

# WIND SWEEP

## Monthly Newsletter

March 2026

As we move through this season of Lent, I want to explain our Lenten theme, invite you to join us in worship, and to be a part of our Holy Week observation as we move from the season of repentance to a season of forgiveness. Our theme for this season that started with Ash Wednesday on Feb. 18th is "Free. Accountable." In Lutheran parlance, we might have said, "Law. Gospel." "Grace. Discipleship." But, what's important for me are the periods after those words. By the good news of Jesus Christ, his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, we have been set free from sin. Period. And, having been washed in the waters of baptism and joined to a death like his, we are expected to every day seek to honor and glorify God by living into the will revealed to us through Jesus Christ. Period. So, on Sundays, we're focusing on God's grace and our freedom as Christians. On Wednesdays, we're focusing on God's call to holy living and our obligations as Christians. This is how Dietrich Bonhoeffer described what we're getting at:

*"Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheapjacks' wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices. Grace is represented as the Church's inexhaustible treasury, from which she showers blessings with generous hands, without asking questions or fixing limits. Grace without price; grace without cost! The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing. Since the cost was infinite, the possibilities of using and spending it are infinite. What would grace be if it were not cheap?..."*

*Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.*

*Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.*

*Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock.*

*Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: "ye were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God."*

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

Finally, during Holy Week, we will begin the ascent to the hill at Golgotha and the sprint to the empty tomb. Our children will lead us in procession on Palm Sunday. Our newest recipients of Holy Communion will lead us on Maundy Thursday. Our choir and high school students will lead us on Good Friday. And, on Easter morning we will raise our voices with long silent "Alleluias" at God's conquering of death.



~ Pastor Eric

# Strategic Visioning @ SoJ

Now that the interview and survey phase of our work is complete we will gather for a series of cottage meetings to take place on Wednesdays at 7pm at Spirit of Joy (we hope we have to add more times because so many of you want to participate!). We'll ask five questions of each small group (questions are available on the table in the Gathering Space for those who want time to process prior to attending) and have a conversation. A Team member will lead the conversation. Another will take notes. We'll stick close to an hour in length. **Visit [spiritofjoy.net/signups](http://spiritofjoy.net/signups) or the table in the Gathering Space to sign up!**

## Cottage Meeting Times

**Wed, Feb. 25th at 7pm**

**Wed, March 4th at 7pm**

**Wed, March 11th at 7pm**

**Wed, March 18th at 7pm**

**Wed, March 25th at 7pm**

## Congregation Visioning Retreat

**Saturday, March 28th 9am-12pm**

Join us as we bring the information gathering phase of our process to a close. We'll hear what we've learned through interviews, surveys, and cottage meetings. Then, you'll help us refine those findings and begin to prioritize and clarify the many themes that have emerged. Sticky dots. Giant post its. Friends. Snacks. And, together shaping the future of Spirit of Joy.



## Timeline

December 2025– Team Formation and Information Gathering

Jan-Mar– Information Gathering (Individual Interviews, Survey, and Cottage Meetings)

Mar 28 9am Congregation Wide Visioning Retreat

April-May: Formulation of Findings and Recommendations

Summer-Fall 2026: Implementation

# What's Happening in Worship @ SoJ



You may have noticed a change in our worship space. Two oil filled candles were donated late fall of 2025 for use on the communion table (altar). Now, we have on order a new oil filled "Paschal" candle. These changes prompted some interesting questions when combined with our use of light during the season of Epiphany about what light means during our worship.

*The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness does not overcome it.*

Lutherans light candles in worship primarily to symbolize Jesus Christ as the "Light of the World" who overcomes darkness. While candles likely came into the worship space as a practicality (everyone likes a reading light), over time meaning was given to their use and expanded across the worship space and its many uses. That meaning came from scripture where light is a persistent indicator of God's presence (the pillar of fire in the Exodus wilderness), the Transfiguration, the angels at the tomb).

Candles on the altar represent Christ's presence, his dual nature as human and divine (fun big word of the day— hypostatic union), and often signify the celebration of Holy Communion (our Lutheran Book of Worship encourages that candles on the altar not be lit unless communion will be celebrated at that service). Individually they serve as symbols of prayer and, evoking the flame that alit on the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit. Often, light moves around the room in formal liturgical ways to symbolize God's presence in a particular ritual action. Perhaps you've seen torches lit and leading a procession to the center of the room for the reading of the Gospel where they stand sentinel alongside Holy Scripture. Maybe you've noticed the Paschal Candle is adjacent to the font as our way of saying, "God is present here!"

Thanks to our generous donors who made our new candles possible. Thanks to those who managed the previous traditional candles. And, thanks to you for being the light of Christ in the world!

*Coming soon!* 



# FORWARD TOGETHER as Spirit of Joy

## 2025 Spirit of Joy Giving Snapshot



### WHO IS GIVING? -----

**58%** of Spirit of Joy units are contributing.  
257 of 445 units gave in 2025.



188 units (42%) are not currently giving.



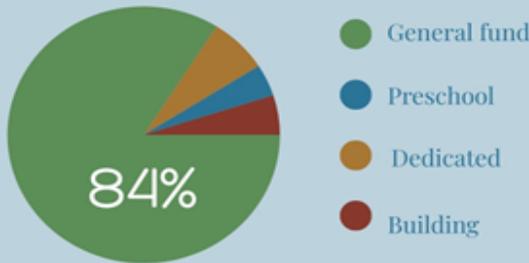
### GIVING TRENDS -----



*Total giving and number of units giving decreased in 2025*

### WHERE ARE PARTNERS GIVING? -----

Over **80%** give to the general fund.



### OF THOSE WHO GIVE ...



**22%** gave more than \$5,000 annually.

## WHAT COULD BE POSSIBLE?



**Just \$10/week** could fund all three summer family fun nights.

We are called to **be generous in every way.**

*2 Corinthians 9:11*

Consider giving today at [spiritofjoy.net/give](https://spiritofjoy.net/give)

# 2026 Core Ministry Teams



**Extravagant Generosity** (L to R): Dena Bueltel, Derris Kunkel, Sue McAdaragh, Gene Benson, Arlene Brandt-Jenson, Chad Fickbohm (Lead), (not pictured: Joel Christensen)



**Passionate Worship** (L to R): Dan Kvanli (Lead), Liz Lynch, Scott Gibson, Heather Wald, Bob Preloger, Tim Hazlett, Kara Dirkson, (Bella Kumagai)



**Bold Service** (L to R): Lori Berdahl, Pr. Dayna Weltzin, Bob Jenson, Heather Bart (Lead), Joe Vogel, Kristen Schoeszler



**Lifelong Faith Formation** (L to R): Marty Peterson, Laurie Gromer (Lead), Nikki Brown, Andy Schumacher, Sandy Odland, Michele Vogel, (Jodi Haugland)



**Radical Hospitality** (L to R): Ronda Samuelson, Pat Nearman, Marnie Backer, Heather Ahrendt, Derek DeBates, Rachael Flagstad, (Doug Danels), (Tiffany Mutchler (Lead))



**SoJ Preschool** (L to R): Jennifer Gabor (Lead), Stacie Swanstrom, Sara Crank, Miranda Stahl, Amy Cauble

# 2026 Featured Ministry Partners

Tied to SoJ's Purpose: "...to *SEND* out one another as Jesus' compassionate servants in the world," are its Featured Ministry Partners. Each program year (September-May) is to align with nine Partners. This month, the featured Ministry Partner is

## Church on the Street



SoJ has been actively supporting the Christ-centered, inclusive ministry of Church on the Street (COTS) for nearly a decade. We continue to have regular volunteers whose passion for outreach to unhoused neighbors shines. We have a bin in Shalom Center to collect unperishables, clothing, toiletries and other usable items. There are many ways to serve our COTS siblings including offering prayers, helping at their worship services or ministry events like Laundry with Love, Health and Healing, packing candy and making monetary donations. May God continue to bless the stellar partnership between our congregation and Church on the Street.

**We're collecting quarters for their Laundry with Love Ministry through Lent.  
Join us Ash Wednesday through Palm Sunday to raise quarters!**

# FOOD TO YOU

**THURSDAY, MARCH 19**  
**AUGUSTANA LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**235 N PRAIRIE AVE**

Sign up: [spiritofjoy.net/signups](https://spiritofjoy.net/signups)

# Spirit of Joy Mission Project

New Dawn Learning Center, Monrovia, Liberia,



There are 37 enrolled students, though more could attend if finances allowed. Many parents struggle to pay school expenses, as most children work to support their families. The administration visits parents to encourage enrollment. All tuition and meals (provided three times a week) are covered by outside funding. Our aim is to educate students in Christian values and keep them away from negative influences so they can become responsible citizens.

Supporting a student costs \$200 for the 2026-27 year. Please consider sponsoring a student.



Pastor Henrique had the opportunity to complete the roofing of two of the unroofed buildings. Spirit of Joy your gifts have helped with this and we thank God for funding to put the roofs on.

*Thank you*

Your Bold Service Team wishes to express a sincere THANK YOU to all those who donated toothpaste and deodorant last month. Thanks to your generosity, Necessities for Neighbors will have these needed essential hygiene items to provide to their appreciative guests for several months to come. The timing of the toothpaste donation was perfect as it coincided with National Children's Dental Health Month and could be distributed alongside toothbrushes provided by another donor. Thank you for spreading kindness and smiles!

## Resignation of Rev. Dayna Weltzin

It is with great joy for her time among us and great sadness for her departure that we announce the resignation of Associate Pastor, Dayna Weltzin. We ask that you would join us as we say thank you and goodbye to over the few weeks.



Your Leadership Team has made the decision to take an intentional 90 day pause to allow the Strategic Visioning Process (p. 2) to move closer to completion before we begin any conversations about future staffing.

### **March 8: Pr. Dayna's Last Sermon**

Pr. Dayna will preach and lead Children's Time.

### **March 15: Pr. Dayna's Last Sunday**

The congregation will share a blessing with her and present her with a gift.

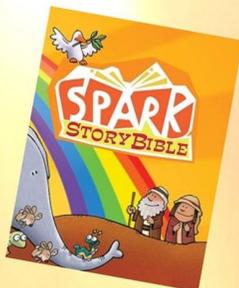
### **Personal Farewells**

You are encouraged to reach out to Pr. Dayna directly so that you may share your gratitude for her time with us.

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## **BIBLE** in a year **CHALLENGE**

### **Read the ENTIRE Spark Story Bible during Lent**



- 3-4 Bible Stories per day for 46 days
- Reading plan will be available on Tuesday 2/17
- Find your Spark Story Bible!

# Youth Page

Meet our new Coordinator for High School Faith Formation: Bella Tooley. After spending some crossover time with Tori, Bella heads into March leading our high school youth group. In the weeks to come you will find her assisting with worship and maybe even singing with the choir! Bella also works at Coffea and this fall will be attending Wartburg Seminary (remotely). We are so happy to have her here as we bless Tori on her next adventure in the Black Hills. Welcome to SoJ Bella!



## March Calendar - Join Us! *Wednesday nights at 8PM*

- 4th - Welcome Get Together/Party for Bella
- 11th - Social Wellness
- 18th - OIFun Outing
- 25th - Emotional Wellness

Friday, March 27 | BINGO | 6:00PM  
More details coming...





Celebration Sunday will be April 26. Kathy McHenry will be the keynote speaker, the choir will provide music, and two donors will give testimonials. MEF committee has set a goal of \$250,000 for the Fund by the end of the year. To provide a catalyst, the Committee is planning to challenge partners to commit pledges towards a \$50,000 Match Campaign to raise a total of \$100,000 in 2026.

Mission Endowment Fund Balance



For more information on Mission Endowment Fund, visit:  
[spiritofjoy.net/mission-endowment-fund-2](http://spiritofjoy.net/mission-endowment-fund-2)



# Faith Formation



## Adult Sunday School

This year's adult education will follow closely with our Bible in a Year Program. Each week will be an independent overview of an entire book or books of the Bible. Come regularly.



- March 1 - Church on the Street Ministry Partner
- March 8 - Ecclesiastes
- March 15 - Pr. Dayna's Fellowship Hour
- March 22 - The Major Prophets
- March 29 - The Minor Prophets
- April 12 - The Gospels and Acts

## Brewed Theology | The No Jerk Rule

Monday, 3/16 7PM @ Charlie's Pizza

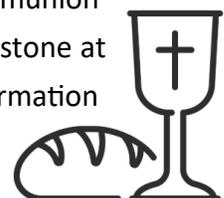


If you've dealt with humans before, you've probably encountered difficult ones. Maybe even perpetually unpleasant ones who make others' lives difficult. There are many names for these people – but a mostly understood one might be "jerk." Doesn't sound very Christian, right? Perhaps not. But let us explain. This Brewed Theology is about dealing with bullies, creeps, jerks, tyrants, tormentors, despots, backstabbers, egomaniacs, and megalomaniacs in the workplace (admit it, we all have), while also avoiding being or becoming one. It has its origins in the book *The No Asshole Rule: Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One That Isn't* (2007, Balance publishing), a New York Times and Businessweek bestseller, written by Dr. Robert Sutton. Sutton served on the Graduate School of Business faculty at Stanford University from 1983-2023. Although you won't find the book in Christian bookstores, Sutton's research-driven analysis, helpful observations, and proactive recommendations surprisingly track with identifiable Christian principles. While we often say, "all are welcome," that doesn't mean "all behaviors are welcome." There are ways to be – and not to be – in community together.

Find more information and the pre-reading at [spiritofjoy.net/signups](http://spiritofjoy.net/signups).

## First Communion Milestone

This milestone is for First graders and any older children who are in need of First Communion Instruction. The class is Saturday, March 21 from 9AM-12PM and we'll celebrate this milestone at our Maundy Thursday worship on April 2, 6:30PM. Please contact Marnie for more information ([marnie.spiritofjoy@gmail.com](mailto:marnie.spiritofjoy@gmail.com)).





# SPIRIT OF JOY PRESCHOOL

Caring Community • Active Learning • Faithful Hearts

## “Brave! Kids in the Bible!”

Did you know Spirit of Joy Preschool, your preschool, is a member of the Evangelical Education Association? The ELEA, an ELCA partner, supports Lutheran schools with professional and administrative resources, professional development, and faith formation.

The ELEA and Lutheran Schools are celebrating their mission and ministry in education settings during the week of March 1-7. Please include the teachers, administrators and staff in your prayers sharing the love of Jesus and God’s work in the world.



*Teaching God, Thank you for our schools and early learning centers throughout the ELCA. Guide them with your wisdom. Help them to be brave by sharing your love. And bless all the children in their classes as they learn about you. God, in your mercy, receive our prayer.  
(adapted from ELEA resources)*





## Preschool Registration and You!

*(Even if your children are grown or retirement is on the horizon.)*

Would you be willing to share Spirit of Joy Preschool with someone you know? Registration season is a perfect time to learn about the program and ask questions. Grab a brochure from the Welcome Center, visit the Facebook page ([facebook.com/spiritofjoypreschool](https://facebook.com/spiritofjoypreschool)), or call for a tour. All are welcome.

Not sure what we are all about? Visit anytime and learn more. Fall 2026 Preschool Registration is open now! Call, email or visit Amy Cauble today.

(The Preschool does have a referral program, be sure to let us know if you have referred someone new.)



# Creation Care Corner



**The Spirit and the bride say, "Come."**

**And let everyone who hears say, "Come."**

**And let everyone who is thirsty come.**

**Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.**

In this picture, members of Spirit of Joy's Creation Care Team are pictured next to the new water bottle filling station with their reusable water bottles. Pictured L to R are Sue McAdaragh, Arley Fadness, Bill Webb, Dayna Weltzin, Bob Jenson, Mandy Freeseemann, and Arlene Brandt-Jenson (not pictured are Jim McAdaragh and Tracy Dahl-Webb).

We are excited to announce the addition of a new water bottle filling station at Spirit of Joy! Hopefully, you have been using it already. Please remember to bring your reusable water bottles to church and stay hydrated. If you have been reading our newsletter articles regularly, you will know that we are trying to decrease the habit of single-use plastic, so this will be a big boost to our efforts. Thank you to Spirit of Joy and the Creation Care Team for this new station.

Why are we so passionate about this? The Container Recycling Institute states that more than 60 million plastic water bottles are used every day in just the US, creating a ton of plastic waste. When water bottle filling stations are an option, many municipalities and organizations have described up to a 50% decrease in plastic bottle usage. Another positive impact is that when you stay hydrated, studies have shown improvements in mood, cognitive function, and overall health.

We are in the middle of a plastic-waste, garbage-waste crisis. Sadly, more than 90% of plastic is never recycled. Let's help change course by using more sustainable swaps. One way we can do that is by switching to bottles made from materials such as stainless steel, aluminum, glass, or copper. Even BPA-free plastic

*Living water, never ending  
quench the thirst and flood the soul,  
Well-spring, source of life eternal,  
drench our dryness, make us whole.*





## Financials through January 2026

### Checking Account:

General Fund	\$58,242.03
Building Fund	\$2,527.20
Donor Restricted	\$150,898.43
Reserve Fund	\$4,360.10
Petty Cash	\$200.00

### Savings Accounts:

Building	\$179,958.23
Donor Restricted	\$41,435.33
<b>Total Cash Balance</b>	<b>\$437,621.32</b>

	January 2024	January 2025	January 2026
Attendance	1073	841	1137
General Offering	\$ 70,525.07	\$ 83,835.73	\$ 115,625.96
Building Offering	\$ 9,693.38	\$ 3,262.68	\$ 2,397.20

Year-to-date Income for Ministry	\$115,627.88
Year-to-date Expenses for Ministry	\$85,917.79
<b>Net Income/Deficit for Ministry</b>	<b>\$29,710.09</b>