jim Ostlie, Treasurer

2026 Budget

				2026 Budget	Spent to date
1100 Missions/Donations/Memberships				\$910.00	\$0.00
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	Based on donations		\$0.00	\$0.00
1107	SW Minnesota Synod			\$300.00	\$0.00
1108	Love Fund	Based on donations		\$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

1200 Staff and Ministry				\$66,377.50	\$27,424.41
1201	Church Custodial Salary			\$6,095.16	\$3,033.01
1202	Office Secretary Salary (incl. WZ portion)			\$9,142.68	\$4,551.38
1203	Organist Salary			\$1,700.00	\$960.97
1204	Pastoral Salary			\$44,511.46	\$17,414.85
1204.1	Pastoral Benefits			\$6,079.62	\$4,243.32
1204.2	Pastoral Mileage			\$1,800.00	\$0.00
1204.3	Pastoral Professional Development			\$525.00	\$66.50
1204.4	Pastoral Salary			\$36,106.84	\$13,105.03
1204.5	Other			\$0.00	\$0.00
1205	PowerPoint Creator Salary (incl. WZ portion)			\$1,108.20	\$552.78
1206	Pulpit Supply (sub Pastors)			\$300.00	\$0.00
1207	Employee Quarterly Taxes			\$3,200.00	\$786.42
1208	Sub organist fees			\$220.00	\$0.00
1209	Tax Prep			\$100.00	\$125.00
1210	MN Paid Leave			\$0.00	\$35.31

1300 Congregational Life				\$6,530.64	\$2,999.72
1301	Altar Supplies			\$500.00	\$214.12
1302	Church Worship Material			\$500.00	\$101.74
1303	Convention (Synod Assembly)			\$700.00	\$460.00
1304	Office Supplies/Rentals			\$3,930.64	\$1,951.41
1304.1	Copier Lease			\$2,805.64	\$1,306.95
1304.2	Copier staples/paper			\$400.00	\$58.19
1304.3	Other			\$250.00	\$586.27
1304.4	Postage			\$250.00	\$0.00
1304.5	Website Fee			\$225.00	\$0.00
1305	Other (Kitchen)			\$300.00	\$187.35
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	\$85.10
1309.1	Sunday School			\$0.00	\$0.00
1309.2	Confirmation			\$0.00	\$85.10

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** \$10,062.64

1401	Dept of Labor (Elevator Inspection)			\$100.00	\$145.00
1402	Insurance			\$5,500.00	\$2,268.24
1403	Mowing			\$700.00	\$55.00
1404	Repairs/Maintenance			\$1,500.00	\$270.25
1405	Supplies (custodial) *			\$500.00	\$187.20
1406	Utilities*			\$15,238.20	\$7,136.95
1407.1	Electricity			\$4,000.00	\$1,250.00
1407.2	Fuel			\$5,000.00	\$3,355.48
1407.3	Phone/Internet			\$1,150.00	\$435.50
1407.4	Propane			\$4,200.00	\$1,548.50
1407.5	Water			\$888.20	\$294.40
1407.6	Garbage Service			\$495.00	\$253.07
1408	Flowers			\$50.00	\$0.00

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

1501	Harvest Dinner			\$200.00	\$0.00
1502	Other			\$0.00	\$0.00

Proposed Operating Budget:

\$97,606.34	\$40,486.77
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1600 Income **\$97,606.34** \$26,813.11

1601	Youth Programs (i.e. SS & VBS)			\$600.00	\$620.00
1602	Church Rentals			\$0.00	\$0.00
1603	Grants			\$0.00	\$0.00
1604	Interest			\$0.00	\$0.47
1605	Memorials			\$0.00	\$0.00
1605.1	Love Fund			\$0.00	\$0.00
1605.2	Other			\$0.00	\$0.00
1606	Missions			\$0.00	\$0.00
1607	Mowing			\$700.00	\$0.00
1608	Offering-Regular (includes loose offering & online)			\$85,286.34	\$23,436.64
1609	Offering-Lunch			\$500.00	\$328.00
1610	Other Income			\$3,000.00	\$25.00
1611	Harvest Lunch			\$1,300.00	\$0.00
1612	Thrivent Grant Funds			\$1,000.00	\$663.00
1613	Youth Mission Trip			\$0.00	\$0.00
1614	West Zion (shared costs)			\$5,220.00	\$1,740.00

May 2026 Financial Report

Checking Account

Line Item	Date	Check #	Description	Payment	Deposit	Balance
1303	5/4/2026	14910	Debbie Flaten (Synod Assembly Reimbursement)	\$460.00		\$5,310.37
1608	5/4/2026		Tithely-offering-regular		\$180.34	\$5,490.71
1402	5/5/2026	Auto	North Star Mutual Insurance	\$378.04		\$5,112.67
1407.3	5/5/2026	Auto	Federated Telephone	\$86.20		\$5,026.47
1405	5/6/2026	14911	Zosel's True Valeu	\$63.51		\$4,962.96
1608	5/7/2026		Thirvent		\$141.00	\$5,103.96
1608	5/11/2026		Tithely-offering-regular		\$274.84	\$5,378.80
1403	5/12/2026	14912	Lye Mowing (1x)	\$55.00		\$5,323.80
1407.4	5/18/2026	14913	GPC (propane budget plan)	\$220.00		\$5,103.80
1608	5/18/2026		Tithely-offering-regular		\$230.34	\$5,334.14
1407.1	5/19/2026	Auto	Agralite	\$250.00		\$5,084.14
1204.4	5/20/2026	14914	East West Zion Parish (February pastoral)	\$2,645.92		\$2,438.22
1204.1	5/20/2026	14914	East West Zion Parish (pastoral benefits)	\$869.64		\$1,568.58
1304.3	5/20/2026	14914	East West Zion Parish (Zoom)	\$6.90		\$1,561.68
	5/20/2026		Transfer from savings		\$2,600.00	\$4,161.68
1201	5/20/2026	14915	Stephanie Smith (May Custodial)	\$505.50		\$3,656.18
1203	5/20/2026	14915	Stephanie Smith (May Organist 2X)	\$101.10		\$3,555.08
1202	5/20/2026	14916	Betsy Anderson (May Secretarial)	\$379.13		\$3,175.95
1202	5/20/2026	14917	Jim Ostlie (May Secretarial)	\$379.13		\$2,796.82
1205	5/20/2026	14918	Melissa Wroblecki (May Powerpoint)	\$92.35		\$2,704.47
1304.1	5/26/2026	Auto	Great America Financial Services	\$211.89		\$2,492.58
1402	6/2/2026	Auto	North Star Mutual Insurance	\$378.04		\$2,114.54

Total Income to date 2026:

\$26,813.11

Total Income to date 2025:

\$28,374.14

-\$1,561.03

May Financial Report

Savings Account

Line Item	Date	Description	Withdrawal	Deposit	Balance
1608	4/23/2026	Offering-Regular (4/3/26)		\$190.00	\$7,274.21
1610	4/23/2026	Reimbursement for Safety Deposit Box fee		\$25.00	\$7,299.21
1608	4/23/2026	Offering-Loose (4/12/26)		\$40.00	\$7,339.21
1609	4/23/2026	Offering-Lunch (4/12/26)		\$46.00	\$7,385.21
1601	4/23/2026	VBS Seed packets		\$620.00	\$8,005.21
	4/23/2026	To Checking	\$7,000.00		\$1,005.21
1604	4/30/2026	Interest		\$0.03	\$1,005.24
	5/6/2026	Offering		\$1,662.00	\$2,667.24
	5/20/2026	To Checking	\$2,600.00		\$67.24

Money Market Account

Budget	Date	Description	Withdrawal	Deposit	Balance
	2/19/2026	Beginning Balance			\$25,000.00
	2/27/2026	Interest		\$2.29	\$25,002.29
	3/31/2026	Interest		\$9.54	\$25,011.83
	4/30/26	Interest		\$9.23	\$25,021.06

Mission Investment Funds

6 Year Term Building Fund	\$78,206.45
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Demand Checking Building Fund	\$9,819.29
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Demand Checking Memorial Fund	\$128.22
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