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 Online: www.fishlakelutheran.org
 Office Hours:
 Monday—11:30-4:00
 Wednesday, Thursday and Friday
 11:00 am to 4:00 pm

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Fish Lake Lutheran Leadership & Staff
 Interim Pastor: John Keller
 Office Administrator: Denise Steinberg
 Parish Deaconess: Sister LaDonna Olson
 Pianist: Cindy Blesener
 Custodians: Robin Graham & Tom Anderson

Church Council Members
 Steve Mettling, President
 Barb Sauer, Vice President
 Kathy Lodin, Treasurer
 Kelli Klein, Secretary
 Candy McColley
 Justin Ricke
 Gaylen Yates
 Clay Wilking




December
Worship Service each Sunday 10:00 am
ONLINE ONLY

- 2nd WELCA Meeting 9:00 am
- 3rd Fish Lake Council Meeting 6:30 pm
- 4th Card Club
- 5th Audit Committee Meeting 9:00 am
- 8th Social Ministry Meeting 6:00 pm
- 16th Book Club 12:30 pm
- 24th Christmas Eve Services
 4:30 Family Service Outside

Annual Meeting: January



Vine & Branches

A Monthly Newsletter of Fish Lake Lutheran Church

December 2020



Advent Storms and Safe Harbors

Advent comes during the dark cold month of December. The sun hangs low in the Minnesota sky and frequent storms race across the prairie. Snow storms alter our daily lives. And this year we continue to struggle with the Covid-19 pandemic and the rising numbers of hospitalization and deaths. We are desperate for some warmth and light, some good cheer, hope that will endure. The world seems ready to collapse and die.

In Advent, I am reminded of Jesus' words,
There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. (Luke 21:25-28)

Jesus experienced the broken, destructive shadows of creation. He knew the despair we can slip into. Yet he would not let us go. It's as if we are on a long sea voyage and terrible storms are smashing our ship. The storms of sickness, violence, neglect, sin and death cause us to despair. Why celebrate Christmas when the world appears to be so harsh, cold and cruel?

This year in particular feels like a dangerous sea voyage. The uncertainty of when a vaccine will arrive and how it will be distributed has many of us on edge. People may feel like abandoning ship and striking out for some new lifeboat. A few may wonder, "Will we make it?" Our despair can erupt as unintentional anger towards those we love.

But the present storms are not the end of the story, only a temporary part in God's glorious story of safe passage. Even as the seas roar, our safe harbor is drawing near. A safe harbor called Bethlehem and God's presence and power among us. The angel choir will once again announce, "Peace on earth, good will to all." God will calm the storm. Let us hold fast to our Savior who pilots our ship, Jesus Christ. And Let us encourage one another with the hope of a safe harbor.

Lord Jesus, you gave us a glorious promise that someday your whole creation will be made new again. We trust that you will pilot us through the storm of this pandemic. Grant us the faith to trust in your promise and the everlasting hope to live by your power. Guide Fish Lake with your strong love. Raise our heads high and let us sing your praise with energetic joy and hope today. Amen.

Interim Pastor John Keller

Outdoor Christmas Eve Worship At 4:30pm December 24

A short, outdoor service will help us celebrate Christmas Eve. Participants can either stay in their vehicle OR dress warmly and keep social distance from other households as we gather in the parking lot. The service will be a Christmas carol, the reading of the Christmas Gospel, a prayer, lighting of candles (wind permitting – flashlights also welcomed) and singing Silent Night.

Please bring your own candles or flashlights. Dress warmly.

Check the church website or voicemail for weather cancelations or postponements.



Our monthly WELCA meeting was held on Wednesday, November 4, 2020. We met inside and all wore masks and made certain to social distance.

1. The Secretary's minutes were approved and accepted, as written. Thank you notes were received and read.
2. The Treasurer's report was read and approved. The opening balance was \$3,349.13; income was \$121.24; expenses were \$213.38, leaving a balance of \$3,256.99. Our savings account totals \$2,804.30.
3. Social Secretary: Kathy reported that she will be sending out Thanksgiving cards to some of our shut ins as well as sympathy cards, when appropriate.
4. Old Business:
 - a. WELCA Sunday: Coffee time has been cancelled until further notice. Coffee volunteers should make sure the food donations received get delivered to Family Pathways Food Shelf, Cambridge and North Branch. Mary Kay Linder is the volunteer for November. Could also coordinate with Tom and/or Robin.
 - b. Quilt Needs: All required and necessary quilts were reviewed and status of completion brought up to date. Continued to work on mission quilts.
 - c. Service and Mission Update:
 - Kitchen Updates: Tabled.
 - Block of the Month: Meeting upstairs with breakfast grab and go following the meeting. Fabric sale continues.
 - Coffee Maker: Has been ordered.
5. New Business:
 - a. The three quilts that were selected for sale on eBay will be appraised. When the eBay account is set up and the quilts posted, Sharon will add the PayPal information.
 - b. South Minneapolis Children's Shelter: We will begin making children's quilts for this mission. Wednesday, November 11th, will be a special work day to put kits together. Ladies from Block of the Month will participate with us in making these quilts.
 - c. Approval was received to purchase up to four weighted blankets for hospice patients.
6. Our next meeting will be held on December 2nd. Until further notice, we will begin our day with the meeting at 9:00 am followed by any work on quilts that need to be done, closing with the Lord's Prayer at 12:00 pm. We will continue to be diligent in social distancing and wearing masks. Any woman, friend, or member of Fish Lake Lutheran is welcome to all or any part of our day.

Respectfully submitted, Mary Kay Linder

Note:

- Block of the month in person gatherings have been cancelled for the months of November and December.
- The New Coffee Brewer has arrived

Council Meeting Minutes Continued.....

****Christmas Eve Worship Services** this year will be held outdoors around 4:30 p.m. Pastor will continue to work on the details. ****Discussion and decision to discontinue in person worship effective Nov. 15, 2020.** This change is made due to continuing increase of Covid 19 cases.

****Suggestion made to review identified special project needs that could be presented to our Congregation at our Annual Meeting.**

****Add a Resource page to our Website.** Pastor will talk with Denise about doing this.

AFFIRMATIONS Kathy Lodin for her work as Social Secretary, keeping our Shut-ins, and hospitalized members connected to Fish Lake. Affirm the Cemetery Board for their excellent work in caring for our cemetery. This is so well done. Noel Petit for his continued work on our tech support. Candy McColley for removing dead mice from the kitchen area. LaDonna for her work on the 2021 Budget Preparations.

CLOSE WITH THE LORDS PRAYER

NEXT MEETING: Dec. 3, 2020.

Respectfully Submitted: Barb Sauer

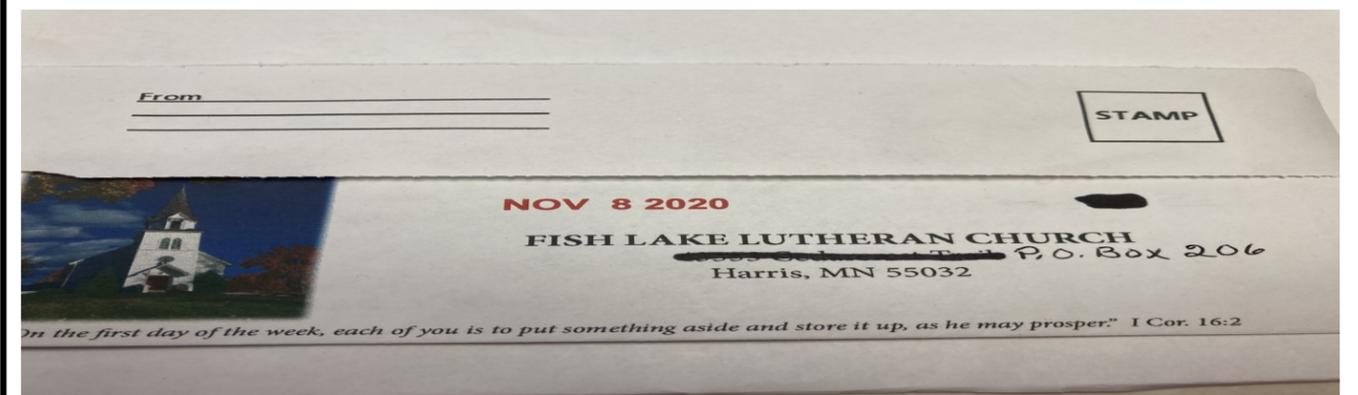


Fish Lake Lutheran has rented a post office box in the Harris Post Office. The Church Council decided it was a more secure way to handle the church's mail. The box on the road often gets bumped by the snowplow and pops the door open allowing snow to get in. There are also fewer people around the building while we are doing online worship only. So all mail/contributions will be kept in the mailbox in Harris.

The post office will forward the mail for a year, so giving envelopes will automatically be redirected to the post office box. As of right now the mail is collected on Monday mornings, the checks/donations are entered into the church system and prepared for deposit. The money is deposited into the bank the same day. So we won't have money in the mailbox on the road or in the church overnight.

The new mailing address is:

Fish Lake Lutheran Church
P.O. Box 206
Harris, MN 55032



Care of Creation Work Group

The Saint Paul Area Synod has an active Care of Creation work group. The Care of Creation work group believes that we are called to care for God's creation as a central part of our Christian faith and identity. The group was established in 2018 to:

- explore life-giving ideas
- share best practices within our synod, the larger church and the community
- become part of the public and teaching voice of the church

The Care of Creation work group is part of **The Bishop's Committee for Public Witness**. For more information contact Don Schuld at donschuld@gmail.com or 651.491.2078.

The Care of Creation work group has created several newsletter articles for congregational use.

Topic: Energy Efficiency at Home

When Earth was created, God entrusted us as its stewards and calls us to care for it and each other in all of our actions. When we make environmentally-wise choices we are celebrating and respecting creation, giving thanks for Earth's abundant resources, and being good stewards with what we're given. Being good stewards of resources also means using only what we need—like the energy we use to cool and heat our homes, turn the lights on, and power our favorite gadgets.

Reducing your energy use at home not only protects the environment, it can be a real money saver! What can you do to reduce your energy use (and put some "green" in your pocket!)?

Today, I Can:

- Turn off the lights, gadgets, and appliances I am using and make sure I turn the lights off when I leave the room.
- Run only full loads in the dishwasher, washer, and dryer (or use a clothesline!).
- Program my thermostat to be a more energy-efficient temperature when I am away from home (set a little warmer in the summer and a little cooler in the winter).
- Set my refrigerator between 36F and 42F, freezer between -5F and 6F, and water heater at 120F (or lower if young children are in the house).
- Call my energy utility and ask about buying into clean energy options like wind and solar energy.
- Turn water off mid-task (washing dishes, brushing teeth, watering plants) - -running water especially hot water, uses a lot of energy!

In the future, I plan to:

- Improve my home's insulation and insulate my hot water heater and hot water pipes.
- Replace burnt out incandescent light bulbs with LED light bulbs.
- Replace appliances with energy efficient options (look for the Energy Star logo).
- Clean and replace appliance filters (especially the furnace) on a regular schedule.



By your side; End of the Year Giving Campaign

This has been the most challenging year Family Pathways has seen in 42 years. But this letter isn't about us. It's about the families we help who struggle with putting food on the table, being safe in their homes, or caring for aging loved ones.

This letter is about you, too.

By Gabby's side...

"I'm not very good with my words, but I wanted to express my gratitude for our local food shelf, My husband gets tested for COVID 19 every Thursday with his employment, and this last Saturday we got the word he was positive. This meant he had to quarantine in our room until he was better, and the kids and myself in the house for 2 weeks at least. I had not gotten a chance to get my groceries before we got the call, so with a large family to feed, I just didn't know exactly what to do.

I was panicking. When I called the food shelf, they were truly good to me and even delivered to our driveway so I wouldn't have to try to find someone to pick up for us. When they told me they could help, my eyes teared up, such a relief." - Gabby

Standing by the side of neighbors like Gabby is what Family Pathways exists to do.

When the pandemic hit this spring, community support for Family Pathways made it possible for us to pivot our normal ways of work and not only survive but also innovate. If you were one of the hundreds who donated, you have our deepest gratitude. With the support, we developed a new program, Doorstep Food Delivery, to help housebound seniors; while finding creative ways to meet the needs of current and new families seeking help.

Today, food insecurity is on the rise. Before the onset of COVID-19, 1 in 11 neighbors struggled to afford food. Today 1 in 8 individuals face hunger due to the economic strain brought on by the pandemic, and 40% of them are children.

There is a long road ahead with an expected increase in the pandemic, and Family Pathways is here for the long haul. We need resources to build on the strategies we know are working.

Your gift of \$30.00 feeds a neighbor for a month.

Your support makes it possible for Family Pathways to be there for those who seek a meal, a safe place to lay their head, or a helping hand. Thank you for being the power behind this work.

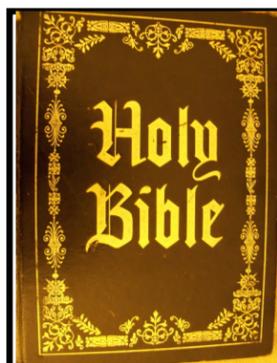
This article is taken from a newsletter from Rich Smith, Interim Executive Director of Family Pathways

*Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Advocacy 24-Hour Crisis Hotline (800) 338 -7233



Winter is Coming...

Some of our older members have trouble shoveling out after the large snow storms we get here through the winter. If you would be willing to help shoveling for some of our members through the winter months, please call the office and we will share your name with those who might be in need of help. Or, if you would like help with snow removal this season, you can call the office as well.



Bibles for 3rd graders and 1st year confirmation students are on the tables inside the basement door available for pick-up Monday-11:30-4:00 Wed, Thurs or Friday 11:00-4:00



In Loving Memory Corinne Lillian Bergstrom who passed away Nov. 12, 2020

Keep her and her family in your thoughts and prayers

Let us Pray for...

Those in our midst fighting cancer: Beth, Barb, and Jordan.

Our service men and women including: Sami, Tim and Joe

Injured and ill: Ronnie, Carol, Jean, Ruby, Dan, Wanda, Judy

Partner congregation – Wasa Congregation in Tanzania

Those preparing for or recovering from surgery

Those who are grieving

If you are aware of someone who should be added or removed from the Prayer list, please call the church at 651-674-4252 or send an email to office@fishlakelutheran.org.



A Message from Sister LaDonna

A message from Sr. LaDonna...

Every Advent we are drawn again into the incredible story of the events leading up to our Savior's birth. I was looking for some inspiration for this message and I came across a website with tiny Advent poems. <https://engageworship.org/ideas/tiny-advent-poems>

Here are a few I loved:

Advent is turning off the lights before you bring in the birthday cake.

Advent is refuges in a sinking raft spy the light from the lifeboat.

Advent is an amazing story of my family tree. I learn it hungrily, rooting for the root of me.

Advent is finding a grave old key, cold and weighty. What sacred space did it once unlock? Could it still?

Advent is waking in a cold house, hear the heating tick and come into life. Warmth is on the way.

What are your ideas about Advent? What words come to mind? Waiting, Silence, Praying, Preparing

I encourage you to write your own Advent is poetry. One poem each day leading to Christmas. It will help you stay focused on what is important this season. I would love to hear from you about what you have written. ladolson@msn.com



Gift Cards for Christmas!

If your giving includes gift cards this year, Fish Lake Social Ministry can help! There are hundreds of retailers and restaurants to choose from. Simply call or email Sister LaDonna if you need to see the list.

Then contact her with your list of gift cards, mail a check or drop it off at the office and your gift cards will arrive within a week. This is a fundraising campaign for social ministry.

We order the gift cards for you and receive a rebate. Everyone wins!

So make your gift card list and contact Sr. LaDonna at ladolson@msn.com or 651-238-6778.

Thank you!

Social Ministry

Giving Tree - We talked about ways to continue this tradition at Fish Lake Lutheran safely because of Covid. Sister LaDonna will be checking with the County to see what they suggest.

Samweli - We are thankful that the funds needed to continue Samweli's sponsorship are being donated by the VBS fund.

Wasa Scholarships - We will be sponsoring the education of the same 5 children from the Wasa congregation this year. The money will be sent to the synod office by January 1. Cindy has contacted Pastor Amidu in hopes that he will be able to take pictures of the students for us.

Bega Kwa Bega Festival and Worship Service - These events were recorded so that we can use them in our worship service.

Social Ministry Committee



2020 FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP AT FISH LAKE LUTHERAN				
Date	Actual Offering	Budgeted Offering	Percent	Above/Below Budget
October 25th	1,078.00	3,317.31	33%	(2,239.31)
November 1st	2,305.00	3,317.31	70%	(1,012.31)
November 8th	6,600.00	3,317.31	199%	3,282.69
November 15	1,925.00	3,317.31	58%	(1,392.30)
2020 YEAR TO DATE	147,976.78	152,596.26	97%	(4,619.48)

ALL who contributed to these funds in 2020:

- **Cemetery Fund—\$6,380.00** was given in support of maintaining our Cemetery grounds.
- **Building Fund—\$2,202.00** was given in support of maintaining our building and grounds.



If you want to join the fun volunteer work with the great crew at Shalom Thrift Shop

Shalom Shop looking for a few good people who are willing and able to donate 4 hours every Monday to help out. They are also looking for Saturday helpers (just 3 hours) one shift per month.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration towards this worthy cause.

To get started you can just stop in at the thrift store and ask for paperwork to fill out and Kay, the volunteer coordinator will contact you.



Volunteers rule the world

The Shalom Thrift Store runs 100% on Volunteer Time!

There are no paid staff!



The Shalom Thrift Shop in Cambridge began in 1981 in the basement of the Cambridge Lutheran Church parsonage with the mission of providing needy area residents with food, shelter, and clothing. It has expanded many times over the years, moving to a small shoe shop in Cambridge, then into the former Ben Franklin, and now more recently in a large store on Hwy 95.

Thanks to the community for donating gently used clothing and houseware items as well as wood furniture, books, media items, jewelry and tools. The Shalom Shop has over 200 volunteers who sort, clean, price and display this merchandise.

Due to this outpouring of help and donations, in 2019, the Shalom Shop was able to donate back to the community \$417,700. As of November 2020 they've donated \$422,700

Several Fish Lake volunteers spend one afternoon a week working in the shop.

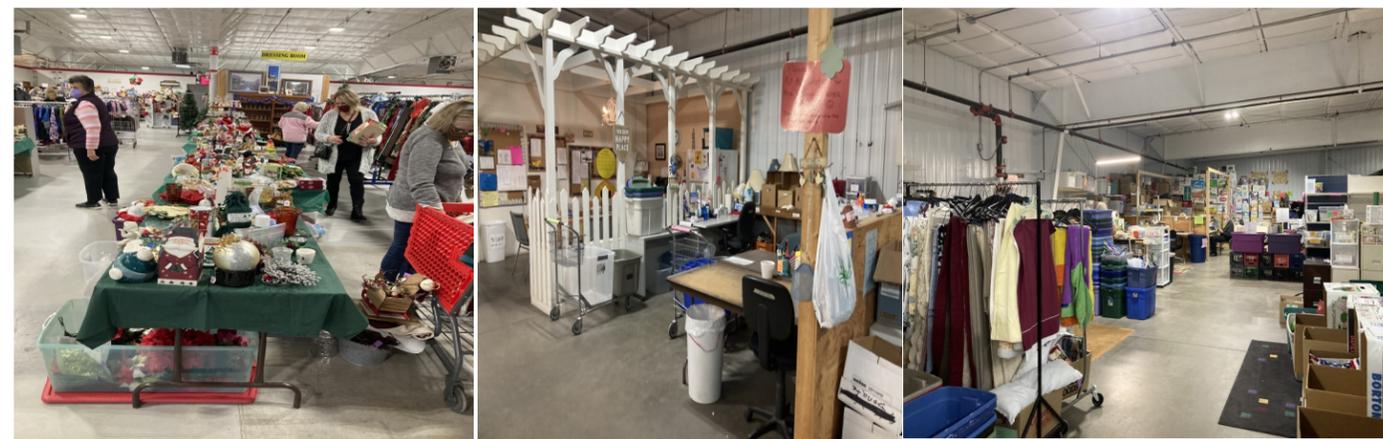
By agreeing to this commitment, our pastor is given a certain amount of money each month that can be given to people who either come forward with specific needs or are made aware of others with legitimate needs. If you are aware of anyone who could use some extra help, now particularly during this unemployment crisis, please contact Pastor John Keller or call the church office.



Article submitted by Mary Kay Lindner (September edition of Vine & Branches)

I recently got to see the back room and the inner working of the volunteers at the Shalom Thrift Store. The volunteers that work there are absolutely amazing. The inner workings is like a small city with every area having a specific duty. They are very innovative in how they use/recycle ALL the items they receive from buttons, to old t-shirts or jeans that can't be worn anymore. Almost nothing goes to waste, if it isn't something that would be helpful for the community it is shipped to other parts of the world. They even collect and ship cold weather items to colder parts of the world. I knew the Shalom Shop made huge contributions to the community, but I had no idea of really how big there power of giving reached!

Submitted by Denise Steinberg



COUNCIL Meeting: 11/5/20/ 6PM CHURCH BASEMENT / MASKS AND DISTANCES

MEMBERS : STEVE METTLING / KATHY LODIN / GALEN YATES / JUSTIN RICKE / KELLI KLEIN / CANDY McCOLLEY / BARB SAUER /CLAY WILKING

DEVOTIONS-Pastor John led us in prayer. Barb will lead devotions in November

FINANCIAL REPORTS: LaDonna was present at our meeting to review and discuss our current financial reports. We are underfunded in the Printing area and Snow Removal. LaDonna also noted that our giving has been down this fall compared to past years. Pastor John will write a letter to our members to ask they review their giving and perhaps give a special gift during this Holiday Season.

LaDonna has also been reviewing and working on drafting a budget for 2021. We saw an initial draft at our meeting with suggestions made. It will be updated for our next meeting.

CHISAGO COUNTY CARES FUND GRANT: Nancy Hoffman contacted Steve about this Grant opportunity. LaDonna will be working on the application and submitting. It is designated for Non-Profits who do community service.

PASTOR REPORT

Worship services

- a. Online worship continues with Face Book live and Youtube video
 - i. Sound system challenges
 - ii. Tech challenges below
 - b. In-person Worship started on Sunday, October 4
 - i. Attendees have been following safety guidelines. .
 - ii. Attendance has been manageable about 25 -30/week.
 - iii. COVID cases are rising rapidly in Chisago and Isanti county (see attached document from MN department of health)
2. Pastoral Care:
- a. Home communion – Tom and Evie Janssen
 - b. We have talked with one member about possible fuel assistance this winter, but so far no request. Shalom Funds
 - c. One funeral – Mary Ann Crawford, Oct 10
 - d. Twin burials - Robert G. and Laverne Eastlack 10/18/20
 - e. Baptism of Kepler Jason Pilz – October 11, 2020
3. Confirmation Instruction
- a. Confirmation instruction is a cooperative effort with Calvary and Spring Lake Lutheran churches.
 - b. Orientation on Sunday, October 4 at Calvary in Rush Point at 12:30.
 - c. Instruction will be on- line using Google Classroom and Zoom meetings.
4. Interim Process
- a. How best to “commission” the Call Committee in worship?
 - b. Communication with congregation?
5. Psalm Break with local pastors, Wednesday at noon on Facebook Live continues.
6. Zoom class on Centering Prayer begins Tuesday, November 10. Pastor is doing this in cooperation with Minnesota Contemplative Outreach.
7. Additional matters to consider
- a. Offering counters. Only three of four weeks are covered.
 - i. 1st (Week one)-Cindy Blesener, Amy Johnson
 - ii. 8th (Week two) - Joel/Katie Santjer—Melody Hermel (New Volunteer)
 - iii. 15th (Week three) - Laurie Knudson, Shelly Lustig
 - iv. 22nd (Week four) - 2 Volunteers Needed
 - v. 29th (Week five) - Council Members
 - b. Mailbox: Decided to rent a P.O. Box in Harris.

c. Tech needs;

- i. better computer microphone,
- ii. possible camera?

Add a resource page on the website for various community events that we want to support

PROPERTY, SAFETY: STEVE METTLING, GALEN YATES, JUSTIN RICKE:

**MICHELSON LANDSCAPING: Work Finished. Recommend doing other side of patio next year.

**Steve will contact Animal Control Contractor to schedule next visit.

**Gustafson will be doing our snow removal again this year. Steve will contact to review the details of our contract.

** NEED TO REPAIR ROOF AREA AND SIDING - FLASHING ON LOWER AREA OF ROOF ON NORTH SIDE OF CHURCH THIS SPRING.

SOCIAL MINISTRY : PASTOR JOHN: Social Ministry will have a meeting in the upcoming week.

WELCA / BARB SAUER - Continue working on Mission, Grad, and Bingo Quilts. Supporting our Shut-ins with cards sent each month. Will be having a special workday to put together Pillowcase Kits and Children’s Quilt Kits. We are going to provide support to the Emergency Foster Care Children's shelter located in South Minneapolis. The boys and girls range in age from 3-11 and have been taken out of their homes because of abuse or neglect.

CALL COMMITTEE PROCESS AND UPDATE -BARB

A. Committee Chair – Rick Cedergren

B. Nominations of Pastor’s from our Congregation Members. Process/Timeframe

C. Prepare Materials about Fish Lake for Applicants.

D. Development of Interview Questions in process.

OLD BUSINESS:

****Gustafson Snow Removal Contract** has been finalized.

****Kitchen Coffee Pot Purchase:** Anonymous donation made for this purchase. Should arrive around the middle of the month.

****Update on Church Employee Reviews.** Steve is coordinating and should have most of them done before Dec. Council Meeting.

Annual Report: Our Annual Meeting will be on the 4th Sunday of January 2021. We will need to work out the logistics if we are still not doing in person worship services. Review last year’s Annual Report with Denise to see what further assistance is needed for her.

Designated Gift Catalog. Reviewed and updated. Will include in the Vine and Branches

NEW BUSINESS :

****VBS Scholarship** to Samwelli from Sunday School Account in the amount of \$277.00. Approved

**Darrel Mattson has requested to cut dead fall from our wooded area on the back 40. This was approved.

** **Discussion on Missionary Covenant.** Decided to include as a line item on our 2021 Budget Proposal of \$1000.