



THE MESSENGER VOLUME 66 #9

Pastor's Column September 2026

I was sitting at a table this summer with some old acquaintances at my high school reunion sharing memories of confirmation classes. Back then they were huge: 10-15 kids per grade. As you might suspect, some did more to impress their peers than grow their spiritual lives. One guy wouldn't shut up, got an earful from my dad, and, looking back, said he definitely deserved it.

What struck me, though, was how none of the former First Lutheran confirmands in the class of 1991 go to church (except for me). Even the ones in town don't attend the place they grew up in. It's as if that's just some part of the past. If they did, the congregation would be booming.

I wonder what happened, but there's no simple answer. The culture became secular and not participating became the new normal. I didn't hear any gripes about being oppressed by religion or God not existing (not from the Lutheran ones, anyways). It was just sort of falling out of the habit and not seeing any real reason to keep going.

My home church is not unique. Most mainline kids leave church after confirmation and high school. Retention rates run around 1%. If we wonder why so many ELCA churches are shrinking, just think if that number was 30% or 50% how many more people we'd see on a Sunday.

Part of the problem is that confirmation was not set up for our world. It's designed to make sure that teenagers who were baptized as infants get proper doctrinal instruction to be able to say that, yes, indeed, they agree with the teachings of the church, before getting to vote as adult members. It's not designed to convince young people to stay in the faith, or what difference being involved makes vs. just staying home.

Of course, this is how mainline churches are organized in general. We came from European state churches, where the culture and the government pushed the faith and promoted it at every level and station of life. Everybody was a part of church. The only question was what to do with them. Make sure they have the right beliefs. Participation is going to happen regardless.

And if it doesn't? Then we have to switch to demonstrating to youth that God exists, that faith is life-changing and beneficial, and that they should keep being a part of the church when they're adults. And how do you do that?

Well, it's not complicated, but it is work.

A professor named Rollie Martinson did research on what kept youth in church after graduation. He found 8 things that made the faith "stick".

1. Faith integrated into family identity and practice
2. Three or more adult mentors of vital faith
3. Three or more months service in the name of Jesus Christ
4. Apprenticed early into leadership in their church
5. Engaging, meaningful church experience in which youth are valued
6. Excellent senior high/young adult ministry
7. Encouraged by strong Christian friend(s)
8. Support within an engaging Christian community during a personal crisis

I've been using this list for years as a guide to youth ministry planning. Most of these factors are relational – kids and adults working together for Jesus, building meaningful mentorships and support and connections. Youth group is number 6. This should give us some hope, since it does not require a huge teen ministry. Even small churches can be effective.

In the history of Lutheran churches, the template has been for the pastor to get exhausted trying to squeeze youth in around all the other work, and sub-contract out the kids to the charismatic staff person who will make the big #6 youth group happen. For a while, this works. Teenagers are visible. New families join because the kids invite their friends. Everyone wins.

Until they graduate and disappear.

So what happened? Well, we jumped to #6 and skipped #1-5. We built this really fun, youth-oriented church, and when they got confirmed and graduated we told them it was time to jump into the other church where everyone's older and they don't know anyone and the programs are all different.

It was asking teenagers to choose to join a different church than the one they'd experienced. The kid-church was programmed for them, designed to be fun and entertaining, surrounded by same-age people, and required little. The adult church just doesn't work that way. Instead of training them in adult church, we created a separate one that was more fun, and then expected them, as teenagers, to switch.

Hindsight is 20/20, so I have to be careful not to look judgy on the old method. It really looked like it worked for a long time. The numbers backed it up. And we Lutherans have a whole baptismal theology around confirmation, which made changing it harder. But now we have to do what we can with the world we're in and figure out how to design our youth ministry to leave kids passionate about Jesus and the church and excited to get involved and take leadership.

The council voted last month, after a couple years of study, to get a Youth Ministry Coordinator staff position. It's part-time, 10 hours/week or less, and is designed to facilitate the congregation integrating youth into its life and worship, facilitate relationships between generations, get the youth involved in worship and service. The coordinator is there to do the back-end work, set up the activities and relationships with members and kids. At many things, the coordinator might not even be there. We need the kids to feel like this is *their* church, full of people they know, who they know care about them, who are training them to be leaders, and who testify to how awesome Jesus is and what a difference he makes in your life. Instead of doing youth ministry *for* us, it's to make it happen *with* us.

Of course, we will still have youth events, youth nights, youth outings (if we can pull them off). I would love to have some sort of teen small group that could share highs and lows and talk about faith and life questions and do service. Peer interaction is still important. But....it won't be the coordinator running it for us, but organizing us to do it, including me, the pastor. I really think kids notice if the guy up front, who has this special position, is involved and cares about what they do. It signals their importance in the congregation.

I hope, as well, to expand some ministries to connect with young adults without kids (a growing segment of the population) and young families with babies and little kids. I'm going to work with the Coordinator to research community needs and develop some strategies for those as well. It might involve new groups, events, I'm not sure yet. We'll see when community surveys come back.

Peace,
Pastor Lars

Stewardship

The Stewardship Committee (Pastor Lars, Carroll Gjovik, Janet Mobley, Judith Hedberg-Duff, Clarice Swanson, and Lori Peterson) had our first meeting on 8-19-26. We are going to have the 4-T's (Time, Talent, Tithing and Thankful) as our theme this year.

Time is the first T, and we see members of this congregation giving of their time every day, expressing the love of God through acts of kindness. They are making quilts to comfort people around the world, teaching Sunday School, helping at schools, sharing food from their garden, visiting people who are homebound or in the hospital, feeding those who need food and giving clothes to those who need clothes. To mention just a few, as there are plenty more. All of these ways we share our time, show how God's love has changed our lives, and through our giving of time, helps to change other people's lives. To everyone coming to church, maybe one of the best ways to share our time is to be a warm, welcoming person as an example of God's love. Many members remember the first time they attended CLC and how they were welcomed and made to feel like this was home. Let CLC be a welcome home church where people come to worship and praise God for all the love, grace and peace he gives to all.



Godly Play Resumes Soon!



To celebrate the start of Godly Play and our precious Christ Lutheran children, please join us for an ice cream social during coffee hour on September 20.

Our dedicated team of Godly Play Storytellers/Teachers are Sara Pinkerton, Allison Tabacco-Hines, Kirsten Brannon, and Emily Stone. If you want to learn more about Godly Play and the possibility of becoming a teacher, please contact Pastor Lars.

Volunteers are needed to be Door Persons again this year during Godly Play lessons. As a reminder, the Door Person escorts the children between the sanctuary and the Godly Play classroom before the first reading at Sunday services. They observe the Godly Play lesson, helping the Godly Play teachers as needed, and return with the children to the sanctuary before communion. All adults are welcome to participate in this role, and no training is required. Volunteers last year had fun getting to know our Christ Lutheran kids better and watching them learn. If you are interested in helping or have questions, contact Kay Shelton. Sign-ups for the fall schedule will be posted beginning September 6.

September Birthdays

Marianna Willis -	9/2
Cecilia Rutledge —	9/2
Jacob Riley —	9/3
Braylee Tucker —	9/5
Brook Prutsman —	9/6
Peggy Simpson —	9/6
Dorothy Hagen —	9/7
Peter Hoffman —	9/7
Bob McCoy —	9/7
Chad Pederson —	9/8
Nolan Berry —	9/10
Rita Hoffman —	9/12
Clarence Strabel —	9/13
Doris Ann Simmons —	9/15
Barbara Hoffman —	9/22
Norma Austin —	9/25
Richard Fryhling —	9/26

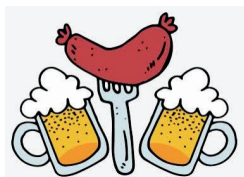
Save the Date

Brats & Brews will be on Saturday,
October 17th.

Are you good at making a big poster, or
teaching a polka dance. How about
helping out at the beverage table? Would
you be interested in helping in the kitchen
with set- or clean-up?

Your talents and time are greatly
appreciated.

If you want to help please let
Janet Mobely 509-200-1363 Text.



God's work. Our Hands September 13, 2026

"God's work. Our hands." ELCA, Annual
Day of Service Gather's congregations to
live out our convictions that we are sent to
love and serve our neighbors
in practical, everyday ways.

This year the council has chosen The Sleep
Center to be the recipient of Christ
Lutheran Church donations.

A list of needed items will be available on
Sunday in the inner Narthex and we will be
gathering donations until September
13th,. we will collect bedding, towels,
food, hygiene items.

Thank you very much. If you have
questions, please call or text Lori
Peterson. 206-618-3632



Attendance Record

July 2025 - 124

July 2026 - 85

CLC'S FINANCES

July 2026

Total Income: \$15,849

Total Expenses: - \$12,866

Net Gain: \$2,983

Christ Lutheran Church
Church Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday August 11, 2026

Council President Kay Shelton called the meeting to order at 5:30PM. Those attending were Melanie Hein, Lori Peterson, Janet Mobley, Pastor Lars Hammar, Jim Peterson, Greg Romaniuk, Peggy Haug, Kirsten Brannon, Mara Palumbo, Julie Michener and Guest Sara Pinkerton.

Devotions – Devotions by Greg Romaniuk

June Minutes - Minutes of the June 9 meeting were approved by email affirmation June 16, 2026.

Financial Report - Greg Romaniuk shared the financial report with council members.

Pastor's Report – Pastor Lars Hammar emailed his current report to council members. He is updating the job description for the Youth Coordinator position. He is also organizing a confirmation class.

Council President's Report – Council President, Kay Shelton, emailed her report to council members which included updated revisions to the church Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions. The Constitution will be reviewed at the August and September meetings.

Committee Reports

Finance & Budget: Jim Peterson

The Christ Lutheran Congregation is on track budget-wise at the end of July. The end of July represents 58% of the way through the calendar year. We have received 58.5% of the budgeted income for the year. Through July we have spent 56.4% of the annual total budgeted expenditure. Year to date the actual net is better than the budget. We budgeted expenses for the year that are \$47,000 greater than the budgeted income. So, even being slightly better than budget we are currently nearly \$20,000 in the red. I point out two additional observations. Giving in July was below budget until a large offering donation was received late in the month. This might be a cash flow blessing to us in July but might result in a smaller bulge in offering in November and December than we have experienced in past years. Also, a few budget line items are currently over-expanded. This results from either a budgeting error (bad estimate) or an expenditure that has been higher than expected (inflation, additional activity, etc.) Sound budget management requires that we focus both on income and expenditure.

Worship: Peggy Haug

Worship happens every Sunday thanks to many volunteers. We are grateful to James French for his continued support as Organist while Dr. Kang is gone. We had a very productive meeting with four other church members to plan for special worship services between now and Christmas.

We look forward to meaningful worship services, especially for Reformation Sunday, All Saints' Day, and Advent. We have some great ideas that will involve congregation participation. Thank you to Leslie, Paul, Judith, Clarice and Pastor Lars for their support.

Evangelism: Linda Lohrmann - no report

Outreach: Melanie Hein

Mission group continues to be busy sewing quilts and making health kits. We need donations of large pieces of cotton material. We continue to serve meals to the sleep center and the Christian Aid Center. We've made extra meals at the sleep center, due to their needs and we appreciate your help. With everything that is happening around us, I urge you to look around and reach out to those in need. A phone call, a note, can mean a lot.

Property: Anne Swant - no report

Fellowship: Janet Mobley

Coffee Hours have almost all been filled. This is a special time to visit with people in the fellowship hall after church. Anyone interested in hosting coffee hour, ask a friend or two to help you and add your name to the list. It was wonderful that so many were involved in VBS this past June. Many people shared their talents and meals. It was a great way to interact with each other, including our youth. We had a wonderful turnout for the WW Sweets baseball game. The food was delicious. The weather was great. Several of our children received baseballs and the Sweets won! It was a lot of fun and fellowship. Thank you, Jim & Kari, for the fun time at your house on July 26th. Please Save the Date: Brats & Brews on Saturday, October 17th. Details to come.

Stewardship: Lori Peterson

We have a Stewardship Committee that consists of Pastor Lars, Carroll Gjovik, Clarice Swanson, Janet Mobley, Judith Hedberg-Duff, and Lori Peterson and we will have our first meeting on August 19th.

Personnel report: Mara Palumbo

This month I met with Pastor Lars, Kay Shelton, Kirsten Brannon, and Sara Pinkerton to review and revise the youth coordinator position. We developed the job description and are prepared to present it to council for approval.

Adult Education: Cheryl French – no report

Youth & Family: Kirsten Brannon

September 12th is our trip to Jubilee Lake to hike and picnic. We'll meet at the day parking area at 10 am. Hike, then lunch and swimming. Pack water for the hike. Pack lunch, walking shoes and swimming attire.

Godly play is scheduled to begin again on Sunday, September 20th.

Continuing Business:

- A. Motion to approve computer and accessories for financial secretary – Jim Peterson researched and provided a description of a new computer for our financial secretary. Jim made a motion to approve the purchase, Kirsten Brannon seconded, passed by unanimous council vote.
- B. Policy Reviews: Social Media Policy (Pastor Lars) Pastor spoke about updating the policy. He would like a volunteer, not necessarily a council member, to assist with updating the policy. Currently posts are only being made on Facebook.
- C. Youth Coordinator proposal - Pastor Lars reviewed our need to hire a Youth Coordinator. Kay discussed the pay range for the position. Jim Peterson moved that we hire someone for the Youth Coordinator position, second by Janet Mobley, passed by unanimous council vote. The Hiring Committee will be Pastor Lars, Mara, and Kirstie. Sara was also invited to be on the hiring committee, and she will let them know if she wants to participate.

New Business:

- A. Model Constitution and Bylaws Update – Kay shared projected updates to our church Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions. To ratify the changes the congregation must vote on them twice with 60 days between votes. All council members agreed that the Treasurer should have voting rights at our meetings.
- B. God's Work, Our Hands - Sept 13th – Our focus is helping the Sleep Center. A list of what they need is in the narthex. We will take donations until Sept 13th and deliver them. Your participation will be appreciated by those in need.
- C. Update on Youth Education – Sara has chosen the curriculum for Godly Play for the last three and one-half years, but she is ready to pass the baton to someone else. We are very grateful for Sara's time and talent in developing an excellent model to follow. Pastor Lars and Kay will review the materials and map out this year's schedule.

Future Dates:

September 12 - All Ages Jubilee Lake Hike (fires permitting)

September 13 - God's Work, Our Hands

September 20th - Rally Sunday! Godly Play will resume with an ice cream social following our church service.

October 17th - Beers & Brats

Adjournment – The meeting concluded with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Julie Michener, Council Secretary

SEPTEMBER 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Mission Group 9am Men's Group 10am	2	3 SJAG Meeting 10am Bible Study 1pm	4	5 Weavers 1:00 – 4:00pm
6 Worship Service 9:30am	7	8 Mission Group 9am Council Meeting 5:30pm	9	10 Bible Study 1pm	11	12
13 Worship Service 9:30am Gods Work Our Hands	14	15 Mission Group 9am Men's Group 10am	16 D&D Night 7pm – 9pm	17 Bible Study 1pm	18	19
20 Worship Service 9:30am Godly Play 9:30am Ice Cream Social after service	21	22 Mission Group 9am	23	24 Bible Study 1pm	25 Newsletter Deadline	26
27 Worship Service 9:30am Godly Play 9:30am	28	29 Mission Group 9am Men's Group 10am	30 D&D Night 7pm – 9pm			



Christ Lutheran Church

1420 South 2nd Avenue
Walla Walla, WA 99362-4502

Return Service Requested

Church Website come see what's new!
www.christwallawalla.org

September 2026

Church Staff

Pastor Lars Hammar	President Kay Shelton
Office Manager Dee Kasten	Secretary Julie Michener
Sexton Bert Rodriguez	Treasurer Greg Romaniuk
Organist James French	Stewardship Lori Peterson
	Fellowship Janet Mobley

Church Council

Property Management Anne Swant	Outreach Melanie Hein
Finance/ Budget Jim Peterson	Adult Ed./Library Cheryl French
Worship Peg Haug	Personnel Mara Palumbo
Evangelism Linda Lohrmann	Youth Education Vacant
Youth & Family Kirsten Brannon	

Mission

We are God's people, united by faith in Jesus Christ, forgiven, chosen and called by him through the Word and Sacraments to make disciples, and to serve in the world God loves.