

Trinity Valley Tribune

Gilman ~ St. John's ~ Spring Lake

www.trinityvalleylutheranparish.com

DECEMBER 2021

Mission Statement

By the power of the Holy Spirit, Trinity Valley Lutheran Parish is united to increase the vitality of our individual congregations by joining our talents and resources. Together we can better serve one another, share God's goodness, Sacrament, and bring Christ to our neighbors.

Church Locations

Gilman Lutheran Church

N8107 330th St.

PO Box 386

gilslake@svtel.net

St. John's Lutheran Church

S520 Church Ave.

PO Box 336

svstjelca@svtel.net

Spring Lake Lutheran Church

N7724 County Rd B

PO Box 386

gilslake@svtel.net

Spring Valley, WI 54767

715-778-4334 or 715-778-5935

Office hours (temporary): Monday/Tuesday by appt.

Wednesday/Thursday 9am—noon

Friday—closed

Office Staff: Linda Price

Pastor Amelia Houdek: cell phone 612-850-3904 email:pastoramelia@gmail.com

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAMS

Sunday, Dec. 19th: During worship service at all churches

CHRISTMAS EVE

Friday, Dec. 24th 4pm at St. John's: *Family Forward/Kid Friendly Worship*

(Everyone encouraged to bring Bells to ring outside after worship)

6 pm at Spring Lake: *Carols Communion & Candlelight Service*

CHRISTMAS DAY

Saturday, Dec. 25th: 9:45 am at Gilman

Carols & Lessons with Communion

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Sunday, Dec. 26th: 9:45 am at St. John's (One Service)

EVERYONE WELCOME!

~WATCH FOR DETAILS IN BULLETINS & FACEBOOK ABOUT LIVE NATIVITY~



PASTOR AMELIA'S MESSAGE

Email address: pastoramelia@gmail.com

Cell phone: 612-850-3904

Advent Greetings Family and Friends of Trinity Valley Lutheran Parish!

I am prepared! It's true! No, I have no Christmas shopping done nor do I have any plans to bake cookies, and, the truth is, our family has not even decided when we are going to celebrate Christmas together. *Nonetheless*, I am prepared! Okay, I am sort of prepared.

The question is, am I prepared for what really matters in the beginning of our new liturgical year: Advent and Christmas? Hmmmmm...are you? Are we?

I know, I know. COVID has really messed with thinking we can prepare for anything. I mean, everything changes so quickly. However, sisters and brothers in Christ, we are called to prepare for something that never changes. We are called to prepare for what really matters. What is it, you ask?

The one thing that we can always prepare for that will come is coming of Light of the World in breaking into our dark, harsh world. Jesus is always ready to be present with us, bringing peace, hope, joy, and love to our hearts, our homes, and our lives. It's true! Yet, I wonder if we fail to notice Christ's presence with us because we aren't prepared to receive him. With the state of the world, it's understandable that we may have lost focus—or 'the reason for the season' as the saying goes. How might we once again prepare ourselves to experience the inbreaking reality of Emmanuel, God with us?

This Advent season I invite you to join me and the rest of our Church family as we prepare ourselves to welcome Christ once again to be the Light of the World for us and through us. Our Advent series is called "***Blessed are Those Who Believe***". Each week we will be encouraged to have us revived as we look at the different characters who had to believe, who chose to believe, the impossible. Through our litanies, music, prayers, and sermons we may just rediscover the One for whom we prepare. And in this preparation, we may once again experience Christ's presence in our lives. Hear these words from Luke 3:4-6:

As it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"Prepare the way of the Lord,

Make his paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain made low,

And the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth;

And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

This is my hope and fervent prayer for you, for me, for us. May it be unto us according to God's will.

Advent Blessings,

Pastor Amelia



Psalm 137:4 How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?

Christmas Message to the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

In 1926, my maternal grandmother left Germany and immigrated to the United States.

One of my earliest memories is singing *Silent Night (Stille Nacht)* in German by the Christmas tree in her small house in Jackson, MN. I wonder what it was like for her to move to a foreign land not speaking the language. I wonder how difficult it must have been for her to sing her song in a foreign land.

Last Christmas most of us couldn't gather inside our church buildings to sing *Silent Night* on Christmas Eve. Some of us sang to our computer screens, some sang in their cars in the parking lot, some sang with masks. We were all trying to sing the Lord's song in a foreign land, the land of COVID. It has been difficult. Our song has been muted.

Psalm 137 is a lament Psalm. The writer of Psalm 137 is describing the pain of the people who were forced to live in a foreign land after witnessing the destruction of their homeland and their temple. They are grieving the losses, lamenting, crying, and finding it impossible to "sing the Lord's song in a foreign land."

My heart goes out to the Afghan Refugees who are experiencing their first winter at Fort McCoy. I wonder how difficult it will be for them to sing their songs of faith in a foreign land. Many know that they will never go home again.

In Luke 1 Mary sings her song in unknown territory. She has received the message from Gabriel that she will bear God's son and his name is to be Jesus, and he will reign as king forever. This incomprehensible message is confirmed by her relative Elizabeth and changes Mary's life's circumstances. Mary is asked to do what no one has ever done before. This is uncharted and foreign territory for a young girl. She sings her song in a foreign land like her sisters before her Miriam, Ruth, and Hannah. She sings a song of courage, faith, hope, and love.

Luke 1:46-49 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One

This Advent/Christmas/Epiphany season I invite you to reflect on Mary's song as an old song sung in new circumstances. Many of us and our churches find ourselves dealing with circumstances we might not have chosen for ourselves and wish were different, circumstances that might cause us to lament and grieve. We are here now. Sing. Join Mary and the faithful of every time and place, that great cloud of witnesses, and sing of courage, faith, hope, and love. Sing. Sing an old song of trust in unfamiliar territory, and sing a new song of hope in a new land. We are here now.

May the Hope of Advent, Joy of Christmas and Light of Epiphany bring you Peace. Bishop Laurie

For more information about helping Afghan refugees

Volunteering at Fort McCoy contact Wisconsin Council of Churches volunteer@wichurches.org.

Resettling families contact LSSWI [Refugee Resettlement - Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan \(lsswi.org\)](http://lsswi.org). Sarah Halstad

Donations contact Catholic Charities in La Crosse <https://cclse.org/afghanistan-refugee-assistance/>

FOOD PANTRY HOURS



Spring Valley:

2nd & 4th Wed.
10-11:30am & 4:30-6pm

Elmwood:

1st Tues. 3-6pm
3rd Tues. 9-11am
Sat. 9-11am

REMINDER: During the months of Nov. & Dec. all Spring Valley Churches are responsible for stocking the Food Pantry. Donations may be left at the back of the church or monetary donations may be marked for the "Food Pantry" and placed in the offering plate.



WEST CAP & GIVING TREES

St. John's and Gilman are collecting gifts for area families in need. At **Gilman** a tree is located in the narthex with tags that suggest possible gifts for a single child, suggested range of \$30. Those who are willing to participate should take a tag from the tree, **record which tag they took on the sign-up sheet** and bring their **un-wrapped** gifts to church by 12/5. **St. John's Giving Tree** which is sponsored by the Social Committee is staged at the Spring Valley Drug Store. Please return gifts by 12/18. Contact person: Mel Wentlandt

POINSETTIAS



Gilman, Spring Lake and St. John's churches encourage you to donate a poinsettia for beautifying the altar area for the Christmas season. Please bring your Poinsettia two weeks prior to Christmas. Please let us know if you are giving a poinsettia in honor/memory of someone so they may be acknowledged in the bulletin.

→ *Individual Churches' Monthly Council Minutes can be emailed upon request. Printed copies will be available in the narthex area.*

WELCA NEWS

GILMAN:

Meeting & Bible Study: Thursday December 9th @ 1pm at church; Bible Study led by Pastor Amelia.
Bring your own bag lunch.
2022 Handbooks will be available in December
Quilters will meet as needed. Contact Marlene Aamodt for next meeting date.

SPRING LAKE:

Meeting & Bible Study: No meeting this month
No Christmas Party

ST. JOHN'S:

Women's Bible Study every Monday
@ 10:00 am and 5:00 pm in the fellowship hall
No meeting on 12/27 or 1/3
Bible Study led by Pastor Amelia.
No Quilting for winter months at St. John's
WELCA meeting: No December Meeting

GRACE PLACE

Spring Lake congregation supplied the supper to Grace Place homeless shelter for November. Kim Davis, Sally Pierce, Kris Frankfurth and Trudy Rew prepared meals. The Gilman Volunteers for December 10th are Karen Jorgenson, Sonja Lenarz, Tricia Traynor and Julie Webb. Please let Marlene Aamodt or Trudy Rew know if you are willing to commit to a meal next year. The 2022 sign up sheet is posted on the bulletin board. We thank all those who continue to provide casseroles.

NOW HIRING... PARISH POSITIONS OPEN

Looking for individuals to fill open positions:

- TVL Parish Accountant + St. John's and Spring Lake Bookkeeper – Job may include paying bills, payroll, monthly financial reporting, reconciling bank accounts and auto payments, bookkeeping. 3-5 hours per week. Knowledge of best accounting practices and accounting software required.
- TVL Office Admin – See TVL Parish website for full job description

If interested, or know of someone qualified, please contact Pastor Amelia @ 715-778-5935 or Parish Council President @ 715-495-3155.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS: ANNUAL MEETINGS

St. John's - Sunday, January 16th following 11 am worship

Gilman—Sunday, January 23rd following 9:45 worship, No Potluck

Spring Lake—Sunday, January 23rd during 8:30 worship

All worship services will be abbreviated that Sunday.
NOTE: Committee leaders need to get their reports to office by 1st week in January.

∞ Birthday Lists will no longer be printed in bulletins or newsletters due to space issues. The 2022 list of birthdays is available as a handout in the narthex.

Trinity Valley Lutheran Parish Council Meeting

Oct. 25, 2021

Members of the Parish Council, together with church treasurers and financial leaders met at 6:30 p.m. at the Fellowship Hall at St. John's Lutheran church on Oct. 25th. Present were Earl Gunderson, Ray Dohm, Bill Emerson, Brian Sandness, Karen Gunderson, Shelli Wood, Ann Beyer, Pastor Amelia Houdek, Trisha Traynor, Jeremy Johnson, Dale Place, Dawn Schmitt, Phil Verges, Linda Price.

Opening prayer offered by Pastor Amelia.

Karen Gunderson, Parish Council President welcomed the parish council members and the treasurers and bookkeeper to the meeting. Discussion on the 2021 Parish Financials/ Role of Parish Treasurer w/individual church. The financial people were asked to share insights they have regarding what/ how to make improvements to financial records, payments, etc. Right now, all 3 churches use a different system for finances. Would it make sense to have 1 person with 1 system to handle all the parish finances? If all paid employees in each church was paid by the parish rather than the individual church, would we only need to have one worker's comp policy, thus potentially saving money, and making it more efficient for a bookkeeper/accountant to handle? It would require each church to contribute a portion to a parish account rather than what we have done this year and is what we had envisioned when we first became a 3-point parish. The individual churches would retain their own treasurer to disseminate money specific to their own churches (electricity, fuel, telephone, etc.). Karen has been acting as parish treasurer and her term will expire early in 2022. Earl Gunderson's term as SJ's treasurer is also complete, and Brian Sandness is retiring as the St. John's bookkeeper, too. Ann Beyer has resigned as the Spring Lake Church treasurer effective the first of January 2022, so Spring Lake will also be needing a council treasurer. Suggestions as to who might be interested in and qualified for a paid position as a Parish Treasurer, as well as number of hours, pay, and what the job would entail were discussed, as well. It was recommended that we hire a professional person, or one that has experience working with accounting, payroll, and other expenses. Karen will make some initial contacts based on suggestions.

Next on the agenda was Working as a Parish – Office and Treasurer Efficiencies. Ann Beyer has resigned as the St. John's office administrator at the end of October (though she will come in and enter St. John's information into Church Trac until a new person is hired and trained). Linda will continue to work 2 days a week. An accurate, current job description is being written prior to advertising both within and outside of the parish for this position. This would be a part-time position at approximate 10-15 hours a week on average and is currently being paid at \$15/hour. Again, different systems are being used by the churches for record keeping and publications. Combining them into one would be more efficient and make it easier for Pastor to access groups and individual members from any of the churches. Some changes would need to be made regarding inputting of offerings, membership.

The 2022 Budget was reviewed and discussed next. Due to COVID and not having a regular schedule, there were fewer budgeted hours for office administration, so this was increased to 19 hours in the 2022 budget. Also reflected in the increased budget was parish treasurer which Karen has done without compensation since the parish was formed. After some discussion, it was agreed that a parish treasurer might spend 5 hours a week and would probably need to be compensated at around \$50 per hour (depending on experience). The total amount for supply pastor was increased due to an increase in mileage compensation. Changes to copier costs, bulletins, postage, and individual communion cups, were also noted. Since some of the increases that were discussed caused change to the total budget amount as presented, Karen will make those changes and send a revised budget reflecting those changes via email for approval by the Parish Council.

Other considerations were whether we need 2 phone lines and 2 separate post office box for the parish. Because we receive church offerings via mail and those offering envelopes are already printed, ordered, and have been received, the separate post office boxes probably need to be kept this next year.

Motion made by Ray Dohm, seconded by Dawn Schmitt to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted by Shelli Wood, Parish Secretary

Trinity Valley Lutheran Parish Joint Council Meeting

November 9, 2021

The councils of Gilman, St. John's, and Spring Lake met at 6:30 p.m. at the Fellowship Hall at St. John's Lutheran Church for their regular monthly meeting. Members present: Mary Hecker, Dale Place, Barb Esanbock, Dawn Schmitt, Tyra Johnson, Jeremy Johnson, Lisa Nelson, Karen Gunderson, Earl Gunderson, Linda Anderson, Phil Verges, Diane Hurtgen, Nancy Cleveland, Shawn Miller, Ray Dohm, Pastor Amelia Houdek, Kim Davis, Shelli Wood, Trisha Traynor, Leanna Larson, Rob Moore.

The meeting was called to order by Parish Council President, Karen Gunderson, at 6:31 p.m. Pastor Amelia opened with prayer.

The minutes from the October meeting were reviewed. There was concern about whether the correct procedure had been followed regarding the motions presented during the meeting and printed in the minutes. A motion was made by Ray Dohm and seconded by Nancy Cleveland to accept the October motions and minutes as they were presented and printed. Hearing no opposition, the motion carried.

Pastor's Report addressed thinking about how to work together as a parish, and how to get members to participate in church ministry, as well as engagement in smaller groups outside of Sunday. How do we get to know one another better? Pastor refreshed us on the article "From Age of Association to Authenticity" which says that people from different age groups do things for different reasons, including church participation. While people from the Age of Association might participate in church partly out of a sense of duty, or tradition, those from the Age of Authenticity are looking at discovering and expressing one's true self without the need to affiliate with a particular organization. Acknowledging that will require us to consider different approaches to how we do things. The church is in a big shift right now. We must make sure that people want to be part of our vision going forward. Intentionally inviting people to participate in activities makes them feel more welcome than generalized announcements of that activity.

Stewardship Sunday is November 21st. The commitment cards will be collected that day, also. There will be extra cards at each church that morning in case members misplaced theirs. A question was raised about the cards not specifically asking for monetary or service commitments. Pastor explained that the cards were meant to help members assess themselves, and that member engagement (readers/greeters, etc.) would be addressed in a different way. She also stated that since the budget is not dependent on what people pledge, it was not included on the commitment cards.

The total approved Parish Budget is \$162, 844 (a \$13,000 increase budgeted for a parish accountant). The breakdown for shared parish expenses is as follows: Gilman - \$48,853; Spring Lake - \$32,569; St. John's - \$81,422.

In addition to a job opening for parish accountant, there is also an opening for parish administrator. Both jobs are part-time. There has been some interest, but no one has been hired yet. Contact either Karen or Pastor if either you, or someone you know, is qualified and interested.

Advent/Christmas was next on the agenda. Advent begins the last Sunday of November. Christmas Day is on a Saturday this year. Please note that these are **Parish Services**, so it is the expectation that you will choose the service that best meets the needs of you and your family. A motion was made by Dawn Schmitt and seconded by Leanna Larson to hold the services at the times listed below. The motion carried.

Friday, Dec. 24th Christmas Eve

4 p.m. at St. John's – Family/Children Focused Service

6 p.m. at Spring Lake – Candlelight Service

Saturday, Dec. 25th Christmas Day

9:45 a.m. at Gilman – Traditional Christmas Day Service

Sunday, December 26th

9:45 a.m. at St. John's (ONE SERVICE ONLY)

(continued on next page)

Lisa Nelson has agreed to make the initial contacts and coordinate plans for the parish's second Live Nativity Scene. Watch for further information soon.

Next agenda item was Snow Days. If church would need to be cancelled on short notice for weather related concerns, how will that be handled? The councils will work to put together guidelines about how members would be notified. Those guidelines will be published as soon as possible.

The last agenda item was whether to have only one shared parish worship service on the last Sunday of each month. The pros of this include getting to know members of our parish better and promoting unity. A concern was what to do about Sunday School. A suggestion was made about combining Sunday Schools on that day, too. Details to be worked out. Since St. John's is already hosting one service on December 26th at 9:45, that would be the first Sunday of this trial. Next would be Spring Lake for January 30, and Gilman for February 27th. These services would also be held at 9:45. Motion was made by Leanna Larson, seconded by Trisha Traynor to approve one parish service on the last Sunday of the month for 3 months (as listed above), then review. Motion carried.

The next regular joint council meeting will be held Dec. 14th at 6:30 pm at St. John's.

Motion made by Dawn Schmitt and seconded by Earl Gunderson to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Councils dismissed to individual council meetings.

Respectfully submitted by Shelli Wood, Parish Secretary



WINTER WEATHER CHURCH GUIDELINES



In the event of extreme weather this winter, the following are guidelines that will be used to determine if Sunday services and other activities will be cancelled to ensure the safety of our members and guests:

- **If the County is under a Winter Storm/No Travel Advised Warning by the National Weather Service through 9am Sunday morning, then all services will be cancelled.**
- **If temperatures are -30F or lower Sunday morning, then all services will be cancelled. Wind chills can at times be negative digits, and individuals should use their discretion as to whether they feel safe being out on the roads.**
- **If over a foot of snow falls over a short period of time prior to Sunday morning, and no travel is advised by National Weather Service, then all services will be cancelled.**
- **If individuals are concerned about their safety being out and traveling on a Sunday morning, then they should stay home.**

If on weekdays, Spring Valley Schools are closed or dismissed early because of inclement weather, all church activities will be cancelled for that evening, unless otherwise determined by the Pastor or church leaders.

CHURCH ROTATION SCHEDULE 2022

JANUARY-MARCH

SPRING LAKE	8:30
GILMAN	9:45
ST. JOHN'S	11:00

APRIL-JUNE

ST. JOHN'S	8:30
SPRING LAKE	9:45
GILMAN	11:00

JULY-SEPTEMBER

GILMAN	8:30
ST. JOHN'S	9:45
SPRING LAKE	11:00

OCTOBER-DECEMBER

SPRING LAKE	8:30
GILMAN	9:45

JOIN OUR WORSHIP IN DECEMBER:

Gilman will be at 8:30
 St. John's at 9:45
 Spring Lake at 11:00

ONE SERVICE 12/26 AT St. John's @ 9:45

NOTE: WORSHIP ROTATION SWITCHES IN JANUARY

~ CONFIRMATION NEWS ~

Dec. 12th: Worship at Gilman-Group 2
 Worship at Spring Lake-Group 3
 Dec. 15: Christmas party & Quiz Bowl
 Dec. 22-Jan. 5: Xmas Break-No Confirmation

~Sunday School News~

**CHRISTMAS PROGRAMS DURING WORSHIP
 ON 12/19**

(Note: If child cannot attend at St. John's, contact Rob at rob6483@gmail.com or 515-451-7603 so their part can be video recorded in advance.)

WORSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

GILMAN

<u>Date</u>	<u>Greeters</u>	<u>Readers</u>	<u>Acolyte</u>	<u>Coffee Hour</u>
12/5	Marlene & Arland Aamodt	Tom Gunderson	Kalena Beyer	VB 3
12/12	Confirmation Students (Group 2)			VB 4
12/19	Jeff & Janna Neidermyer		Addison Neidermyer	Christmas Program
12/25 C. Day	Darryl Klawitter/Karen Jorgenson	Darryl Klawitter	Chase Rud	none

Deacon: Dawn Schmitt
 Altar Care: Michele Frederick

SPRING LAKE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Greeters</u>	<u>Readers</u>
12/5	Jim & Zona Hague	Shelli Wood
12/12	Confirmation Students (Group 3)	
12/19	Ray Dohm	SS Christmas Program
12/24 C. Eve	Don & Cindy Jensen	Abby Jensen

Deacon: Karyl Tiffany
 Altar Care: Sue Wood, MaryJane Hecker

ST. JOHN'S

<u>Date</u>	<u>Greeters</u>	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Readers</u>	<u>Acolyte</u>
12/5	Paula Hampton/Judy Larriue	Shelby Crow	Paula Hampton	Grace Henneman
12/12	Confirmation Students	Earl/Karen Gunderson-mentors		
12/19	SS Christmas Program	Henneman Family		Ruth Henneman
12/24 C. Eve	Aaron Morrow, Kate Crogan	Richard/Lynda Johnson	Ron/Gretchen Cipriano	Kate/Parker Cipriano
12/26	Brian/Pat Sandness	B & P Sandness	Elana Roberts	Kolton Wilman

December 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 6-7: Confirmation at SJ	2	3	4
5 8:30-Gilman 9:45-St. John's 11:00-Spring Lake	6 10am + 5pm: Bible Study at SJ	7 8am-Crew leaves for West Cap 10-11:30 Memory Café at SJ 6:30pm-Parish Council at SJ	8 6-7: Confirmation at SJ	9 1pm-Gilman Welca at church	10 4pm-Supper deliv- ered to Grace Place Shelter	11
12 8:30-Gilman 9:45-St. John's 11:00-Spring Lake	13 10am + 5pm: Bible Study at SJ	14 8am-Crew leaves for West Cap 10-11:30 Memory Café at SJ 6:30pm-Parish Council at SJ	15 6-7: Conf. Xmas party & Quiz Bowl	16	17	18
19 SS Christmas Programs 8:30-Gilman 9:45-St. John's 11:00-Spring Lake	20 10am + 5pm: Bible Study at SJ	21 No Confirmation	22 No Confirmation	23 Christmas Eve 4pm-St. John's 6pm-Spring Lake	24 Christmas Eve 4pm-St. John's 6pm-Spring Lake	25 Christmas Day 9:45am-Gilman
26 9:45-St. John's (One Service Only) NO SUNDAY SCHOOL	27	28 10-11:30 Memory Café at SJ	29 No Confirmation	30	31 New Year's Eve	+ WORSHIP ROTATION CHANGES IN JANUARY