

THE MESSENGER

February 2024

The newsletter of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church

GOD ON TRIAL



Lenten Worship

Note: There will be a potluck meal at 5:30 pm before the Wednesday services.

Ash Wednesday Worship with
Holy Communion

February 14 at 6:30 pm

“Restraint” Pastor Behm

Wednesday, February 21 at 6:30 pm

“Testimony” Pastor Bittorf

Wednesday, February 28 at 6:30 pm

“Misconceptions” Pastor Russow

Wednesday, March 6 at 6:30 pm

“Truth” Pastor from Medford

Wednesday, March 13 at 6:30 pm

“Sympathy” Pastor Willitz

Wednesday, March 20 at 6:30 pm

“Accusations” Pastor DeGier

Thursday, March 28 at 6:30 pm

Holy Thursday Worship with
Holy Communion

Friday, March 29 at 6:30 pm

Good Friday Worship

In this Messenger:

- 1) Lenten Worship
- 2) Pastor’s Devotion
- 3) Calendar
- 4) Women’s Bible Study
- 4) Soup Lunch & Games
- 4) Attendance & Financial Updates
- 4) Birthdays/Anniversary
- 5) Hymnal Order
- 5) Lord’s Prayer Input
- 5) WELS Youth Night
- 5) *Men of His Word* Men’s Conference
- 5) *Mysterious Marriage* Workshop
- 5) Easter 2024
- 6) Connecting our Community
- 7) Our Church’s Online Presence
- 8) Christmas & Mission Festival Pictures



715-536-3313

www.christmerrill.com

www.facebook.com/christmerrill

1204 N. Sales Street | Merrill, WI 54452



www.wels.net

Rejoice and Be Glad - Each and Every Day

This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:24)

These past few weeks we have experienced some interesting winter weather. At the beginning of the year the weather didn't even feel like winter. Then we started to get some snowstorms. Just recently we had a week where some days it barely got above zero for a temperature. It's during these days that we might say, "I can't wait until it gets warmer." But even during the warmer months we still can complain about how hot and humid it can be. We can have intense summer storms that bring inches of rain which causes flooding. The reality is that no matter what the weather may be like we are not always content.

But the above passage tells us to rejoice and be glad in each and every day. There are multiple reasons to rejoice and be glad in each and every day. First, it's because it's the day the Lord has made. At creation the Lord created different things on each day. Although the Lord has stopped creating, he still takes care of his creation. In his wisdom the Lord does different things on different days. Therefore some days may be cold and others may be warm. Some days may be full of sunshine and other days may have snow or rain. The Lord decides what will happen on each day in order to accomplish his purpose. Even if we don't fully understand why, we have the confidence that this is what the Lord wants.

The second reason to rejoice and be glad in each and every day is because each and every day is another day to experience the Lord's grace and blessings. Every day the Lord brings us different blessings, whether it's the continuation of certain blessings like what we need for our lives or new blessings the Lord gives to us. This is why we rejoice and are glad in each and every day because the Lord will take care of us and bless us according to his love.

Finally, a third reason to rejoice and be glad in each and every day is if you look at the context of this passage. In the context of this passage it talks about Jesus as the capstone which the builders have rejected. Then it mentions that the Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes. Why would the rejection of Jesus be a marvelous thing to us? It's because Jesus came to be rejected and put to death in order to take away our sins. That's the ultimate day that the Lord had made: the day of our salvation. Therefore we rejoice and are glad in each and every day because if the Lord hated us and distanced himself from us then each and every day would be a day of sorrow and despair, but instead we constantly live under the Lord's grace and salvation.

So as we continue on in these winter months when the weather may not be the best, rejoice and be glad in the day the Lord has made knowing that in his wisdom he makes every day special, the Lord blesses us each and every day, and we live under his grace and salvation.

- Pastor Neal Behm

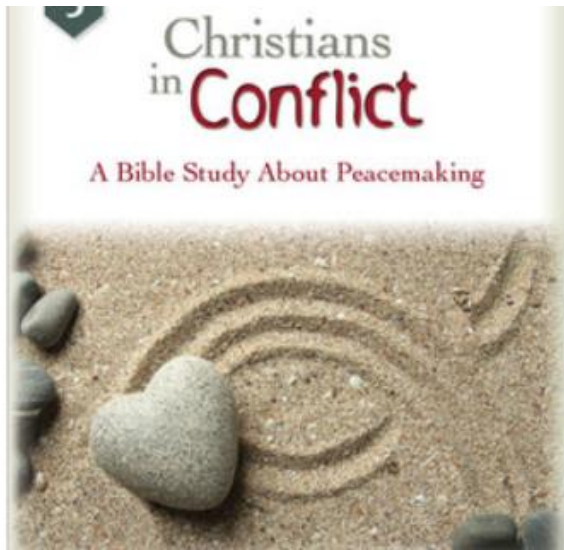
February 2024

View the most up to date calendar at christmerrill.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 6:30 pm Women's Bible Study	2	3 9:00 am Mysterious Marriage @ Trinity, Berlin
4 9:00 am Worship (Holy Communion) 10:20 am Children's Group Time 10:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Teen Bible Study 10:30 am Adult Bible Study 5:00 pm WELS Youth Night	5	6	7 9:00 am Adult Bible Study 4:30 pm Catechism Class 6:30 pm Choir	8	9 7:30 pm Swing Dancing	10
11 9:00 am Worship 10:20 am Children's Group Time 10:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Teen Bible Study 10:30 am Adult Bible Study	12	13 2:00 pm Worship @ Bell Tower 6:30 pm Council Meeting	14 9:00 am Adult Bible Study 5:30 pm Meal 6:30 pm Ash Wednesday Worship (Holy Communion) 7:30 pm Choir	15 6:30 pm Fellowship Committee Meeting 4:30 pm Catechism Class	16	17 8:00 am Men of His Word Conference in Oshkosh
18 9:00 am Worship (Holy Communion) 10:20 am Children's Group Time 10:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Teen Bible Study 10:30 am Adult Bible Study	19 6:00 pm Board of Elders Meeting	20 6:00 pm Northland Lutheran High School Open Forum 7:00 pm NLHS Delegate Meeting	21 9:00 am Adult Bible Study 5:30 pm Meal 6:30 pm Lenten Worship 7:30 pm Choir	22 4:30 pm Catechism Class	23	24
25 9:00 am Worship 10:20 am Children's Group Time 10:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Teen Bible Study 10:30 am Adult Bible Study 11:30 am Soup Potluck & Games	26	27	28 9:00 am Adult Bible Study 5:30 pm Meal 6:30 pm Lenten Worship 7:30 pm Choir	29 4:30 pm Catechism Class		

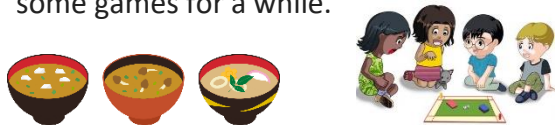
8:00 am Sundays - worship service on the radio (96.3FM, 730AM)

9:00 am Sundays - worship service online at youtube.com/@christmerrill



WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY Got conflict? Foolish question! We all experience conflict. It shatters lives, causes wars, foments hatred, generates violence, divides congregations, ends marriages, destroys businesses, disrupts friendships, and wrecks health. What causes all this conflict? And how does God want us to react to conflict? This practical course gives an in-depth look at what God has to say about conflict. It will lead us to apply biblical conflict-resolving principles to our own lives and to consider how every Christian can become a vital part of a culture of peace. **The February 1 study will cover the topic "Peacemaking and Faith"** and include A Model from Matthew 18, Paul's Power Formula, and Counting the Cost. Paper copies of the previous studies from the series are available in the display to the right of the bulletin board at the top of the stairs.

SOUP & GAMES: On Sunday, February 25 at 11:30 am, we will have a 'Soup Potluck' for lunch. Other items like sandwiches, crackers, cheese, sausage, and (of course) desserts are welcome. After lunch, those who wish to can stay and play some games for a while.



<i>Spiritual Growth Weekly Averages</i>	December
Sunday worship	63
Midweek Advent worship	21
Christmas Eve evening worship	56
Christmas Day worship	54
Men's Bible Study	5
Sunday Adult Bible Study	15
Sunday School & Teen Bible Study	7
Wednesday Bible Study	11
Women's Bible Study	6

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

2 Neil V. 16 Rose S. 18 Jim Y.
 3 Connor M. 17 Amanda K. 20 Jennifer M.
 10 Jenny Z.



FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARY

21 Jason & Deana J.

CHURCH FINANCIAL UPDATE

Our Offerings to the Lord (as of 12/31/23)

Anticipated offerings: \$158,413

Actual offerings: \$143,559

Actual expenses: \$144,519

General Fund balance as of 1/7/24: \$16,738

Your offerings help to support the ministry of the congregation. Giving continues to trend below budget. Please consider how your offerings benefit our church, our fellowship events, and our ability to reach our community. For more information, see the Treasurer Report on the bulletin board by the elevator.

HYMNAL ORDER: There is a signup sheet on the hall bulletin board to order one or more Christian Worship Hymnals for personal use. You can choose between pew or gift editions and may order a personalized imprint. Sign up by February 25; pay when the hymnals arrive.

We want to hear from you!

Throughout our journey to adopt the new *Christian Worship: Hymnal*, your input has been invaluable and helped shape the way we approach worship as a family of believers. With full-time use of the new hymnal now upon us, there is one last item we'd like to hear from you about - the Lord's Prayer.

Some of your fellow members have expressed interest in using the "new/contemporary" version of the Lord's Prayer. Others have said they prefer the "traditional" version. Still others don't have a strong opinion and would use either version of the prayer. God has not prescribed a specific version of this prayer for our use. Instead, he leaves the decision to our Christian freedom and judgment.

Starting in January, there will be an opportunity to use and discuss the "new/contemporary" version of The Lord's Prayer at the conclusion of the Sunday Adult Bible Study. Additional conversation about this version of the prayer is planned for the April Open Forum. The forum will be a space for all members to share their perspectives, ask questions, and contribute to the ongoing dialogue about this subject. We encourage you to share your opinions at this meeting or at any time with an elder or with the Pastor.

SHUT-IN VISITATION: The Elders welcome help from members visiting our shut-ins. Members are encouraged to visit and/or keep them in our prayers. Please reach out to Pastor or an elder for contact information.

Laurene H., Tom L., Phil M., Lorna P., Kathleen P.

WELS YOUTH NIGHT

Sunday, February 4 from 5:00-8:00 pm
FREE BOWLING! FREE FOOD! FUN PRIZES!
FOR TEENS GRADES 8-12

Marathon City Sports Center

1200 WI-107

Marathon City, WI 54448



Find a link to sign up on the Members of Christ Lutheran Facebook group page

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/christmerrill>)

MEN OF HIS WORD CONFERENCE

The 15th Annual MOHW Conference will be held at the Best Western Premier Waterfront Convention Center in **Oshkosh** on **Saturday, February 17**. Additional details and online registration are available at www.menofhisword.org. The registration fee is \$65 for adults and \$35 for youth – these rates increase to \$80 and \$40 respectively after January 28th.

MYSTERIOUS MARRIAGE

Trinity Lutheran Church, Town of Berlin, invites all married couples to a marriage enrichment event, Mysterious Marriage, on **Saturday, February 3**. The cost of this one-day marriage enrichment event is \$80 per couple. Register by going to Eventbrite.com and searching for "Mysterious Marriage" or by clicking the following link:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/.../mysterious-marriage>

Be part of Easter 2024 and the Resurrection Reality

— LET'S CELEBRATE —
EASTER
— TOGETHER —
**resurrection
REALity**

Why Your Invitation Matters: Studies show that Easter services are one of three worship services that unchurched people are most likely to attend. That's why it's so important for us to extend a warm invitation to worship. People are especially likely to attend if invited by an acquaintance. Think of someone and consider inviting them to come to our 9:00 am Easter Sunday worship service.

Connecting our Community

In a continuing effort to increase communication with those in our church family, members will soon have an opportunity to indicate their communication preferences and enroll or subscribe into different platforms. Lastly, there will be an opportunity to provide other church demographic information.

Bulletin announcements and paper copies of *The Messenger* will continue to be provided at church. In order to provide more timely communications with you via email, phone message or text message we would like to also use Church360 Members, our membership software platform. **Members aged 13 and older with an email address on file will receive an automated message with an option to select what type of subscription messages they would like to receive.** Opt-in options include **Announcements** (used in urgent situations), **Invitations** (for upcoming events and services), and **Reminders** (for people who have already signed up for an activity). In the near future feedback will be gathered to help determine what frequency level and types of communication enrollees prefer.

<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">Email</div> <p>Preferred email address</p> <input style="width: 90%; border: 1px solid #ccc;" type="text" value="No preference"/> <p>Subscribed to message types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Announcement<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Invitation<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prayer Request<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reminder <p>Opted out from email:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 14*****@gmail.com

Our Church's Online Presence: Share our Church Service with Others

By Ken C., Technology Committee Chairman

If you followed the steps last month to find our YouTube channel ([YouTube.com/@christmerrill](https://www.youtube.com/@christmerrill)) and subscribed, hopefully you enjoyed a service live or watched the recording. The volunteers working behind the scenes to provide the livestream and recordings each week have made this a personal ministry. The great thing is this can become your ministry too without knowing anything about the hardware used or how to link to YouTube, and you can still attend in person. **Do you know someone who can't get to church, is homebound or in a nursing facility? You can help them see and hear the service wherever they are.**

If they have internet, help them get online and share the service with them. If they don't have a computer or tablet but live in a nursing home or care facility, they should already have WIFI in the facility and you only need the facility WIFI password for connection to the web. So, bring your tablet or laptop, open to YouTube and our channel and have a personal service right there in their room. Or better yet connect to a TV for a better viewing experience. Maybe their neighbor or roommate would like to participate too. Not only would you be ministering to our members but also reaching out to others.

You can follow along with the liturgy and sing the hymns that are all printed on the screen. We have been working hard to improve the sound so that it sounds and feels like you are in a large open sanctuary. I have been told by those who can't always attend in person how great it feels to be able to hear the congregation singing along and responding to Pastor. So, join in and sing or respond with the one you are visiting.

If you can't get to someone personally, share the link with someone, a family member or caregiver, who can. If they have the internet and the link, our service can be brought to them. And if you can't connect or don't have a device that can connect where they are at, we can provide a copy; just talk to me and we can work something out for you.

Lastly, **send the link for our YouTube Channel to those you know in the military around the country or serving overseas.** I was there once myself and would have loved to have had the ability to see our home church service. More recently, when I was working many weekends, I would close my office door at the hangar and, if I did not get a call, I was able to enjoy the worship service hour with you.

Next month I will share how to get in the right frame of mind to get the most out of the service.

WORSHIP LIVESTREAM: Christ Ev. Lutheran Church provides an internet livestream broadcast during many of the **Sunday services (9:00 am).** **The service is simultaneously streamed to a TV in the lower level of the church for anyone not able to be in the sanctuary.**

Subscribe to the YouTube channel [youtube.com/@christmerrill](https://www.youtube.com/@christmerrill) to get updates about the live streaming schedule. The videos are available on the channel to watch at one's convenience.



Christmas Musicians at Christ Lutheran

Musicians Pictured Left to Right:
Katelyn (clarinet), **Derek** (alto saxophone),
Jennifer (bassoon), **Ellen** (flute), **Adeline** (oboe),
Scott (alto saxophone), **Adam** (trombone)



Instrumentalists enhance the Christmas Day service.

Mission Festival



On January 21 Pastor Jeff Mahnke gave a presentation about **Home Missions**. More information about Home Missions, including the new start-up in Kronenwetter, is on the bulletin board at the top of the stairs as well as the one in the basement near the classrooms. The presentation may be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/live/Ag8UlpLnCPk?si=-uzB8T4eSuK-JW4s>.