



West Denmark Lutheran Church Luck, Wisconsin

WHAT'S GOING ON AT WEST DENMARK!

Sunday August 2nd: YOUTH LED WORSHIP followed by mission trip inspired fellowship! Come hear the stories from the mission trip, and see what God is doing in the lives of the WD youth!

Sunday August 9th: All Congregational Meeting following worship. You do not want to miss this one!

Sunday August 16th Special Fellowship to celebrate the life of Tom Kessler

SHARE THE BOUNTIFUL HARVEST

Produce-sharing table is up and running in the entry. Bring your excess produce, take what you can use, and put a donation in the canister for the local food shelf. There will also be a cookbook or two from time to time.

BEING (EVEN MORE) WELCOMING

from Terry Speiker

The Church Council has been discussing ways to build on West Denmark's welcoming "Front Door" atmosphere. We are especially interested in expanding on all the ways we currently are hospitable as we get ready for a new Pastor and as we expand our membership.

We believe that one way to grow a sense of inclusivity is to make sure that everyone in church knows the name of everyone else. With this thought in mind, we plan to start offering name tags to persons worshipping at/attending services at West Denmark.

Wearing a name tag will be voluntary. The tags will be permanent ones, that you can put on when you arrive at church and leave behind once services are concluded. It will take us about a month to work out the logistics for having the tags available.

If you have questions, suggestions or comments about the tags, please talk with any of the Church Council members. Thank you for working with us to further open our Church's doors!!

◇ Special Days in August ◇

Birthdays

- 5 Shawn Mai
- 9 Christine Johansen
- 10 Sarah Petersen
- 13 Erica Lumley
- 14 Marilene Jensen
- 19 Dan Girtz
- 22 Levi Johnson

Anniversaries

- 4 Connie Engblom & Bill Krueger
- 26 Barb Kass & Mike Miles
- 27 Marilene & Daniel Jensen

Look for more pictures from the Lucky Days Parade throughout the Newsletter!



AUGUST PASTOR'S COLUMN

This summer, I have stepped away from my work at Methodist Hospital as a clinical pastoral educator. For the first time in 20 years, I haven't supervised a group of interns or residents for a summer session. This time has helped me deeply appreciate the notion of sabbatical.

Years ago, I bought the book *The Sabbath* by Abraham Joshua Heschel. I always had it out with a couple of other reflective texts in my Mississippi River cabin in Minnesota. Heschel writes:



Group picture!

"Six days a week we wrestle with the world, wringing profit from the earth; on the Sabbath we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul. The world has our hands, but our soul belongs to Someone Else."

As a human being, I am not wired to slow down much. That has certainly remained true during my sabbatical (if you want that confirmed, talk to my husband Chuck) However, I have been nourished by the travels I've been blessed to take. One of those was a mission trip with our youth group to the Lake Traverse Reservation in South Dakota. It was an incredibly rich experience, learning about the history of the Dakota people and raising my awareness regarding the impact of European settlement. Beyond the learning, the part that worked on my soul as much as anything was simply working alongside our wonderful young people. I didn't imagine that pulling weeds alongside another person could be so enriching. It was a chance for deeper connection.

At the beginning of the week, I walked into the Sunday school classroom in the basement of Grace Lutheran Church in Sisseton where we stayed, and I admit I panicked a bit about sleeping on the floor again. By the end of the week, as we prepared to leave, I walked into that same classroom—the space where we had slept and prayed—and offered a prayer of thanksgiving for all the sacred time that had transpired.

I've been musing on how the concept of "sabbatical" can work on us when we are with others in a new way. I believe that has been happening to us collectively as a congregation during this interim time between called pastors. With the guidance, wisdom, and movement of the Holy Spirit, our West Denmark church community truly put our shoulders to the wheel and have gotten good work done and, in many ways have experienced the gift of renewal.

In the months ahead, we will continue to be with one another in new ways as we enter another season at West Denmark Lutheran Church. May we continue to find renewal and soul enrichment with one another as we move forward together.



Coyote work group (one of three for the week) working at the community garden on the reservation

In Christ's love
Pastor Shawn Mai

AUGUST 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!

COMMUNION IN AUGUST

will be on the second and fourth Sundays instead of first and third - August 9th and 23rd.

PREACHERS IN AUGUST

August 2nd Youth Takeover!

August 9th Christy Wetzig

August 16th Nikki Strandkov

August 23rd Pam Hanson

August 30th Christy Wetzig

JUST A CLOSER WALK

The next "Just a Closer Walk" will be on **Wednesday, August 19th**, beginning at 6:00 pm. Meet behind Café Wren to walk the Gandy Dancer Trail. Come talk with us about Spiritual Practice. What brings you closer to God? We have had great conversations and shared with each other. Why Jesus/ Why we find God in nature? What we believed as a child that we wrestle with now? We just enjoy each other's company. Youth are welcome. This month's reflection: Share a time when you felt closest to God. What do you do to feel closest to God? (Facilitated by Terra Lumley).

COUNCIL VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Church Council is looking for two-three volunteers to serve as a nominating committee to find new Church Council members. At the Church's Annual meeting in December 2026, we will be electing two new Church Council members to replace 2 current members. The nominating committee will be asked find congregation members to fill these positions. Please let any of the current Council members know of your willingness to serve on the nominating committee.

Ongoing Activities at West Denmark...

Chair Yoga with Connie

Tuesdays 10-11 am at the parish hall. Join the growing group of participants for an excellent hour of stretching, balance, mobility and flexibility exercises led by Connie Wicklund. Bring a mat and yoga block and elastic band if you have one. Donations welcome.



West Denmark Bible Study

Wednesdays at 1 pm in the fellowship area. Wander through the interesting book of Acts with glimpses of the early church! This is an excellent time to join an engaging, relevant, low stress study led by Christy Wetzig. No prep necessary! Our motto is: Not all who wander are lost! All are welcome!

Encore: Conversations About Aging

Thursday August 27th

10:30- noon in the fellowship area in the church. Help choose topics of interest for the months ahead. Join us!!!

Choir is on Summer Break! Thanks for the Beautiful Music!

West Denmark Book Club

On summer break until September.
See Page 6 for an update on Book Club!



Men's Breakfast

Mondays 7:30am

Meets at the Tin Shed in Frederic



Women's Breakfast

Mondays 10 am

Mondays 10 am at the Tin Shed in Frederic except the last week of the month when they meet on Monday at Cafe Wren at 11:40am.

Quilters!

We will be starting to piece quilts with the pieces already cut and accepting fabric for more. We need cutters and people to sew, then crews to assemble, tie and bind the quilts. Call the church for meeting times. (We often meet on Mondays at 11:30 after the women's breakfast.) All skill levels are welcome!!!



TOM KESSLER

The following is an excerpt from Tom's obituary. Please visit the Williamson-White Funeral Home website to read more, and plan to attend a Special Fellowship on Sunday, August 16th honoring Tom's life.

Thomas "Tom" Kessler passed away peacefully at home on June 22nd, at the age of 86. Tom was born on September 20, 1939, in Appleton, Wisconsin, to Edward and Mary (Langenberg) Kessler. He grew up in a large Catholic family and carried his faith with him throughout his entire life.

Together, Tom and his wife Joyce devoted their lives to service, social justice, and caring for those who often went unseen. Tom believed deeply that every person deserved dignity, compassion, and a place to belong. One of his favorite poems was Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken," perhaps because it reflected the life he chose to live; a life guided not by convention, but by conscience, faith, and love.

Those who knew Tom will remember his enormous smile, his warm hugs, and his genuine interest in others.

OBITUARY PROJECT UPDATE

Work has continued on the obituary project for the West Denmark Cemetery. So far, I have gathered 526 obituaries but now I need your help. Please search your records, reach out to family or whatever sources you have available to find the last few. If you have any, please email them to me at laurajensen825@gmail.com. I am missing the following recent obituaries:

Ernest Hoar Fremont-1998
Gordon "Gus" Gydesen-1998
Jennie M. Holdt-1998
Louise Elizabeth Skow Pedersen-1999
Doris Bengston-1999
Paul Bengston-2000
Lauritz "Larry" Pedersen-2001
Caroline M. Holm Price-2001
Virgie I. Ordway Vangsgard-2001
Axel B. Sorensen-2003

Carl Andrew Sorensen-2006
Ove Richard Nielsen-2009
Maxine Jensen-2011
Edna Petersen-2011
Gerda R. Ravenholt Bune-2013
Kristian Frede Henriksen-2014
Johanne Ravenholt Fremont-2015
Barbara Surman Ravenholt-2015
Agnes Ravnholt Nussle-2016
Bernadine Kirk-2017

AL'S THANK YOUS

I want to thank everyone who helped me during Family Camp. For those who helped me around particularly, Sue, Tom, Judy, Carl, and Barb and Mike, for leading me around from different venues and taking me through the food line and taking such good care of me. I give them all thanks. It was a great three days.

I want to thank everyone who offered supportive thoughts and suggestions regarding recent decisions about my eyes and the possibility of another cornea transplant. I found it helpful as this is how I often make decisions. To let you know, I am on track to having a transplant and going through the process. It will probably be near the end of the year, I expect, before such a thing happens and I will keep you posted. Thank you again for all of your help in making my decision.

PLANS FOR THE WEST DENMARK BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

A few years ago we convened a WDLC group that reads books—currently one every other month, except in the summer—and talks together about them. I write today to announce plans for our 2026-2027 season and invite anyone who may be new to the group to join us.

First some background: when we started, our idea was to find high quality and accessible “theology-adjacent” books. We’ve experimented with many approaches including novels, histories, and memoirs—some focused on theology in narrow senses but more often not. We pick books by crowd-sourcing a list of nominations and voting on them. Our meetings have normally been via Zoom. I, Mark Hulseth, keep an email list of interested people, host the Zooms, and try to stay on top of the logistics. Please write me at mhulseth@gmail.com if you want on or off the email list.. Our “system” for accessing the books is everyone doing this in whatever way that seems best to them.

Through our votes and discussion last spring, we planned the following schedule for 2026-2027. Note that we are switching to the second Wednesdays of relevant months. Our longstanding habit is to convene at 11:00 AM. We are considering an in-person meeting for September.

September 9 Marcus Borg, *Convictions: How I Learned what Matters Most*

November 11 A.M. Allchin, *Grundtvig: An Introduction to His Life and Work*

January 13 James McBride, *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store*

March 10 David Treuer, *Rez Life*.

May 12 (Still open for emergent ideas, since there was no clear fifth place vote.)

Our first author, Marcus Borg, is a widely read Biblical scholar and public theologian—one of the most important voices from his generation for crossing over from academic studies to churches like ours. *Convictions* is a summation of his life’s work. It is pitched well for us and highly interesting. Largely it builds on Borg’s life story (which started Lutheran in Western Minnesota) and synthesizes his work on the Bible, with many extrapolations into commentary on US religion and politics.

Please consider joining us for this season!



LOAVES & FISHES MONTHLY REPORT

JUNE 2026

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

Households served: 43

Luck: 27; Unity: 12

Adults: 70; Children: 24

New families: 2

Total people: 94

Donations: Money: \$2,825.64

(Below includes TEFAP, purchased food, donations)

Weight of food coming in: # 2,136

Weight of food going out: # 2,426

Volunteer hours: 58 hours.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a federally funded USDA food program, which is administered through the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services and Loaves & Fishes is a recipient agency.

Needs for next month: diced tomatoes, green beans, Chinese foods, saltine crackers, tuna without soy, spices, personal needs.

We can always use more volunteer workers!

If interested, please contact:

Pam Girtz 320-232-7541

email: girtzp@gmail.com;

or Gena Bugno: nobug115@yahoo.com

IN SEARCH OF PEACE, NOT WEAPONS

Wisconsin licensing regulations require that our Woodland School facility must remain weapon-free environments. As the children will be using the Woodland Trails as well as occupy the Church basement, we need to assure parents and staff as well as licensing regulators that we have taken steps to make our facilities and care as healthy and safe as possible.

Recently, the Supreme Court struck down a Hawai'i law that required gun carriers to ask owners of private property that is open to the public for permission before entering that property. As a result of this ruling, these property owners now must put up signage prohibiting guns from the property.

Wisconsin law already requires specific signage if weapons are not allowed on such a property. The loophole is that an owner or employee can verbally tell someone, "We don't allow guns here, you need to leave," which also has full legal authority. Ignoring signage or verbal notice can result in a misdemeanor criminal trespass violation.

The West Denmark Lutheran Council discussed this issue for the Woodland School as well as the Church. They decided that we should post signs at the Woodland Trail entrances and near the lake (Frog Harbor) as a notice to any member of the public who might enter the area and possible hunters. We also decided to post smaller but similar "No Weapons Allowed" signs near the main entrances of the Woodland School, the Church, and Parish Hall. The Woodland School Advisory Group as well as the Council approved this plan. We think that these signs will help to maintain a gun-free zone for the Woodland School and the Church Campus, without having to resort to a verbal request. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please share these with a member of the WD Church Council or the Woodland School Advisory Group. In the future, the Council intends to investigate the possibility of posting the whole Church Campus as a "No Hunting" area.

MISSION: IMPECCABLE!

Jenni Tretsven

I didn't realize impeccable actually meant "flawless." I'm not sure I could rate this trip to that level of perfection. And if one asked the other travelers, they probably wouldn't say the trip was impeccable. But it was nearly flawless given the turn of events that occurred before we left, and "Mission: Impeccable" makes for such a great play on words! I call on the reader to decide...

If you had followed our group's progress, we originally were planning to fly to Bayou Labatre, AL for our mission. However, about one month before we were to leave, our flights were cancelled. So that was NOT flawless. Fortunately, YouthWorks, the mission organization we used, was able to accommodate our group in Lake Traverse, SD. We now had one month to completely reorganize a trip that had originally taken a year to plan and arrange. I believe now that it was actually divine intervention. We were meant to go to Lake Traverse.



We kept our original schedule, and departed on Friday, July 3rd, after a jubilant send off by the Family Camp morning chorus who sang original Henrik Strandskov lyrics to the tune of the Marines Hymn. At this time, a pained smile was shielding my despair as one of our youth was in the Emergency Department getting stitches from an injury sustained at home earlier that morning. Also not the definition of flawless. Was this snag a sure sign of things to come? Was I leading this group of 14 starry-eyed teens and adults into a calamity worthy of a National Lampoon movie? Looking back, perhaps I was being dramatic, since leaving 15 minutes later than our stated itinerary actually did not translate into the apocalyptic disaster I had envisioned during the lyrics "from the shores of LIT-TLE Buuuuuuuuuutternut...."

We took a lunch break in St. Peter, MN, at Gustavus Adolphus College, Shawn's alma mater. He gave us a brief tour of campus, and even walked backwards while showing us the buildings, just like he had when he was a tour guide! Our picnic lunch was courtesy of Barb Kass, which included beautifully wrapped sandwiches, tied with little bows. At this point one should imagine 15 synchronous "aaaawwww!"-s as the cooler was opened and the sandwiches were passed around.



The Treaty Site History Center in St. Peter was our next stop. Kate, a retired teacher, gave us a tour and background of one of the many treaties that were orchestrated but mostly ignored by the US government, leading to the establishment of reservations and the current plight of Native Americans. It was an excellent preparation for our visit to the Lake Traverse Reservation.

We ended our day in Tyler, MN, at the Danebod Village. Pastor Megan gave a tour of our "sister" campus, and we slept in the old dormitory. In the morning everyone described the same experience of hot rooms, open windows, and amateur street fireworks, perfectly spaced to prevent evolution into the second stage of sleep.

In the morning of July 4th, we headed to Agency Village, in the heart of the Lake Traverse Reservation. There is a Wacipi (powwow) held there every year, the oldest and largest in the nation. None of us had experience with a powwow but we were welcomed almost immediately on arrival by



Darrell, a tribal leader who explained what to expect. It was extremely rewarding to watch the dancers with unbelievable stamina and the drummers and singers with incredible voices. It is curious that the Native Americans would celebrate the birth of a Nation that had treated them so poorly, but it was explained to us that the powwow on July 4th instead celebrates Mother Earth.

That afternoon we were welcomed by Hank at the Midwest Bible Camp in Watertown, SD, where “the Son is always shining.” The air-conditioned Youth Center was the perfect retreat for our sun weary group, complete with retro lighting, ping pong, air hockey, pool

table, movie room, and mini basketball. We ordered pizza, played games and watched “Cars” thanks to Elodie’s mad technology skills. As evening closed, we played on the outdoor equipment and attended a fireworks show.

We spent Sunday morning shopping for donations to the tribal school. Our kids had raised enough money for each person to spend \$75 on backpacks and other school supplies for kids on the Lake Traverse reservation to kick off their school year. Another hot day, we visited a state park on the reservation that has a lake to cool off before we were to arrive in Sisseton, our final destination. We swam, hiked, ate lunch, and afterwards, thanks to a generous donation from West Denmark members, got some ice cream before we headed to Grace Lutheran Church in Sisseton. Of note, through an “agreement” between tribal leaders and the US government, the Lake Traverse reservation was opened to white settlement in the late 1800’s. Sisseton is a mostly white village, right in the middle of the reservation. It has a high school, but the tribe also operates a K-12 school in Agency Village, called Tiospa Zina and a K-8 school in the village of Enemy Swim.

We were met by Steve, Jack, Tyler, and Matt, our leaders from Youthworks. We unpacked our vehicles and inflated our air mattresses. Each mission group got a male and female room to use in the basement. The other groups were from Harris Covenant Church in Harris, MN (just across the St. Croix River!) and Immanuel Lutheran Church in Story City, IA. We were divided into 4 service groups, mixing youth and adults from each church. West Denmark was represented in the Bison, Eagle and Coyote service groups. Each morning we had chores and devotion time, followed by loading up and heading to our assigned service site. Some groups served at the same site all day, while some groups went somewhere else after lunch. Our service included gardening, visiting nursing homes, gardening, pulling weeds (is that considered gardening?), painting, gardening, mowing & weed whipping, cleaning classroom rugs, and gardening.

The reservation is divided into 7 districts, and each district has a community center; some have large gardens to provide fresh produce to residents. We also did some yardwork for private citizens, and work at the Enemy Swim and Tiospa Zina tribal schools.

We typically worked until 3pm and then headed to showers, either at the old high school in Sisseton or the Tiospa Zina tribal school. Back at Grace Lutheran, we ate dinner and did chores and devotion again. Each evening we also had an activity. On Monday, Darrell (who we had met at the Wacipi) provided insight into Native American



culture and relations. On Tuesday, we visited Dustina, who is in the process of restoring native prairie grasses

continued on page 10...

to her 30 acres; she also built an earth lodge and serves as a coach for a reservation youth lacrosse team. Wednesday we had free time, and went to the Sisseton pool, walked around Sisseton, or simply caught up on sleep. Thursday we visited Sica Hollow State Park, which means "Bad Land" in Lakota. We had individual church group time before lights out, where we basically shared our individual "high-low-buffaloes" for the day and laughed (and sometimes cried).



Tuesday night it rained, and we woke on Wednesday morning to find standing water on the floor in our room at the church. So, also, NOT flawless. But it dried pretty quickly, and our mattresses were ready for use again by lights out. So if one considers that the flight cancellation was actually divine intervention; stitches only delayed us 15 minutes on an arbitrary itinerary; and water on the floor could be argued as refreshing, then it WAS an IMPECCABLE trip!

Ugh. I forgot that Shawn dropped his towel on the floor of the showers on Monday and Liz had to go to Dollar General to get him a new one. The shower was consistently reported to be, by every male in the group, THE dirtiest shower they have ever seen.

The Mission: Impeccable title is null and void. Thanks, Shawn!

MISSION TRIPPERS THOUGHTS

Read on for Youth Highlights From the Trip!



Elodi: One of the nights we spent on the reservation, two men came to talk to us about the tribe's history. One of them described how native reservations are the predecessor to the concentration camps during the Second World War: "The Nazis just sped up the process" he had said.

The government had established reservations with no goal of sustainability. Healthcare was withheld to the point where when diseases hit the reservation it would cause devastation. If you married outside of the tribe the government would reduce your right to tribal identification. These two features of reservations were set up to ensure that all natives left in US territory would one day die of illness or assimilate into European-American culture. After the speech was over, a boy from Iowa asked the man why he referred to reservations as concentration camps, to which the conversation ended in hostility without understanding. I found myself upset with the man's impatience with the boy who just didn't understand.

The next day we were doing work for a woman who hosted a community garden for the tribe, we would help her with weeding and she would tell us stories. That day she told us about the man's story. We learned that a majority of his family had died of covid due to the nature of the reservation he told us of earlier.

Upon hearing this, I thought about how upset I was that he and the boy never came to an understanding. Now that I knew the man's story I could understand that he has been living his words. He continues to live in a concentration camp while his family and friends leave him. It has taught me how vital it is to understand the background of a person's stories while staying curious to how it would feel to live them.

Erica: Coyote day one: Erica driving, Shawn frustrated with Google Maps, and we arrived late at the community garden feeling somewhat unsure and stressed out about being late. Rhonda met us with a friendly and calm explanation of what seemed like everything that had happened to her in the last 10 years. I had a moment. My harried, over focused-on-productivity-white-lens didn't recognize the gift Rhonda was giving until a few minutes into her story. I exhaled. I realized that I was meant to be here in THIS moment, listening to THIS story, from THIS human, right now (not 10 minutes ago). This is how we begin. Gratitude for Rhonda, and her invitation to authentic relationship with person and place, to begin our day, and our week of service.



Gussie:

My favorite part was the Bible camp youth center. Meeting Steve was pretty cool, and I'm glad we were able to help him out.

Johanna: It was so much fun! I learned a lot about myself and strengthened my connections with fellow travelers. Gaining new knowledge and learning about different perspectives when it came to faith was also really impactful.

Abel: One of my favorite and most interesting parts of our mission trip to me was when one of the members of the counsel in the region came to talk with us on our first service day. He came to tell us stories and share a bit about their culture and traditions, but the most interesting part was at the end of his talk he led us in a "friendship dance" that turned out to be very similar to the grand march we do at West Denmark. It started with everyone linking hands in a line and following him around in aimless circles, and at the end we got into pairs and made a human tunnel for the people behind us to walk through. It made me think of how even though Dakota and Danish culture are very different, different people can have similar ways of expressing friendship.

Lucy: The mission trip was a success! We worked together to help the community and strengthen our relationship with God. Overall, I had a lot of fun



West Denmark Lutheran Church



2478 170th Street
Luck, WI 54853
www.westdenmark.org

Return Service Requested

August 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:	
MONDAY, 11:40am, usually Cafe Wren	

TUESDAY

Chair Yoga with Connie	10am
------------------------	------

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study	1pm
-------------	-----

THURSDAY

Every Other week:

ENCORE	10:30am
--------	---------

SATURDAYS

AA -	9-10:30 am
------	------------

Mark Your Calendars! Upcoming Events

8/2	Youth Led Worship Service
8/9	All Congregation Meeting
9/27	Choir Resumes

In This Issue

Pastor's Page	page 2
Worship Notes	page 3
Mission Trip Update	pages 8-11
<i>And Lots More!</i>	

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.