

*West Denmark Lutheran Church Luck, Wisconsin*

## UPCOMING EVENTS at WEST DENMARK

**January 31 Fish Boil!** An annual favorite! Come to the fire ring by the Dane school for the excitement of the boil over and then warm up in the cozy Dane school with delicious fish, cole slaw, bread and dessert. Be sure to sign up!

**February 7th West Denmark Heritage Concert** Shauncey Ali Quartet. 7pm at the church

**February 13-15 National Catholic Worker Farmer's gathering at the parish hall.** Speakers, Square Dance, Great food, Fun people! Contact Mike or Barb if you are interested and/or if you would be willing to host an out of town guest or two. All are welcome all weekend!

**February 13th We Will Remain Here: Palestinian Resistance in a Time of Genocide with Brenna Cussen Anglada 6:30pm at the church.** Brenna spent 5 weeks on the West Bank with the Community Peacemaker Team this fall. This is part of the Farmer's gathering. All welcome!

**February 14th Square dance with the Catholic Worker farmers, 7:30 at the Hall!** Live band, excellent caller, all dances taught! (Warm up for more dancing Sunday night!)

**February 15 Fastelavns at the parish hall.** Cats in barrels! Cats out of barrels! Coronation of West Denmark 2026 Royalty, Danish folk dancing, treats and more! This is the annual festive gathering before Lent begins.

**February 18 Ash Wednesday: Soup Supper at 6. Service at 7** including distribution of ashes .

**February 21 Peacekeeper training at the hall. 1-3** Contact Barb or Mike for details.

**February 25: Lent Soup Supper at 6, Service at 7.**

**March 4, 11, 18, 25: Lent Soup Supper at 6, Service at 7.**

**March 7th West Denmark Heritage Concert: Randy Sabine and Gary Rue 7pm at the church**

### \* February Birthdays \* & Anniversaries

*Happy Birthday!*

**1 Adrian Johnson**

**9 Nancy Moe**

**10 Beth Lemieux**

**Terra Lumley**

**Jonah Tretsven**

**12 Henrik Strandskov**

**14 Chris Tou**

**28 Art Martin**

*Happy Anniversary!*

**2 Debbie & Monte Tretsven**

## FINDING LIGHT IN THE DEPTHS OF WINTER



*The Fish Boil flames in 2025*

As we emerge from nights plunged into the biting cold of -25°C, this winter has brought a particular kind of darkness. I experienced it firsthand when I discovered our blocked sewer pipe, frozen shut, filling my home with an unbearable stench. Thank goodness for Google—it guided me through the process of clearing it. Opening that blocked pipe felt like a breath of fresh air, a little piece of heaven in the midst of chaos.

Yet, this experience mirrors the deeper, more haunting darkness around us. The tragic killings of Alex Pretti and Nicole Renee Good, alongside the violence facing immigrants, have left us reeling, often feeling immobilized by despair as we see a lack of meaningful response from our nation's highest leaders.

On the last Sunday of January, I preached about the importance of our communal gatherings, which serve as vital sources of light amid the darkness. These moments together can help soothe our anxious hearts and restore our spirits. As Paul Pedersen lights the fire in the cold midwinter sky at the fish boil (Bringing new meaning to bright and glorious is the sky) may we invite the warmth of that flame to kindle hope within us—all the more necessary in these troubled times.

Let us embrace the light we share in community, transforming our individual struggles into collective strength and resilience. In doing so, we can shine brightly even in the darkest of days.

Blessings,  
Pastor Shawn Mai

### LET IT SHINE

Throughout this issue you will find messages sent to WD from people who have shared in the warmth of this community's light. Thanks to Liz Dodge for collecting them! Look for this symbol next to each message:



## **FEBRUARY WORSHIP NOTES**

### **SUNDAYS AT WEST DENMARK:**

#### **8:30 MEDITATION GROUP**

You are invited to join our 8:30 Meditation Group, which meets in the balcony of the church. In a world that can often feel chaotic, this gathering has become a grounding and connected time for all participants. We start with a short reflective reading, follow it with 15 to 20 minutes of silence, and wrap up with a discussion about our experiences. It's a beautiful way to center ourselves and find peace together.

#### **10 AM WORSHIP**

Join us for our thriving 10 AM worship service, filled with inspiring music, engaging lay participation, and thoughtful reflections on lectionary texts. Invite neighbors who may be looking for community to experience our eagerness to welcome. Stay afterward for coffee, delicious treats, and meaningful conversations at 11 AM!

#### **Preachers in February**

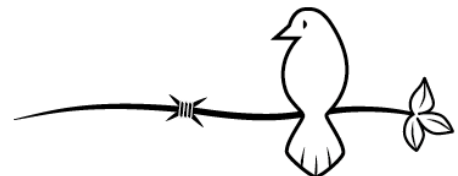
<b>February 1</b>	Christy Wetzig
<b>February 8</b>	Christy Wetzig
<b>February 15</b>	Adedamola Adesiji, from Luther Seminary
<b>February 22</b>	Christy Wetzig

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### **WE WILL REMAIN HERE: Palestinian Resistance in a Time of Genocide with Brenna Cussen Anglada**

**Friday, February 13, 6:30 - 8 pm  
West Denmark Lutheran Church**

Hear from Brenna Cussen Anglada, who recently returned from five weeks in the West Bank with a team trained in unarmed civilian accompaniment, or "protective presence." Through photos and stories of courageous and steadfast nonviolent resistance, Brenna will share how Palestinians, indigenous to the West Bank, are committed to remaining on their land. She will also share what Palestinians are asking of the worldwide church and all those who wish to support them. Brenna lives and works at the Isadore Catholic Worker Farm near Cuba City Wisconsin.



community peacemaker teams

## **PASTORAL CALL COMMITTEE NEWS**

On Thursday, January 22, 2026, representatives from West Denmark's Call Committee met with Pastor Randy Olson from the Northwest ELCA Synod of Wisconsin to learn more about the trajectory of the Call process and be trained in their work as members of the Call Committee.

The Call Committee members are Laura Jensen, Mike Miles, Chris Johansen, Paul Peterson and Jenni Tretsvén. Members of the Transition Team (Nikki Strandskov, Connie Engblom and Paul Petersen), some of the volunteers who will act as references for our church during this process (Harry Johansen and Barb Kass) and several Church Council members (Liz, Terry and Jeff) also attended the training meeting with Pastor Randy.

We learned that West Denmark's Ministry Site Profile has been accepted by Bishop Halom. It is ready to be published nationally, to be seen by ELCA Rostered Pastors who might be interested in applying for consideration. A copy of the church's Site Profile can be found in the church office or by checking with Liz, who has copies available for you.

Pastor Randy is our Synod contact and will work with the Call committee to help search for possible candidates and assist them as they screen and interview candidates. It is the duty of the Call Committee to interview candidates, using the information contained in the Ministry Site Profile as their question guidance, and make a hiring/Call recommendation to the Church Council and the congregation. Until a Call offer is made and accepted by both the congregation and the candidate, the name of and identifying information about applicants will be held confidential, known only to the Synod and the Call Committee members.

Pastor Randy estimated that the Call Committee might begin receiving candidate names as early as late Spring/early Summer 2026. Please check upcoming church newsletters for updates from the Call Committee or ask them your questions during Fellowship and after worship services.

Fingers crossed and many prayers said, as we move ahead with our search process!!

Terry, on behalf of the Church Council



## West Denmark Bible Study

Wednesdays at 1pm

Meet in the fellowship area in the church. An engaging, relevant, low stress study of 1st Peter is being led by Christy Wetzig. No prep necessary! Our motto is: *Not all who wander are lost!* All are welcome!



## Encore: Conversations About Aging

Thursday February 26th

10:30- noon in the fellowship area in the church.

Topic: Life after death? What do you think?

## West Denmark Book Club

Wednesday

February 25th

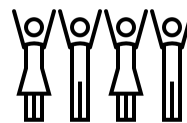
The WDLC book discussion group, which in Spring 2026 will meet via zoom at 11 AM on the FOURTH Wednesday of every other month (note change from third) has chosen **Kathleen Norris's *Dakota: a Spiritual Geography***. This is a profound and beautiful memoir. Join us for a lively, insightful discussion.

<https://bookshop.org/p/books/dakota-a-spiritual-geography-kathleen-norris/2756210178ba709a?ean=9780618127245&next=t>. For the Zoom link contact: Mark Hulsether  
<[mhulseth@gmail.com](mailto:mhulseth@gmail.com)>

## Men's Breakfast

Mondays 7:30am

Meets at the Tin Shed in Frederic



## Women's Breakfast

Monday's 10 am

Meets at the Tin Shed in Frederic except the last week of the month when they meet in the afternoon at a time and place to be announced

## Peanut Butter

It's always needed for the backpack program at Luck school! Thanks for the great response! I drop off jars every week! Either purchase peanut butter and leave at church, or earmark a donation, put it in the offering and I will purchase. Thank you!! Barb Kass

## Join the Quilters!

The quilting group would like to have a list of all folks interested in helping with the quilts, i.e., pressing and/or cutting fabric, piecing squares, tying and finishing. If you have participated, are interested or just want to learn more about the group, please send your name, email address and mobile phone to Margaret Gehret at [mmgehret1012@gmail.com](mailto:mmgehret1012@gmail.com). Once she has the list prepared, she can bring those interested up to date with our plans and needs. The distribution lists will also let us notify the group quickly of any changes to meeting times, etc. If you have any questions, you may email Margaret or call her at 423-823-7343.

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## From Los Amigos:



"Dear West Denmark Church, Thank you so very much for your recent donation to the Los Amigos Program in the amount of \$190.00. Your generosity will enable us to purchase a queen-sized bed for a local immigrant family. The Los Amigos program is just getting started in the Polk County area and we are grateful for your support.

Appreciatively, Nancy Stewart & Barb Katt "

## Children, Youth and Families

Our West Denmark youth once again outdid themselves with their 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Dessert Theater. Performing five short plays, one of which was written by Jenni Tretsven, another one of our talented playwright/directors, the youth brought down the house with their affectations and antics. The delicious desserts, provided by West Denmark's fine bakers, and fine wines and steaming cocoa and coffee, all served by adult members of the congregation, made this multi-generational event a night to remember.

The Dessert Theater was a fundraiser for our Youth Mission trip. It raised \$2600 to help defray expenses for the trip to Bayou La Batre, Alabama. Our kids will be leaving from Family Camp on July 3<sup>rd</sup> and returning on July 10<sup>th</sup>.

Thanks to our youth actors: Evelyn Holm, Elodie Lumley, Abby and Alex Ritchie, Adelia Snook, Gussie, Johanna, Lucy and Oskar Tretsven, and Abel and Mercy Wetzig. Thanks again to Jenni Tretsven who goes above and beyond in putting on these productions.

Sunday School is back in session. Our younger children returned to class on January 25<sup>th</sup>. Greg Marsten and Jenni Tretsven kicked off the next semester with stories and games and fun.

Finally, our youth continue to attend joint Confirmation sessions at Luck Lutheran. In addition, we have several elementary and high school students attending the Wednesday evening activities held at Luck Lutheran. During the month of January, our high school and Confirmation kids joined together to participate in joint activities focused on mental health and wellness, led by Pastoral Intern Dana Paulsen. Liz Dodge serves as West Denmark's confirmation mentor. Luck Lutheran is always looking for adult volunteers to help with their Wednesday evening activities. Email Liz if you want more information: [dodger602002@yahoo.com](mailto:dodger602002@yahoo.com).

### From Agate Housing and Services to our Confirmation kids:



"Thank you SO much for attending A Day In The Life!"

"Thank you for being one of the Greatest Groups we've ever escorted. Your group is one I'll never forget."

"Thank you for joining us! We would love to have you back? Anytime!"

# NATIONAL CATHOLIC WORKER FARM GATHERING CELEBRATES 90 YEARS AT WEST DENMARK!

*from Barb Kass and Mike Miles*

*THE CATHOLIC WORKER WAS FOUNDED in 1933 by the journalist Dorothy Day and an immigrant from France, Peter Maurin, in New York City's Union Square. It was the height of the Great Depression: unemployment and hunger were never far from a worker's door. The pair started with a newspaper, addressing their first issue to those "who think that there is no hope for the future, no recognition of their plight." Both hope and recognition could be found, they thought, in the neglected social teaching of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Worker looked to respond to the demands of the gospel through radical social and political action: to "blow the dynamite" of Christian teaching about poverty, community, hospitality, and peace. By the end of their first year, Day and Maurin were managing an eleven-room house of hospitality for the unemployed and homeless, which doubled as an office for the newspaper.*

*For Maurin, modern times were comparable to the collapse of the Roman Empire, when the Dark Ages threatened human civilization and early Irish missionaries built a social order from the wreckage. Maurin thought the modern church faced a similar challenge. His program emulated the plans of those early monks: study circles for the clarification of thought, houses of hospitality where the poor and more fortunate could meet and work together, and agricultural communes where people could learn the skills of mutual aid and economic sustainability.*

*(from The Catholic Worker Pushes the Limits By Laurie M. Johnson in The Plough, January 17, 2025)*

In Dorothy Day's diary in 1936, she observed that they had done well in hospitality and clarification of thought, but what was missing was the farm. As was their practice, they didn't just talk about a farm, they set the date of March 1, 1936, and indeed, the first farm began.

The success of farms was not immediate. In fact they waned for a long time. But in recent years many new farms have been established, rekindling Peter Maurin's ideals and bringing vision and enthusiasm for the important work of regeneration of land, practicing hospitality, and clarifying thought of how we live sustainably in these times.

This is the third national gathering of Catholic Worker farmers being hosted at West Denmark. The beauty of our campus, and the welcome felt by those who come, provides the setting needed for important connections, conversations, prayer, shared meals and fun. If you have time, please come and meet our other beloved community, share a meal or a conversation. We can't think of a better place to celebrate 90 years!

## NEWS FROM SAMI RASOULI

*from Mike Myles and Barb Kass*

West Denmark has long been a friend of Sami Rasouli. Born in Iraq, Sami lived in Minneapolis for 28 years and had both US and Iraqi citizenship. Sami had an amazing business on Lyndale Ave that included a restaurant, grocery store, and community center. Members of West Denmark were frequent visitors to his establishment. He was unable to visit Iraq when his immigration status was evolving so Mike was able to visit his Mom on one of his trips bringing medical aid. After that, we became family.

Sami decided to move back to Iraq after shock and awe led to the US occupation of Iraq. He became the head of his family after his mother died and had to assume those responsibilities. He started Muslim Peacemaker Teams following the example of Christian Peacemaker Teams who he met and worked with upon his return. Sami led many delegations back to the US after establishing Minneapolis as a sister city with Najaf. Sami often came to West Denmark and did updates on Iraq, speaking in public forums.

When the school he established in Mosul was bombed, he moved back to Minnesota with three of his children. It took two years for him to move his wife and her oldest child, who was not Sami's son, to Minnesota. Today we received this letter:

Dear Barbra and Mike,

Warm regards from Iraq. My daughter Roia 13/8th grade, son Essa 12/6th grade and I left the country about 3 weeks ago. Things are changing rapidly in the world. Essa (Arabic for Jesus) and Roia went to Somali chartered schools in Minneapolis to preserve some of their Arabic culture, especially the language. They were terrified watching Somali classmates and their families fearful of getting arrested and deported by ICE. Essa and Roia refused to go to school anymore, therefore we decided to leave Minneapolis after this terrible experience. We don't know how long we will be away from my community in the Twin Cities area and beyond. Moving to another different place is a challenge for them, but they are working on getting adjusted. From a distance, we are watching what's going on in Minneapolis and other major cities across the country. Our hearts are with you. Looking forward to connecting with you when we're back to the (US).



Blessings and Peace always to you and your beautiful community,  
Sami and kids

## FAITH BASED ADVOCACY: WHAT IS IT?

In the past year West Denmark's ministry and leadership groups have questioned whether we might cross an unacceptable line into political speech when we speak from the pulpit and host church sponsored efforts that are contrary to official public governmental doctrine. Our Council has debated about approaching current events though a careful /cautious path that doesn't create division among people in the pews or speaking more directly on issues of justice and mercy. We wonder if it is okay to organize a caravan to the Capitol or promote letter writing to our legislators.

Lucky for us, the ELCA has done a lot of work to guide us in these questions. Faith-based advocacy as a Lutheran is guided through our churchwide Social Statements and our Lutheran Public Policy platform priorities. Our call to advocacy is grounded individually in prayer, discernment, and deep study of the Scriptures. Our current study of 1 Peter is one example of that Scripture study. 1 Peter 2: 17 " Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor." That is sparking some amazing discussion. Our faith is deepened as we study issues and we gain moral clarity to our efforts.

From the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin:

Through a process of careful discernment grounded in Lutheran theology, ELCA social statements, research, and discussion, the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin (LOPPW) identifies priority issues each year. While there is some consistency across categories over the years, this process is repeated annually to ensure relevance and appropriateness, as well as to align with realistic goals and the talents and passions of those leading the efforts. Current priorities include:

Hunger

Poverty

Care for Creation (Environment)

Immigration & Refugees

Civic Engagement & Voting

Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin – Engaging people of faith in the ministry of advocacy for policies that support peace, justice, and care for all of God's creation..

Do not be afraid! We are called to act for justice as Lutherans, as Christians. Let us know if you want a deeper discussion, a look at some of the church's Social Statements, or just more information. And you are always welcome to join us on Wednesdays in our own efforts to learn more about this very topic.

Liz Dodge - dodger602002@yahoo.com

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### For providing space for the Monarca training:



"Thank you for all you do for the community! We are so grateful for your hospitality and help!"

–Barb Katt and Nancy Stewart

## LOAVES & FISHES MONTHLY REPORT

### DECEMBER 2025

Open Tues. & Thurs. 11 – 1:00  
Lions Hall, 300 S. 1 st Street Luck, WI  
P.O. Box 554 Luck, WI 54853

# Households served 59

Luck 33; Unity 26

Adults: 102; Children: 31

New families: 7

Total people: 132

Donations: Money: \$5,686

(Below includes TEFAP,  
purchased food, donations)

Weight of food coming in: # 3,486

Weight of food going out: # 3,191

Volunteer hours: 63 hours.

Needs for next month: Vegetables: canned tomatoes, tomato sauce, spaghetti sauce. Pasta: macaroni, rice, noodles, spaghetti. Misc. peanut butter, cake mix, brownie mix, muffins.

If interested, please contact  
Pam Girtz 320-232-7541  
email: [girtzp@gmail.com](mailto:girtzp@gmail.com);  
or Gena Bugno: [nobug115@yahoo.com](mailto:nobug115@yahoo.com)

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## PICTURE PAGE

Picture submissions are always welcome! Whether sharing a personal triumph, local shenanigans, or WD Happenings, we want to see it! Pictures will be included in the newsletter whenever possible (as space and printing costs permit)



**From Lily Johansen Knapp, Newlywed:**



"This church is absolutely beautiful and will always hold a place in my Heart, and the history is so rich. We had people compliment how pretty the church was. You guys were so flexible and accommodating and were very trusting and kind with us as the people using your facility. The wedding turned out great, also the acoustics in the building couldn't be better for live music. Thank you so much!" *Lily has attended Fiddle School at West Denmark and is the granddaughter of Dean Johansen, one of Harry Johansen's cousins. Congratulations to the happy couple!*



Hans Holzen      Nicholas Vanhaute      David Havas

# West Denmark Heritage Council

Presents:

## Shauncey Ali Quartet



Nicholas Vanhaute \* Shauncey Ali \* David Havas \* Hans Holzen

## West Denmark Lutheran Church

Saturday, February 7, 2026 @ 7:00pm

**Tickets: Reserved \$25    Open Seat \$20**

No fee for k-12 students with purchase of ticket by parent.

### Artist Information:

[shaunceyali.com/shaunceyaliquartet](http://shaunceyali.com/shaunceyaliquartet)

See web page: [www.westdenmark.net](http://www.westdenmark.net)  
for information about purchasing tickets



**West Denmark Lutheran Church**  
**2478 170th Street      Luck, WI 54853**

Hans Holzen      Nicholas Vanhaute      David Havas

# West Denmark Heritage Council

Presents:

## Gary Rue & Randy Sabien



**West Denmark Lutheran Church**  
**Saturday, March 7, 2026 @ 7:00pm**  
**Tickets: Reserved \$25   Open Seat \$20**

No fee for k-12 students with purchase of ticket by parent.

**Artist Information:**

[garyrue.com/rue-and-sabien](http://garyrue.com/rue-and-sabien)

See web page: [www.westdenmark.net](http://www.westdenmark.net)  
for information about purchasing tickets



**West Denmark Lutheran Church**  
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## **SEE YOU AT FAMILY CAMP 2026!**

As it has done each summer for over 40 years, the West Denmark bell will ring to call Family Campers to meals, lectures, singing, and coffee. The Family Camp committee has been working hard to prepare for this annual event, a summer highlight for West Denmark members and friends.

The dates are the same every year: July 1 – July 3, with a pre-camp gathering on the evening of June 30. This year those days fall on Tuesday through Friday.

The committee reminds members of the congregation that you are welcome to attend all camp activities (except for meals) at no charge.

This year campers will have the opportunity to handle a human brain, help build an outdoor pizza oven, learn about the training of search and rescue dogs, explore the rich cultural tradition of Black barbershops, display your cribbage prowess, and much more.

Watch for more information and registration materials in the near future.

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## **Save the Date for the Danebod Folk Meeting coming August 19-23, 2026**

You are invited to join us here on the Danebod Campus for the 80<sup>th</sup> annual Folk Meeting, August 19-23, 2026. Founded in the Danish folk school tradition of lifelong learning in community, the Folk Meeting attracts interesting people from across the country to a residential living, learning and socializing experience. Treat yourself to a break in August and join your fellow guests for three and a half days of learning, singing, story-telling, socializing, dining, and folk dancing.

Each year our Folk Meeting program seeks to offer a broad liberal arts curriculum. In 2026 you will engage with experts in a “prophecy” of economics, American political campaigns, and learning with Legos. You will have the opportunity to learn about chamber music, Danish author Louis Jensen’s “Square Stories,” and the responsibilities of the Danish Consul in Iowa.

Experiential learning workshops will spur your creative side with options for exploring the arts of paper-cutting, painting, making Danish pastry, writing poetry, savoring the magic of a nature walk, or honing your skills in folk dancing or wood-carving.

If you are interested in learning more about the Danebod Folk Meeting, visit our website at [danebodfolkmeeting.org](http://danebodfolkmeeting.org). Registration materials will be available in early May.

# West Denmark Lutheran Church



2478 170th Street  
Luck, WI 54853  
[www.westdenmark.org](http://www.westdenmark.org)

Return Service Requested

## February Weekly Calendar

### SUNDAYS

Contemplative Meditation	8:30am
Worship	10am
Fellowship time	11am

### MONDAYS

Men's Breakfast -	
Tin Shed, Frederic	7:30am
Women's Coffee	
Tin Shed, Frederic	10am
last week of month:	
TUESDAY 1:30pm, usually Cafe Wren	

### WEDNESDAY

Confirmation, Luck Lutheran,	6pm
Choir Rehearsal (begins Feb. 4)	7pm

### THURSDAY

Every Other week:

ENCORE	10:30am
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### SATURDAYS

AA -	9-10:30 am
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## Mark Your Calendars! Upcoming Events

2/7	Shauncey Ali Concert
2/13-15	NCWF @ WD (pg. 7)
2/15	Fastelavns
2/18	Ash Wednesday
2/21	Peace Keeper Training
2/25	Lent: Soup and Services

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West Denmark is a safe place  
to worship, study,  
and build relationships with God  
and others,  
regardless of race, creed, sexual  
orientation, gender identity, or cultural  
background.