

TOGETHER IN FAITH

Let us gather as a community to celebrate the blessings that surround us



A Letter from the Pastor: Advent and the Call to Mission

By Pastor Tim Ehling -- Mission Developer for the Kettle River Cooperative

To the disciples of Christ in the Cooperative:

As a new season in the church year begins with the start of Advent, our preparing for the coming of the Christ child at Christmas, I find myself thinking about why Jesus was born. Was he born for us and our church? Or, for the sake of the whole world? How we as a church answer that question actually shapes our churches ministry as we grow into what God has planned for us in this new year. It's really about differentiating the churches ministry between Maintenance minded ministry versus Mission minded ministry.

Perhaps the end of Matthew's gospel says it the best for our churches, or is it a new beginning?

"Go make disciples of all nations.... baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
(Matt. 28)

Every time someone said the word **Mission** Jim got really angry. It didn't matter what context it was in, nor how you talked about it...he always saw it as a word that moved

Sunday Worship

Trinity Lutheran Church

Every Sunday at 8:00am

Oak Lake Lutheran Church

Every Sunday at 11:15am

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Kettle River Conference Church Cooperative

Stay updated with upcoming events, news, weekly Bible verses, and share prayer requests

Website: kettleriverchurchcoop.org

Facebook Page: Kettle River Conference Church Cooperative, ELCA

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the attention away from where he thought the focus of his church should be...on his local congregation. **Jim had a poor image of what mission really meant**, but to be honest...now that I think about it... in some ways he was touching on the truth! **Mission** in its very essence draws us away from focusing on ourselves and encourages us to think about others near and far away. In thinking about the other we are moved to become a part of someone else's life by sharing the life-changing Good News of the Gospel with them.

It's been said that if a congregation wants to grow in faith and life, they have to be **mission** minded. But too often churches are approaching the task of growing from a maintenance way of thinking. Their thinking is, we are faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and will grow, when we take care of ourselves **first!**

“Mission happens when we join God's work in someone else's life.”

But take for example the frog story: A Mad scientist wanted to learn about the leaping abilities of frogs. To do so, he placed a frog on his laboratory table, stood behind the frog and shouted, “Jump, frog, jump!” The frog jumped. The scientist carefully measured the distance of that first leap. He consistently repeated this procedure a number of times to provide reliable and valid statistical research. He then surgically removed one of the front legs of the frog (I know. It is a bizarre story. Remember, this is a mad scientist!)

Placing the frog on the table, the scientist once again stood behind him and yelled, “Jump, frog, jump!” Again, responding to the noise, the frog leaped forward and the scientist carefully measured the distance.

The scientist had the frog jump with three legs a number of times to gather his scientific data. He then surgically removed another leg of the frog and repeated the experiment. He repeated each step of the experiment, measuring the ability of the frog to jump with four, then three, then two, then one leg. Finally, the scientist cut off the last leg and surprisingly, the frog did not leap. The scientist yelled again but there was no response. The scientist finally stomped his feet, clapped his hands, and screamed as loudly as he could, but still the frog did not move. The scientist reflected on what he had seen and contemplated the meaning of this experiment. Finally, he sat up straight in his chair. And with an excited expression on his face that disclosed his discovery of new scientific insight, he wrote down, “Frogs without legs can't hear.”

The intent of this story was to emphasize that simply having data is not enough to draw sound scientific conclusions. The tale was a caution against running wild with partial information. Obviously, the scientist in the story missed the point. He drew an erroneous conclusion because he had a poor image of what a frog is, assuming that a frog could jump without legs. The scientist apparently thought that it was enough to look like a frog to be able to jump like a frog; it was enough

that the frog had a frog's head and a frog's torso. It was not necessary for the frog to have legs to be able to jump.

“A mission-minded church grows not by maintenance, but by movement.”

Too often we as the church think like that. We think it's enough to focus on ourselves first...we work hard to take care of number one, and only after that is there the thinking that we should share the left-overs with others. But what often is the case, when a congregation is mission minded rather than maintenance minded, the congregation experiences the truth of Jesus' earlier words in Matthew “...but strive FIRST for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

(Matt 6: 33)

If we as a cooperative of churches in the Kettle River Conference want to grow in faith and life then let's take a leap of faith together into being more and more **mission** minded...we may be surprised at how God will grow us.

God's peace and strong presence be with you and your family this Christmas season and as we grow together this new year in what being **mission minded** is all about.



News for December

Recap: Hunter's Supper

Trinity Lutheran Church hosted a wonderful **Hunter's Supper** on November 8th, welcoming **over 200 people** for food, fellowship, and generosity. Thanks to the incredible **community turnout** and a very successful silent auction, we were able to offer meaningful support to the **Bruno Food Shelf**.

A special thanks to **Deb and Steve Nelson** for their continued hard work and dedication in bringing this beloved community event to life. Thank you to everyone who attended, **volunteered**, and **gave so generously!**

Blue Christmas Service

The Trinity/Oak Lake Church Joint Health Council and Pastor Tim invites you to a **Blue Christmas Service** on **Sunday, December 21st at 4pm** at **Oak Lake Church**.

This special gathering, a service of Lament and Hope, offers a moment of peace and comfort for those who may find the holiday season difficult. The church is handicap accessible.

Stay afterward for soup, sandwiches, and fellowship.

WELCA Diaper Drive

Throughout the month of December, WELCA will be collecting **disposable diapers** for families in need. If you'd like to contribute, please place your donations **under the tree** in the fellowship area. All diapers will be delivered to the **Bruno Thrift Store** after December 31st.

Thank you for helping share comfort and care this season!

Imy's Birthday Celebration

Join us in honoring **Imy Johnson's** birthday on **Sunday, December 7th**, from **2-4 PM** at **Serenity in Sandstone** (109 Court Ave S, Sandstone, MN 55072).

Imy and Rolly were cherished members of our congregation for many years, and Imy shared her gift as our beloved organist for many years as well. Let's come together to celebrate her life, music, and friendship!

Grace Lutheran Church Celebrates 80 Years

On November 23rd, Grace Lutheran Church joyfully celebrated its **80th Anniversary** with a sanctuary filled to the brim with members, friends, and neighbors from the wider community. The other four churches of the Cooperative joined Grace in worship, making the day a beautiful reminder of shared faith and partnership. **We extend our heartfelt thanks to all who were able to attend and share in this milestone celebration.**

Following worship, a special lunch and program continued the festivities. Members of Grace's Church Council offered a warm welcome, shared highlights from the church's rich history, and honored members **90 years and older** for their lifelong faith and presence. The program also included greetings from former pastors, adding treasured memories to the day.

Pastor Tim closed the celebration with a blessing and benediction, marking a meaningful end to a day filled with gratitude and joy. **May the Lord continue to bless Grace Lutheran's mission and ministry for many years to come.**

December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Bruno Food Shelf Hours: Monday, Friday & Saturday 1-2pm			Daisy's Thrift Store Hours: Monday, Friday & Saturday 10am-3pm; Thursday 3-6pm			
	1	2 Joint Council 7pm at Trinity	3 Confirmation & Sunday School 6-7:30pm at Oak Lake	4 Decorate tree & church for Christmas 10am at Oak Lake	5	6 Live Nativity 4:30- 6:30pm at Emmanuel
7 Trinity Worship 8am OL Event Mtg 10:15am OL Worship 11:15am Imy's Birthday Celebration 2-4pm at Serenity	8 Health Council 4:30pm at Trinity	9	10 Confirmation & Sunday School 6-7:30pm at Oak Lake	11 Auxiliary 3pm at Trinity	12 Legion 6pm at Trinity Christmas Party Potluck 12pm at Julie Gunderson's home	13
14 Trinity Worship 8am - Potluck to follow OL Worship 11:15am WELCA Cookie Packing - after worship at Oak Lake Christmas Caroling - Leave OL at 1:30pm	15	16 WELCA Christmas Party 12pm at Doodie Marier's home Oak Lake Council 5pm	17 Confirmation & Sunday School 6-7:30pm at Oak Lake	18 Newsletter Deadline	19	20
21 Trinity Worship 8am OL Property Mtg 10am OL Worship 11:15am Blue Christmas Service 4pm at OL - meal to follow	22	23	24 Christmas Eve Worship Services: Trinity at 5:15pm OL at 6:30pm No Confirmation & Sunday School	25 Merry Christmas! 	26	27
28 Trinity Worship 8am OL Worship 11:15am - Potluck to follow	29	30	31 No Confirmation & Sunday School	<u>OL Worship Servants:</u> Altar Guild: Laurie Jorgensen & Debbie White Readers: Norma Hoffman (Backup Laurie J.) Communion Server: Tony Koecher Greeters & Acolyte: Volunteers Sunday Coffee Hosts: Volunteers		