



Country Chronicles January 2026

Cannon River and
Cross of Christ Lutheran
Parish, ELCA

*As we stand on the edge
Of another bright new year,
I take your hand in mine
With assurance of
The courage we will find
And the hope that leads us on.*

- “We Toast the Days” composed by Linda Kachelmeier

I’m drawn to the idea of liminal spaces. Those places on the edge of what has been and what is yet to come. Some call it a transition zone, or a watershed moment, when a drop of water could flow to this sea or to that. Whatever the metaphor, they are opportunities for deeper reflection and consideration. The new year offers up just such an opportunity. We reflect on what has come before, friends made or lost, accomplishments achieved and trials endured. We look now to the latter half of the decade, perhaps hopeful or fearful, optimistic or anxious. We look to a new year with perhaps only a hazy outline of what it will bring.

Whatever this new year brings, however it unfolds, I am heartened by the words and sentiment of the song above (a good listen on

YouTube if you have a chance). We face this bright new year for all that it will bring good and bad, not alone but together.

We find courage and hope in the promise that we are not alone. The lights of Christmas are already beginning to dim but the light they celebrate is the true light that shines in the darkness and is not overcome. It is a promise we carry with us long after the decorations have been packed away and the tree comes down. It is a promise that does not wane or waver that sees its fulfillment on Easter morning, the empty tomb, with death conquered and hope renewed.

But that story is for another season. Today, as we look out on what is to come, we can draw courage and strength from the assurance that we journey forth with the light of Christ, never alone. Blessings on your new year may it be a year filled with peace, hope, and above all, joy.

As Ever in Christ,

Pastor CJ

Contact Information for Pastor CJ Boettcher:

Church Phone: 651-388-3464 ***Cell Phone:*** 920-858-7066

Email: pastor@cccchurch.com

BREW EDTHE OLOGY

Brewed Theology: Good Grief: Mourning Well to Live Well

In this session we will be discussing “Good Grief: Mourning Well to Live Well”. We will meet at the parsonage on **Tuesday, January 20th at 6:30 PM.**

You are welcome to bring your beverage of choice and any snacks you may want to share. Also, if you’d like to read or watch some of the source material in advance of our discussion or can’t make the discussion but still want to learn more, please contact Pastor CJ and he can pass on a PDF list and discussion guide. You can still participate fully in the study without the “homework” so just showing up that night is just fine as well! We hope to see you there!

Increase Community Connections



Seven months are waiting to be filled with engaging community activities. Ladies of all ages from both churches are invited to the program planning meeting **Saturday Feb. 7th at 9 am.** The newly formed Women’s Connection Group (WCG) desires to enhance the church's

programming and not compete with what WELCA typically plans each year. We will continue to utilize the micro leadership concept that was implemented successfully last year.

Action Steps:

- Partner with one or more people and pick a month: March, May, June, July, August, September, November.
- Select a speaker or service project. (Refer to the pink program folder filled with handwritten ideas, brochures, or clippings from our members.) Folder is stored in display case lower right side in Dahlen Hall.
- Plan your event and invite the community to connect.

Help people of all ages find meaning, spiritual growth, and community connection in 2026.

Women's Connection Group Mission Statement:

Collaboratively develop inclusivity, spiritual growth, and community engagement.

Our Affirmation Mantra

Be Brave – Facing Challenges in Faith & Leadership

Be Bright – Using Knowledge & Faith to shine in Your Community

Be Bold – Confidence in Outreach & Ministry

Women Connection Group facilitator – Janet Daley 651-212-0519

Coffee Church-January 18th



Join us for Coffee Church on **Sunday, January 18th** at Cannon River, starting at **8am** with service at 9am and at Cross of Christ starting at 10am with service at 10:30am.

Cross of Christ service will be held in Dahlen Hall. There's a sign-up sheet on the table in the back of the church. We have discovered that 3 people can get it set up, serve the food and clean up. Please consider helping and sign up.

Cannon River News

Faith and Family first, helping others along the way.

Attendance

December 7 th	16
December 14 th	13
December 21 st	10
December 25 th	17
December 28 th	11

Financial Report

	Income	Expenses	Net
Jan	\$2,060	\$3,702	(\$1,642)
Feb	\$2,365	\$4,067	(\$1,702)
Mar	\$2,920	\$5,901	(\$2,981)
Apr	\$3,485	\$3,361	\$123
May	\$2,255	\$3,215	(\$960)
June	\$3,300	\$6,629	(\$3,329)
July	\$1,590	\$3,718	(\$2,128)
Aug	\$2,988	\$3,850	(\$862)
Sept	\$9,635	\$6,307	\$3,327
Oct	\$1,855	\$4,577	(\$2,722)
Nov	\$2,765	\$3,664	(\$899)
Year to Date	\$35,118	\$48,932	(\$13,814)

Open House

Members of Cannon River are invited to an open house of new member, Larry Lindmark. Please join him on **Sunday, January 11th** from **1-3PM** located at his home at 2371 Cardinal Drive, Red Wing, MN. Come see his Christmas village, sports collections, and Olympic figure skating collections. Hope to see you there!

Annual Meeting

Cannon River will have their Annual Meeting following worship service on **Sunday, February 15, 2026**. Booklet info needs to be submitted into the office no later than Sunday, January 25th.

Thank you!

Council Rotation-January

January 4th --- Robert January 11th ---Ellen
January 18th --- Les January 25th --- John

Cannon River Lutheran Church Church Council Meeting December 11, 2025

The Cannon River Church Council met on December 11, 2025, at Cannon River Lutheran Church. Members present were Les Anderson, Ellen Hartman, David Fremouw, John Niebur, Barbara Flynn and Pastor CJ.

Meeting was called to order by President Ellen Hartman. Pastor CJ gave devotions.

Meeting minutes from October 09, 2025, were read and approved. Ellen read the treasurer's report from an email on her phone. We will review/approve at the January 8, 2026, meeting.

PASTORS REPORT:

The website is complete and will be running as soon as it is paid.

Hops and Hymns will take place Sunday, December 21, 2025, at 3:30 pm at the Cannon River Inn.

The Longest Night Service will also be held on Sunday, December 21, 2025, at 6:30 pm at Cross of Christ.

Sarah Fox is coordinating a service time for the residents of Teepees Nursing Home sometime in January. This will be a joint CR/CC venture.

Pastor CJ will be out of town 12/26/25 through 12/31/25.

OLD BUSINESS:

Ellen Hartman has been added as an additional signor on the church's bank account.

The piano for the basement was brought to the church on November 28, 2025.

NEW BUSINESS:

Pastor Larry Lindmark will be joining Cannon River on December 14, 2025.

The proposed budget for 2026 was not available so it will be reviewed at the January 8 meeting.

The Ag-Partners note can be extended until September 30, 2027, with an interest rate of 5.0%. Motion was made and seconded to extend the entire note (Principal and Earned interest) to September 30, 2027.

Both the upstairs and downstairs pianos will be tuned this month.

Annual meeting will be held February 15, 2026, following the church service.

NEXT MEETING:

Next meeting to be held on January 8, 2026, at 5:00 pm at Cannon River.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Flynn

Cross of Christ News

We are called by the Spirit to be a lasting presence in our community, faithfully sharing the Word of God through worship, fellowship and service to our neighbors.

Faithful through Generations

Assistants for January 2026

Readers

January 4 th	Jean Kehren
January 11 th	Doris Gruber
January 18 th	Coffee Worship-No Reader needed
January 25 th	Contemporary Service

Greeters

January 4 th	Mary Fjetland
January 11 th	Oscar & Janet Daley
January 18 th	Joan Slingsby
January 25 th	OPEN

Altar Committee

Jan. 4th	Cheryl
Jan. 11th	Cathy
Jan. 18th	Joan
Jan. 25th	Kelley

Council Person

Darwin Fox

January Ushers

Sherril & Sandra Bjornson, Barb & Steve Peiffer

Kitchen Person

Janet Daley

Cross of Christ Financial Update

Any Questions please reach out at

crossofchristreasurer@gmail.com

Thank you for your continued support! ~Emily

Kwik Trip Cards Help support our Building Maintenance Fund by buying Kwik Trip scrip cards. GROCERY ONLY CARDS the church makes 15% on the purchase of these cards. The church makes 5% on the purchase of the usual gas and gift cards, which can be used to purchase anything at Kwik Trip from gas, groceries, and car washes to anything else they sell. Both are available in \$10, \$20, \$25, \$50, and \$100. You pay the amount of the card being purchased. Contact Julie Schreifels to purchase at hjschreif@live.com or 507-990-7024. **The next order will be put in on Tuesday, January 13th and will be available during church on Sunday, January 25th.** I will be at the Women's Retreat on the 18th so if you need them before that let me know. Thank you to those who have ordered Kwik Trip Cards. Julie

Adopt-A-Family Christmas---Thank you!



A BIG thanks to all who helped with
The Adopt-A-Family Christmas
Project this year. -Lynette

Missions

Some call it Mission work . . . it's also called "Loving Others"

We continue our paper bag collection in the back of the church. These are taken to **Hastings Family Service** where they have a great need for bags for their produce delivery!



Souper Bowl-Soup Collection

The Cross of Christ Mission committee will be collecting soup now until **Super Bowl Sunday on February 8th**. The collected soup will be distributed between the Red Wing and Hastings Area Food Shelf. Look for the collection bin at the back of the Church.



Canned soup or bagged soup mix.
Many thanks! The Mission Committee



Market Food Shelf
Food Order from Hastings Family Service

Learning & Youth

In December, we were busy practicing for the Christmas season. The kids performed with Cheryl at the



Smorgasbord singing some familiar Christmas songs. They also did a great job at the Christmas program, even if we only had a few Sundays to practice. Thank you to all who attended church

on those two cold Sundays, as well as to the parents for helping to get the kids ready for this program and served/made cookies to share after the service. We hope



everyone had a wonderful break spent with families during this holiday season.



Schedule

1/4/2025 – No Sunday School

1/11/2025 - Sunday Funday

1/18/2025 - No Sunday School

1/25/2025 - Lesson: United in Christ



Thank you for your continued support of Gabby and Jake by bringing coins each Sunday.

Thanks,
The Fox's



The next **WELCA meeting will be on Wednesday, January 14th 7:00 pm. Dahlen Hall.** We will complete plans for the Women's Retreat and updates regarding the Spring Event and triennial.

Red Cross Blood Drive: Our next drive is scheduled for January 2 8:30 am -2:30 pm. Schedule your appointment at redcrossblood.org , 800-REDCROSS or use your blood ap. welchmn to schedule an appointment. Thanks to all of our donors and volunteers.



2026 Women's Retreat January 16-18 Dunrovin Christian Brothers Retreat Center near Stillwater. Theme: Prayer and Praise

Presenter: Theresa Siemers Come for the weekend or just Saturday (9 - 3) Weekend, \$230 includes lodging and meals. Saturday, \$65 includes lunch Register at <https://forms.gle/qX8eweesk4AWwmc97>, Or contact Julie Schreifels email julie.schreifels@gmail.com Cell 507-990-7024 Please register by January 12th.

2026 Cannon River Spring Event/Salad Luncheon: We will be hosting the spring event and combining it with our annual spring salad luncheon on April 25, 2026. Bruce and Brenda Blair will be presenting the program "Village Partnership for Education" based on their mission in Sierra Leone. Emma Dindorf will be performing as well. In-kind gifts to bring: dry erase markers and erasers, ABC cards, chalk and chalk board erasers, pencils, men's and women's underwear size medium for teachers. **The women of Cross of Christ are requested to each bring a large salad.**

The 13th Triennial Gathering is scheduled for July 16-19, 2026 in Des Moines, Iowa. The theme is "I am Worthy". Registration is now open. Check it out at <https://www.womenofthelca.org/newtriennial-event-page> See also the attached Triennial Information sheet. Our WELCA unit will pay the registration fee for those who are

registered by January 6th as that is the early registration deadline. Please let Julie know if you are interested in attending. We will likely travel by charter bus or vans.

If you plan to go to this fantastic event let Julie know by January 4th.

Future Events:

Red Cross Blood Drive: Friday, January 2, 8:30 am–2:30 pm.

Women's Retreat: January 16-18, 2026. Main program on Saturday, Jan. 17, 9:00 am – 3pm

2026 Cannon River Spring Event/Salad Luncheon: April 25, 2026, Cross of Christ

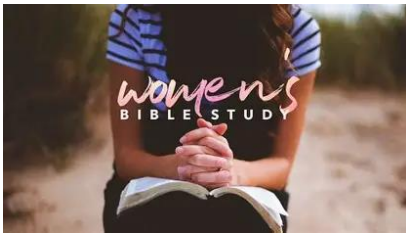
The 13th Triennial Gathering July 16-19, 2026 in Des Moines, Iowa.

***Officers: President: Julie Schreifels Secretary: Joan Slingsby
Treasurer: Jean Kehren***

Julie Schreifels cell phone: 507-990-7024 email

hjschreif@live.com

WELCA Bible Study



WELCA Bible study will meet on **Tuesday, January 13th at 9:00** in Dahlen Hall. We will be starting a new 3-part series on stewardship. Please join us as we explore “what do we treasure” and “how do we tend

our treasure?”. Study guides are provided along with coffee and treats!

Cross of Christ
Council Meeting Minutes
December 9, 2025

Present: Anthony Nemcek, Jim Gustafson, Jeff Meyer, Kelley Mittelsteadt, Ross Nelson, Darwin Fox and Pastor CJ Boettcher. Absent: Oscar Daley, Sherril Bjornson

Meeting was called to order by Anthony Nemcek and the mission statement was read.

The meeting agenda and the November meeting minutes were approved as written.

Unfinished Business

* **Pastor's Report** - Pastor CJ's report included information related to upcoming events in December including Hops and Hymns and the Longest Night service. Pastor CJ has been meeting with Tinta Wita senior care facility to host a bible study in the community room there. Pastor will be out of town 12/26-12/31

New Business

* January Council person: Darwin Fox
* Christmas Giving: Offering received will be donated evenly among the Cannon Falls, Red Wing, and Hastings Food Shelves.

Committee Reports

* Finance – The financial secretaries November report was reviewed. Council had a couple questions regarding items on the report. A follow-up will be sent out separately via email.
* Property Management – An issue with the heating system was repaired under warranty in October, but another issue has arisen resulting in the fellowship hall not having heat. Smith heating will be contacted to address the issue.

*Worship & Music – Will be meeting in early January. Ovation was very happy to be able to perform following the Christmas Smorgasbord.

*Learning and Youth – The Christmas Program will be on December 14.

*Service and Witness – Reminder that a draft was put together of a document to help chairs of the various subcommittees prepare their annual reports. The document provides examples of information to include, such as: aspirational reflections, a list of actionable items, suggestions for growth. Pastor is meeting with Emily Carson from the Synod to talk about the book *Funding Forward* and how it can be used by our congregation.

*Stewardship – No update at this time.

*Missions – The M & M containers used to raise funds for Feed My Starving Children were due.

*Nominating Committee – We can get by with the two volunteers who've stepped up, but it would be great to get one more person to give the Council an odd number in case of a split vote.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. - Motion Passed.

The next meeting will be on January 13th at 6:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,
James Gustafson
Council Secretary

Annual Meeting

Cross of Christ will hold their Annual Meeting on Sunday, **February 8th**, following the morning worship service. All booklet reports need to be in the office no later than **Sunday, January 18th**. Please have financials in the office soon as the audit committee needs to review them. Many thanks!

A Question to Ponder: What Future Is God Inviting Us Into?

The Service and Witness Committee is calling on every one of our 11 church subcommittees—as well as our staff and council members—to join in a vital season of discernment. We are asking for **aspirational reflections** that look beyond our current moment and boldly imagine the future God is shaping for our congregation.

This is a time to lift our eyes, stretch our imaginations, and speak with hope.

What possibilities do you see on the horizon?

What small steps could strengthen our ministry?

What bold dreams might expand our witness?

Each committee is invited to submit its reflections to **ojdaley@gmail.com** by **January 25, 2026**. All responses will be made anonymous and organized into themes. A follow-up meeting with a synod representative will help us interpret the collected insights and discern next steps for increasing the vitality of our small strong congregation.

Committee chairs, staff, and council members: please refer to the email sent on **November 23, 2025**, for additional details.

Together, let's listen deeply, dream faithfully, and step courageously into the future God is preparing for us.