

Jacob's Ladder
4K/PRESCHOOL/DAYCARE



AMY NELSON
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Jacob's Ladder Preschool
2024-2025



Registration begins:
Monday, February 12th
.....at 9:00 AM.....

Open House
Wednesday, February 9th
9:30-10:30AM



3 1/2-5 Year Old Classes

(Must be 3 by 3/1/2024)

Monday-Wednesday-
Friday

9:00-11:30 AM or

Tuesday-Wednesday,-

Thursday

12:45-3:15PM

3 Year Old Class

(Age 2 years 10
months- Age 3)

Tuesday- Thursday

9:00-11:30AM



Ezekiel Lutheran Church, River Falls

#715-629-5427

anelson@ezekiellutheran.org

THE BOX SCORE

General Fund: December 2023

Revenue:	\$ 72,705
Expenses:	<u>\$ 24,913</u>
Difference:	\$ 47,792

General Fund Year to Date:

Revenue:	\$525,675
Expenses:	<u>\$500,779</u>
Difference:	\$ 24,896

Keep the Light ON! 1 year Capital Campaign for Mortgage

Keep the Light ON! – Gifts thru Dec	\$133,448
Pledged over 1 year:	\$111,000

Ezekiel Mortgage Balance:	\$351,890
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U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
River Falls, WI
Permit No. 43
Non-Profit



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



CONNECTIONS

February 2024

Vol. 5 Issue 2

A PUBLICATION OF EZEKIEL LUTHERAN CHURCH, RIVER FALLS, WI
Pastor Steve Dow

EZEKIEL'S 2024
COUNCIL MEMBERS

President: Ellie Richards
President-Elect: Tom Gunderson
Past President/Secretary: Jim Ashbach
Treasurer: Scot Simpson
Discipleship Representative: Megan Franklin
Faith Representative: Katie Piotrowski
Generosity Representative: Dick Seebach
Resources Representative: Doug Cudd

UPCOMING LENTEN
SERVICE SCHEDULE

February 14	5:30 PM Chili Cook-off 7:00 PM Ash Wednesday Service
February 21	5:30 PM Soup Supper 7:00 PM Midweek Service
February 28	5:30 PM Soup Supper 7:00 PM Midweek Service

2024 LENT THEME:
HOLY LAMENT

Acknowledging the grief that is part of everyday
life, holding it, and then placing it gently (or
forcefully!) in God's hands.

PASTOR



PASTOR STEVE DOW
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INVITATION TO LENT

Friends in Christ, today with the whole church we enter the time of remembering Jesus' passover from death to life, and our life in Christ is renewed.

We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance and for God's mercy. We are created to experience joy in communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation. But our sinful rebellion separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, so that we do not enjoy the life our creator intended.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent—self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love—strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament. Let us continue our journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Are you a person who takes something on or gives something up for Lent? I've never been one to give things up. Above is the Invitation to Lent that I have read every Ash Wednesday now for many years. We are invited into the discipline of Lent. Self-examination and repentance remind us that on our own we stand guilty before God if not for God's grace shown to us through Christ Jesus. Prayer and fasting may feel foreign to us. We may understand prayer but fasting? It was understood that one would spend the time in prayer that they would typically use preparing or enjoying a meal. Fasting has lost favor over time but can still be a means for us to draw closer to God. Sacrificial giving and works of love, what does this mean? Sacrificial giving could be sharing the money saved while fasting with someone in need. Sacrificial giving could be giving up the drive-thru coffee and sharing that money with someone in need. Sacrificial giving like fasting may make you feel uncomfortable, but each is meant to draw us out of ourselves and closer to God. This is true of works of love as well. Works of love are often sacrificial in nature because you are giving of your time to someone else.

Please hear the last part as well of this discipline. Whatever we do is meant to be strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament. This means participating in worship whether in person or via livestream. Returning a small part of our weekly time to be in communion with God and God's people. Worship can help us to recognize that we are not alone in a world that can often feel lonely. Worship can also be our reminder that the Holy Spirit calls us in for refreshment and healing so that we can be sent out again for the sake of the world. As Lent approaches, I invite you into this discipline so that you can draw closer to the one who names and claims you.

Sunday School/Children/Families MINISTRIES



MARCI NORUM
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I had the wonderful opportunity to attend the ELCA Youth Ministry Extravaganza in New Orleans, Louisiana recently. I participated in numerous workshops and listened to a vast variety of speakers that were both inspirational and moving.

One speaker that really stood out to me was Jeff Hiller, an actor and comedian and is mostly known for playing Joel on the HBO comedy series "Somebody Somewhere." Jeff was bullied at school as a child and never fit in. One part of Jeff's interview that resonated with me the most was him saying, "My teachers at school didn't like me." It brings tears to my eyes typing this now. To know that a child didn't feel liked by the adults that were around him, to nurture, care, and guide him throughout his school day. Jeff's saving grace was his church. Jeff grew up attending Shepherd King Lutheran Church in San Antonio, Texas. He felt loved and knew he belonged there. His church found opportunities for Jeff to serve in the ways that he felt most comfortable. He went on to graduate from Texas Lutheran College and was a full time volunteer at the Urban Servant Corps in Denver, Colorado.

My take away is this: Be delighted when you see youth at Ezekiel. Talk with them. Let them know that you're happy they're here. The younger youth may be a little noisy but what's the alternative? No sound at all? You may think they're not listening and learning during the service but they are!

We want Ezekiel to be a place where ALL feel safe and accepted.

I will end with a quote shared by one of our speakers, "Our youth aren't the future, they are the NOW of the church."

LENTEN LUNCH LEARNING

You are invited to join Pastor Steve in Room 100, on Microsoft Teams, or on YouTube at noon on Feb 21, 28, March 6, 13, 20 for a lunch study of the document, "The Use of the Means of Grace." Even though this document was written in 1997, it still holds value in our understanding of Word and Sacrament. There will be some reading before each session and the readings will help to shape our discussion. Let Leslie or Pastor Steve know if you plan to attend so that we can get books printed or a PDF of the document emailed to you. Please bring your own lunch.

Teen and Young Adult MINISTRIES



ALLISON KLEIN
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At the end of January, Marci and I had the opportunity to attend the ELCA Youth Ministry Network annual conference held in New Orleans. Aside from touring the city where I'll take 18 teens this summer for the ELCA Youth Gathering, I loved being in community with other youth workers and leaders. Getting to listen to the success and struggles that others are going through is a reminder that we are truly one body in Christ. Knowing Ezekiel's struggles are like those in Boston or Los Angeles is affirming, although we may feel alone, we are connected through our faith.

The theme of the conference was "Dream: In a broken and hurting world, we are called to discern God's dreams and visions; as we seek to follow Jesus, we will be equipped by the Holy Spirit to make those dreams a reality for the children, youth and families we serve." We were invited to rethink the ministries we are currently doing, and dream of how we can better meet the needs of the young people at our church. I attended a variety of workshops and general sessions, and a repeated idea was making spaces and activities intentionally designed for the diversity of our young people. In the upcoming weeks, I encourage you to look around at our spaces and see if we are being as inviting to young people as we think. I invite you to introduce yourself to a young person you don't know and ask what they like about Ezekiel. Our young people hold so much insight into what is working and what can be made better. In many conversations with Pastor Steve, he often brings up young people are not the future of the church; they are the present.

Relational MINISTRY



SANDY TAUFERNER
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Northwest Synod of Wisconsin



**February 17, 2024
9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Bethany Lutheran Church
Rice Lake, WI**

Join us for a day of worship, workshops, and inspiration! Together we will enjoy Biblical storytelling and workshops about ministry innovation, creation care/green teams, Reconciling in Christ, hunger, and more.

I will be co-leading a workshop sharing Ezekiel's story of our solar panel array.

For more information and to register: www.nwswi.org