



The Parish Messenger December 2023

Mission Statement

We are a Christian community rooted in God's love growing in Christ through reaching out and serving.

CHURCHES

Georgetown Lutheran
PO Box 86
Balsam Lake, WI 54810
Office: 715.857.5580

Trinity Lutheran
2532-15th Street
Cumberland, WI 54829
715.822.3001

PASTOR

Diane Norstad
715-501-4129 (cell)
715-268-5706 (home)
revdianenorstad@yahoo.com

WORSHIP TIMES

Georgetown
Worship 10:45 AM

Trinity
Worship 8:45 AM

SUNDAY SCHOOL TIMES

Georgetown
9:15 AM (Sept-May)

Trinity
10:00 AM (Sept-May)

OFFICE HOURS

Mondays 9:00 AM- 3:00 PM



UPCOMING CHRISTMAS SERVICE SCHEDULE

Friday, December 22

Candlelight Service
Trinity Lutheran
7:00 PM

Saturday, December 23

Candlelight Service
Georgetown Lutheran
4:00 PM

Sunday, December 24

Regular Church Service
Trinity Lutheran – 8:45 AM
Georgetown Lutheran – 10:45 AM





Advent, Christmas and Epiphany blessings to you from Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson, Synod Ministers, Elizabeth Bartsch, Sara Villarreal Bishop, Diane House, Lidix Montoya, Randy Olson, Laura Ramlow

Mary the Brave: Mary the God Bearer

As a young pastor and working mom, I struggled with the challenges of balancing work and home life, often while carrying a child in my womb, arms, on my hip, in a front or back baby pack, or car seat. Now my children are adults, and I have the joy of watching them carry my grandchildren. They do it differently than I did, their car seats are much nicer than the ones we had, but like us, they carry their children with much love.¹ I am still carrying my adult children and grandchildren and will always carry them, in my heart with much love. This Advent and Christmas season I'm reflecting on Mary, the God bearer. (In Greek it's Theotokos².) Mary carried Jesus. Like all parents she carried her child with love, but she is also the God bearer. It was a brave thing Mary did to bear God into the world.

To love is a brave thing. It is a brave thing to become a parent. Mothers put their own lives at risk bearing a child in their womb and giving birth. It requires a measure of bravery for parents to bring a child into this world filled with the bad news of climate disasters, gun violence, war, political upheaval, racism, food/water insecurity, and escalating health and higher education costs.

History has painted Mary to be quiet, meek and mild, submissive to God's will, but a closer read shows us that Mary was brave. Mary was neither meek nor superhuman.³ She had grit. She was faithful, courageous, strong and brave. Most of all, she was human. Her encounter with the angel Gabriel, the messenger of God made her brave. She knew that her pregnancy was dangerous and she could die giving birth. She also knew that as an unmarried teenaged mother it would cause upheaval in her family and community. She would give birth to Jesus during Roman occupation, a time of political unrest. Mary was *brave*. Her encounter with the living God made her brave

Her encounter with God gave her bravery and the faith to see that if God was calling her God would also protect her. It revealed to her that God chooses the people on the margins, those overlooked and underestimated. Bearing God in the world was to bring good news and hope to those oppressed. May Mary, the God Bearer, inspire us all to be brave!

This Advent and Christmas season, I invite you to be Theotokos, God Bearers. I invite you to carry the good news of Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection to all those we meet on this journey of life and the love of Jesus in your hearts always.

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson

Luke 1: 26ff In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you..." "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, ... the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God... For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



Silent Night Campaign

XL Twin Sheets and New Pillows are needed at the CRA. Let's help those who are looking to build a new, abuse free life for themselves and their children get these basics. We'll sleep better knowing they sleep better.

A Squeaky Clean Advent



Clean clothes make a difference. Often, families land at the CRA with very little and need the opportunity to wash clothes. Providing liquid laundry detergent for them gives a gift that we may very well take for granted. Let's make their lives easier and more comfortable.



Parish Worship Service Dec. 6th 5:30pm

Join us at Georgetown for a joint evening worship service. We will have a meal, activities and worship. Let's brighten these dark evenings by sharing our love and light with each other in worshipping God.



Christmas Caroling

Sunday, December 17

Join us at Trinity at 2 PM for an afternoon of caroling followed by a gathering at Dee Wagner's at beginning at 5 PM.

Christmas Carol and Pajama Sunday

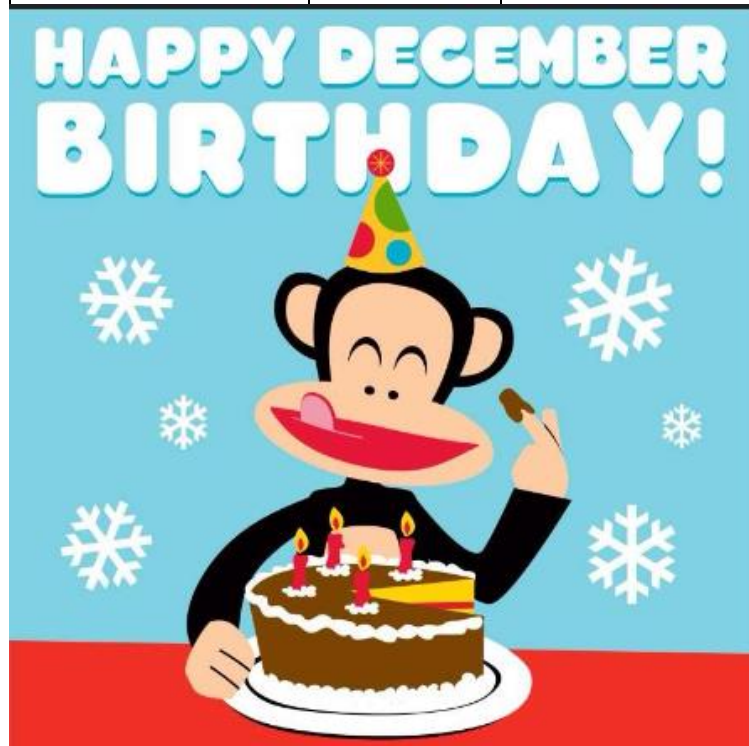
December 31st both churches will be having a service full of Christmas hymns while comfortably worshipping in our pajamas. What better way to show off our Christmas pajamas? Have some fun and relax during this Christmas season.



The St Croix Valley Christian Community Choir presents
Love Was Born A King
Bringing hope for the hopeless & strength for the broken
Dec. 3, 2023 at 2 p.m.
Location:
Balsam Lutheran Church
1115 Mains Crossing Ave.
Amery, Wis.
Created by
Joel Lindsey &
Jeff Bumgardner
Arranged &
Orchestrated by
Daniel Semsen
Free will donation to
Benefit Polk County
Salvation Army

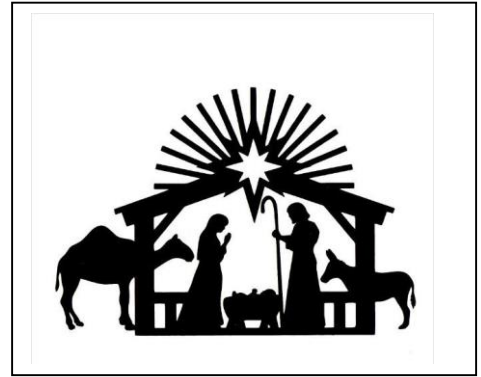
DECEMBER 2023 CALENDAR

Date	Time	Meeting/Activity
Sunday, 12/3	8:45 AM	Church Service - Trinity
	10:45 AM	Church Service - Georgetown
Monday, 12/4	9:30 AM	Bible Study - Georgetown
	7:00 PM	Bible Study - Trinity
Tuesday, 12/5	6:30 PM	Parish Calling Committee Meeting @ Georgetown
Wednesday, 12/6	5:30 PM	Parish Worship Service & Meal
Sunday, 12/10	8:45 AM	Church Service - Trinity
	10:45 AM	Church Service - Georgetown
Monday, 12/11	9:30 AM	Bible Study - Georgetown
	7:00 PM	Bible Study - Trinity
Tuesday, 12/12	6:30 PM	Council Meeting - Trinity
Wednesday, 12/13	6:30 PM	Confirmation @ Trinity
Thursday, 12/14	6:30 PM	Council Meeting - Georgetown
Sunday, 12/17	8:45 AM	Church Service & Sunday School Program - Trinity
	10:45 AM	Church Service - Georgetown
	2:00 PM	Christmas Caroling @ Trinity
Monday, 12/18	9:30 AM	Bible Study - Georgetown
	7:00 PM	Bible Study - Trinity
Wednesday, 12/20	6:30 PM	Confirmation @ Georgetown
Friday, 12/22	7:00 PM	Christmas Candlelight Service - Trinity
Saturday, 12/23	4:00 PM	Christmas Candlelight Service - Georgetown
Sunday, 12/24	8:45 AM	Church Service - Trinity
	10:45 AM	Church Service - Georgetown
Monday, 12/25		NO BIBLE STUDY
Wednesday, 12/27		NO CONFIRMATION
Sunday, 12/31	8:45 AM	Church Service - Trinity
	10:45 AM	Church Service - Georgetown



December 1	Wyatt Bergmann – GT Janis Norlund – GT
December 2	Jim Bystrom - GT
December 3	Greta Weaver – T
December 4	Gail Anderson – T (*)
December 5	Julie Johnson – GT
December 6	Bruce Peper – GT
	Trent Jensen - GT
December 7	Mick Swiontek – GT
December 8	Judy Gammel – GT
	Nataleeah Root – T
December 12	Ira Rouzer – T(*)
December 13	Neil Jensen - FT
December 17	Diana Peterson – GT
	Kooper Klugow – GT
December 22	Randy Glenna - FT
December 23	Emily Frenndt – GT
	Jim Springsteen - T
December 28	Alex Hansen - GT
December 31	Marie Sellent - T

Infant holy, Infant lowly, for His bed a cattle stall;
Oxen lowing, little knowing, Christ the Babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing, bells are ringing, tidings
bringing:
Christ the Babe is Lord of all.
Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning
new
Saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a Gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the
morrow:
Christ the Babe was born for you.”



How marvelous it is how Christ chose to come to us as a child! The birth of a child is a time of great anticipation and joy. The image of the Christ Child in the arms of Mary is a beautiful image of Christ’s willingness to enter the world as a helpless infant. He was as dependent upon others as any of us when we are born. He was dependent upon Mary, a very young mother, and Joseph, a carpenter, for his needs as he entered this world in that manger so very long ago.

In our world we need joy, hope and the salvation of this wonderful little baby who would be the King of the Jews, Prince of Peace, and Savior of all of us. Only God could come to us so vulnerable and open hearted, blessing our lives in a million different ways.

Christ came to us as both fully human and fully divine. Through his incarnation we came to a greater understanding of God and of what it means to be human. Often, we find ourselves trusting in our own abilities in this life rather than being willing to fully rely on God. Even Christ, who was completely capable of taking care of all that He needed in this life chose to rely on others. Christ rested in Mary’s arms at His birth and again when taken down from the cross.

As we await Christ’s birth, following Christ’s example, let us take the time to acknowledge our need for others. More importantly, let us take the time to acknowledge our need for God. Christ was born, died and rose again that we may have the greatest gift of all - eternal life. We can greet Christmas then knowing...“Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the morrow: Christ the Babe was born for you.”

There are those that need us, too. For the CRA, we are working on two projects. At Georgetown we are gathering liquid laundry detergent to make a “Squeaky Clean Advent.” At Trinity we are gathering twin xl sheets and new pillows for a “Silent Night” campaign. While there are a multitude of needs in our world these women and children who have suffered abuse are close to home and need us very much. If you are able to participate that’s great. If you are not able to please keep them in your prayers. Together we will all make a difference.

May you have a blessed Advent and Christmas, taking joy in the Infant Christ, Lord and Savior of all.

Let us pray: Gracious and loving God. In the midst of our busy holiday season, help us to keep our focus on You and the gift we have in Christ Jesus our Lord. In the midst of our busy lives - bring peace, in the midst of our broken world - bring healing, and in the midst of our days bring the joy and love that only You can provide. To You be the glory, God the Creator, Jesus the Redeemer, and Holy Spirit the wind beneath our wings. Amen

In Christ’s Peace
Pastor Diane Norstad

NEWS FROM OUR COUNCILS

Trinity Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes

11/14/2023

Present: Mandy Rouzer, Steve Anderson, Rick Sellent, Lacy Sellent, Shane Beecroft, Deedra Wagner, Kathy Grenquist

Missing: Pastor Diane Norstad

Shane opened the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Secretary's Report: Minutes were read. Lacy Sellent motioned to approve, Steve 2nd. All approved.

Treasurer's Report: The shed still has \$1374.54 owed to the main account.

Monthly Income: \$ 4737.50 – all offering

Monthly Expense: \$ 3578.69

Net Total: \$1158.81

TLC Checking has \$12290.06

TLC Savings has \$640.10

MI Fund has \$13282.46

CD has \$ 15,189.23

Endowment Fund Savings has \$240.94

Mandy Rouzer made a motion, Rick Sellent 2nd, all approved.

Pastor's Report: None

Youth Report: Highway clean-up was done, thanks to those that helped. Advent Fest is coming up on November 26th at 6:30 p.m. Caroling will be December 17th at 2 p.m., it will go until 5 p.m. Possible pajama day for church on December 31st. Christmas program is December 17th at 8:45 a.m.

Old Business:

Water Nitrates – will be installed this Thursday (November 16th). The DNR will pay Aquarius directly.

Lighted Cross – still looking for electrician to do this.

Update of Outdoor Storage Building – shelving isn't complete yet.

Updates to Fundraising for shed – selling pies for Thanksgiving. Did get a Thrivent Grant for the supplies. An ad will be in the paper this week.

Policies for Weddings/Funerals/Baptisms – Mandy moves to approve the Baptism policy as written with two grammar corrections. Steve Anderson 2^{nds}, all approved. A few changes have to be made to the funeral and wedding policies and then they will be approved at the next meeting.

Website Updates – having a hard time updating the website. Will be in contact with the web designer on that.

New Business

Approve Recommendation of Endowment Committee for Dispersal of Endowment Funds – It has been recommended by the Endowment Committee to split the \$2400 equally between 3 members, Elliot Erickson to attend a band trip in Washington D.C., Cash Rouzer to attend the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans, and Sara Sellent for rent. Steve Anderson made a motion, Rick Sellent 2nds, all approved.

Change Constitution to Adjust Call Committee Members? – It's been brought up that we should maybe change our constitution from 6 call committee members to 4 call committee members to be in line with Georgetown, who also has 4. We will look for congregation members to go through the constitution to see if any other changes should be made.

Synod Funds – The Synod has received \$50,000 less than what was budgeted this quarter. We do have \$3,000 set aside in our budget. Kathy will make sure to send the NW Synod the rest of the funds we had budgeted to them.

Treasurer – We are in need of a new Treasurer for the church. Please contact a council member if interested. Kathy will be able to train you! 😊

At the next joint meeting we would like to talk to Georgetown about a Parish Agreement.

We will work on the budget at the next meeting.

Motion made by Mandy Rouzer to adjourn the meeting. Second by Lacy Sellent. Closed with the Lord's Prayer. Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Next Council Meeting December 12, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully, Mandy Rouzer

**Georgetown Church Council Meeting Minutes
November 9, 2023**

Members Present: Sherry Doornink, Stephanie Fansler, Bruce Peper, Judy Gammel, Nicole Norlund, Keith Ward, Roberta Hansen, Treasurer; Past Diane Norstad

Members Absent: Felicia Braastad, Ryan Braastad, Dale Jensen

The meeting was called to order by Council President, Keith Ward.

Prayer and Devotions: Pastor Diane Norstad started the meeting with a prayer and devotions.

Secretary's Report: Minutes from the September meeting were reviewed and accepted.

Treasurer's Report: Members reviewed the Treasurer's Report passed out by Roberta Hansen. Opening balance on October 1, 2023 was \$15,254.76. Closing balance on October 31, 2023, was \$26,310.56 after income and expenses. An increase in income was experienced due to five weeks of offerings, confirmation, and the fall dinner. Net operating funds as of 10/31/2023 were \$15,270.30. Future adjustments to the budget will include an adjustment to pastor's Portico expense and payment for Wayne Kendrick for pastor's vacation. It was brought to the attention of the council that the Northwest Synod Alliance was down \$55,000 for the 4th quarter. A motion was made and seconded to forward our budgeted donation to the Synod at this time. Motion was approved. Treasurer's Report approved.

Pastor's Report, Calendar, and Family/Visitor Update: Pastor indicated that everything is going really well. She is making more home visits. She is not planning on taking any time off prior to Christmas. She is aware that both churches want to have a Christmas Eve service and the following was agreed upon: Trinity will have a service on Friday, December 22 at 7:00 pm; Georgetown will have a service on Saturday, December 23 at 4:00 pm. Both churches will have a Christmas service on Sunday, December 24, at their regular times. There will be no services on Christmas Day, Monday, December 25.

Council Member Reports:

Elders: The Elders will be reformatting the policies and providing copies.

Deacons: Nicole has decorated the Sunday School room. There will be no Sunday School during deer hunting. There will not be a special Children's Christmas program this year.

Trustees: The picnic tables and the stairs didn't get painted and will have to wait until next year. The kitchen light will need a new ballast but may be changed to an LED.

Old Business:

- 1) Water improvement grant application. No action as the nitrates in our water have not increased.
- 2) Update regarding the parsonage and call committee. The call committee met last night and will meet again the first week of December. Christine will be gathering information to do a

site profile. We need to have a survey ready for the congregation at the annual meeting in January.

- 3) Blessing bucket disbursement. A motion was made to disburse funds from the Blessing Bucket as follows: \$300 to Nick and Jody Ward and \$300 to Josh and Julie Johnson. Motion carried. A balance of \$88 remains in the Blessing Bucket.
- 4) A discussion took place about the return of some COVID cases. We need to be alert, have masks available and reduce our contact with each other.

New Business:

- 1) Building Use Requests: No new requests at this time.
- 2) Nomination Committee for new council members are Stephanie, Nicki, and Bruce. Discussion took place about recruiting new members as well as asking current members in the last year if they are will to continue on the council.
- 3) 2024 budget discussion. We will wait to bring this discussion up at the December meeting.
- 4) New fire extinguishers. There was discussion about what our needs are for larger fire extinguishers, smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. Bruce volunteered to look into what our needs might be to comply with current requirements.

Open Discussion:

Discussion took place about past successful activities such as “Blessing of the Bikes”, Pancake Breakfast, Souper Bowl Sunday, etc., and what activities we might like to repeat or initiate.

It was also stated that we need to get our member photographs to Deb Wickstrom for the Parish Directory, which is intended to be for both Trinity and Georgetown. The sooner we get our information to Deb, the sooner the directory can be printed.

Meeting adjourned and closed with the Lord’s Prayer.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Judy Gammel

The next Georgetown Council Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 14, 2023, at 6:30 PM

Georgetown	<u>Oct-23</u>		<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
INCOME	\$15,744.00		\$65,493.40
EXPENSE	\$4,801.20		\$56,049.39
DIFFERENCE	\$10,942.80		\$9,444.01

AN UNPRECEDENTED GIFT

Advent and Christmas Greetings from Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson

Christmas is celebrating
Jesus as the gift we
didn't know we needed
because our human
brain can't imagine
God's generosity.

Jesus is God's **unprecedented gift of love** for a world in great need. Friends, we live in unprecedented times. The word "unprecedented" means *never done or known before*. In recent years we've heard of the unprecedented effects of climate change causing more powerful hurricanes and devastating wild fires. We lived through an unprecedented pandemic, and we lament the unprecedented death toll from mass shootings in our country. We worry about the stability of our democracy after an unprecedented political insurrection at our own capital. At times it feels as though we are reeling from one unprecedented disaster to the next. How do we live as people of faith in this time and place? How do we put our Christian faith into action? What if we countered with **unprecedented goodness**?

This is a true story of **unprecedented goodness**.

On March 23, 1847, at a meeting in Skullyville, Indian Territory (Oklahoma), a group of tribal members from the Choctaw Nation, missionaries, and traders heard the news about what was happening far away across the Atlantic in Ireland, the Great Famine. The result was an unlikely, **unprecedented friendship between the Choctaw and the Irish**. Historians estimate that more than a million Irish people died between 1845-1851 from hunger and hunger related diseases.¹ The Choctaw, deeply moved by this story of people they have never met, collected \$174, an incredibly amount of money considering the Choctaw's own poverty due to the fact that they had been forcibly removed from their land by the U.S. government by an unprecedented act of cruelty just a little over ten years earlier. At the time of the donation many Choctaw were living in poverty with inadequate house and food. One historian writes, "It is difficult to imagine a

Jesus also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. ³He said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. ⁴For they all offered their gifts out of their wealth. But she, out of her poverty, put in everything she had to live on. Luke 21:2-4

people less well-positioned to act philanthropically." Records show that the donation was sent to New York City to buy grain and food that was shipped across the Atlantic. Seven Irish newspapers published an account of the generous Choctaw. Why were the Choctaw so compassionate and generous? Why are we so surprised by their generous gift?

Perhaps the Choctaw and the Irish were connected by their common experience of colonization, mistreatment and suffering.

Ireland had been colonized by England and forced into a land tenure system that enabled English landlords to gain profit from the Irish tenants farmers while leaving the farmers destitute. Tenant farmers raised crops to pay the landlord's rent and to feed their own families they grew potatoes. A disease, blight, to the potato plant caused the famine. The English refused to help and often blocked aid to the Irish.

"We are never too poor to give or too rich to receive."² a favorite proverb of Bishop Joseph Bvumbwe, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Malawi

The Choctaw were forced from their tribal territory by the U.S. government when President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act in 1830. The Choctaw were tricked and threatened into ceding 25,000 square miles of their land in

¹ Grant, R. (2023, Sept/Oct). On Common Ground, Smithsonian, pg. 56-65.

² Attributed to Pope John Paul II

Mississippi and were forced to walk 500 miles to Indian Territory now Oklahoma. Thousands of Choctaw died during that winter's blizzards from disease, and starvation walking what is now called the Trail of Tears and Death. With that memory still in their lived experience, the Choctaw had compassion and collected money (\$174) to be sent to those who were also suffering a great injustice 4,000 miles away in Ireland. It was truly a gift of unprecedented goodness, unprecedented generosity.

This story was largely forgotten until 1990 when an Irish writer uncovered it and began to connect with the Choctaw in Oklahoma. It began by Irish citizens joining members of the Choctaw to walk the Trail of Tears and members of Choctaw traveling to Ireland to join in a commemorative Famine Walk. Later there was a visit by the Irish prime minister to Oklahoma and in gratitude for the earlier gift offers of scholarships to pay for Choctaw students to study in Ireland.²

God sent Jesus into our broken, fallen world. Jesus is God's gift of unprecedented love. Jesus is a gift we desperately needed and did nothing to deserve, a gift we could never repay, a gift that transforms our despair and gives us hope.

Advent/Christmas 2023: May this season inspire us to give generously to those who have experienced injustice and live with great need in response to God's unprecedented gift of generosity to us.³

In Jesus' name, AMEN

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson

² [For more information about the Choctaw gift see: The Choctaw Nation's Gift to the Irish | Smithsonian Voices | National Museum of the American Indian Smithsonian Magazine](#) [The Irish are sending relief to Native Americans, inspired by a donation from a tribe during the Great Famine | CNN](#)

³ Looking for ways respond in faith with unprecedented goodness? Consider giving a Christmas gift to our companion synod in Malawi for a well that will provide clean water for an entire village and enables girls to attend school rather than carry waters from rivers and streams miles away from their homes. [Northwest Synod of Wisconsin | Giving \(nswi.org\)](#) Scroll to Bishop's "Water is Life" Malawi Well Fund.