



Country Chronicles February 2026

Cannon River and
Cross of Christ Lutheran
Parish, ELCA

When the truth offends, we lie and lie until we can no longer remember it is even there, but it is still there. Every lie we tell incurs a debt to the truth. Sooner or later, that debt is paid.
-Valery Legasov from the HBO series “Chernobyl”

Siblings in Christ,

I write to you as our nation finds itself rent asunder, just days after the senseless killing of Alex Pretti on the streets of Minneapolis. I, like many of you, have seen the incident from multiple vantage points and the conclusion is inescapable. Pretti was killed without any sufficient cause. What we are seeing is the culmination of fear and anxiety weaponized into cruelty and malice. What we are seeing across Minnesota is not the judicious use of good governance, it is the wages of our sin-made manifest. It is the consequence of our worship before the idols of security and scarcity. This is not about safety, it's not about fraud, it's about punishing a perceived enemy, while brandishing the sword of the state. This is not a righteous cause and those who use Christ's name to excuse it commit heresy.

We must face this truth. We must face it because every lie we tell ourselves incurs a debt. Every lie we tell ourselves or allow others to tell makes it almost certain that Renee and Alex

are only the first of those yet to come. We can try to ignore it or bury it, but it is still there. God is not mocked. We will reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7). We already have.

I do not mean to sound naïve or uncritical. There are also real dangers and costs that come with not seeking out those who would wish to do us harm. However, there are better, more humane methods to root out violent undocumented migrants. There are more effective ways of addressing fraud. Past administrations of both parties were able to conduct this work much more effectively with far less violence and unrest. Safety and compassion are not hard binaries. Seeking safety cannot and should not entail grave bodily harm as an acceptable cost of doing business. As followers of Jesus, we cannot sanction this nor can we stay silent in the face of it.

Finally, siblings in Christ, I exhort you, do not grow weary or discouraged in this time. Hear again the words of Psalm 27:13, "*I believe I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*" As I mentioned last month, this Psalm does not profess hope in some naïve bubble, it comes during hardship, violence and fear. It is hope sturdy enough to survive moments of great darkness. We trust that God is in our midst, working in and through us to reach out with compassion making the hard choice to love our neighbor no matter how different. We must embrace the truth that no lie can ever destroy, that the power to transform comes in dying to ourselves and rising with Christ. It comes in living in response, choosing to love again and again when the idols of scarcity and security beckon us once more toward violence.

As Ever in Christ,

Pastor CJ

Contact Information for Pastor CJ Boettcher:
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Email: pastor@cccchurch.com

BREW EDTHE OLOGY

Brewed Theology: Good Grief: Mourning Well to Live Well

Brewed theology is back! In our next session we will be discussing “Forgiveness”. We will meet at the parsonage on **Tuesday, February 17th 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!

The Grief Lectionary: A Lenten Journey

Our Lenten experience will center on the resource entitled the Grief Lectionary authored by Rev. Collette Broady Grunde. The theme texts for each session will be used in our time of midweek worship and then be the focus of a bible study at the conclusion of the service (around an hour in length). The Grief Lectionary is informed by the author’s own experience with grief and the value she has found in the exploration of grief throughout scripture. The schedule will be as follows:

Wednesday February 18th (Cross of Christ):

Ash Wednesday Service 6:00 PM, 6:45PM Session 1 The Flood

Wednesday February 25th (Cross of Christ):

5:00PM Soup Supper, 6:30PM Service, 7:00PM Session 2
Jeremiah’s Anger

Wednesday March 4th (Cannon River):

5:00PM Soup Supper, 6:30PM Service, 7:00PM Session 3
Elijah’s Depression

Wednesday March 11th (Cross of Christ):

5:00PM Soup Supper, 6:30PM Service, 7:00PM Session 4 Ruth and the Grieving

Wednesday March 18th: (Cannon River):

5:00PM Soup Supper, 6:30PM Service, 7:00PM Session 5 Jesus' suffering and Acceptance of Death

Wednesday March 25th (Cross of Christ):

5:00PM Soup Supper, 6:30PM Service, 7:00PM Session 6 Resurrection and Making Meaning

I hope you will make this a part of your Lenten experience in 2026. I'm looking forward to the exploration and discussion!

God's Peace,
Pastor CJ

Increase Community Connections



Seven months are open and waiting to be filled with meaningful, community-building activities—and **you** are invited to help shape them.

All women from both congregations, of every age and stage of life, are warmly welcomed to a **Program Planning Gathering on Saturday, February 7 at 9:00 AM.**

Our newly formed **Women's Connection Group (WCG)** is excited to complement the great work WELCA already does each year. We'll continue using the micro-leadership approach that worked so beautifully last year—small teams taking on one month at a time, creating space for fresh ideas and shared ownership.

How You Can Join In

-Team up with one or two others and choose a month to host: March, May, June, July, August, September, or November.

-Explore ideas by browsing the pink program notebook—filled with handwritten suggestions, brochures, and clippings from our members. (You'll find it in the display case, lower right side, in Dahlen Hall.)

-Plan an event that fits your gifts and passions: invite a speaker, organize a service project, or create something entirely new.

-Open the doors and welcome the wider community to connect, learn, and grow with us.

Together, we can help people of all ages discover meaning, spiritual growth, and deeper community connections throughout 2026.

Your creativity and presence make a difference. Let's build something beautiful—one month at a time.

Cannon River News

Faith and Family first, helping others along the way.

Attendance

January 4 th	19	January 11 th	12
January 18 th	16	January 25 th	12

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)
Dec	\$5,942	\$5,051	\$981
Year to Date	\$41,060	\$53,983	(\$12,922)

Annual Meeting

Cannon River will have their Annual Meeting following worship service on **Sunday, February 15, 2026**. Booklets are available at Church starting on Feb 1st. Thank you!

Council Rotation-February

February 1st --- Barb February 8th ---David
February 15th --- Robert

Website-Cannon River now has a website! Go check it out at: www.cannonriverluth.org. It continues to be a work in progress. Let us know what you think and how it might improve. Thank you to everyone who contributed photos, verbiage and support in the process! Pastor CJ

Cannon River Lutheran Church

Church Council Meeting

January 8, 2026

The Cannon River Lutheran Church Council met on January 8, 2026, at Cannon River Lutheran church. Members present were Les Anderson, Ellen Hartman, David Fremouw, John Niebur, Robert Klahr , Pastor CJ, and were joined by Rick Anderson.

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

Meeting minutes from December 11, 2025, were read and approved.

Pastors Report:

Working around Rick's schedule to get the website paid for and up and running.

Sarah Fox is still working on the service at Teepee Nursing home.

Working on a mini "longest night" type service for after Lenton services.

Hops and Hymns continues to be received well at Cannon River Inn

Old Business:

Still waiting for the piano to be tuned. There was a scheduling conflict.

Rick reviewed the treasurer's report for November.

New Business:

Rick reviewed the treasurers report for December which was approved.

Rick reviewed the budget for 2026 which was approved

The stack pipe is leaking water at the furnace. We will likely need to call a plumber for repairs.

Next Meeting:

The next council meeting will be held after the Annual Meeting.

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 February 2026

Readers

February 1 st	Mary Fjetland
February 8 th	Jim Gustafson
February 15 th	Regular Worship- Reader needed
February 22 nd	Contemporary Service

Greeters

February 1 st	Judy Meyer
February 8 th	Darwin & Cheryl Fox
February 15 th	Jean Kehren
February 22 nd	OPEN

Altar Committee

Feb. 1st	Cheryl
Feb. 8th	Cathy
Feb. 15th	Joan
Feb. 22nd	Kelley

Council Person

Anthony Nemcek

February Ushers

Darwin & Cheryl Fox, Duke Bjorklund, Ken Slingsby

Kitchen Person

Sandi Petrashek

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, February 17th and will be available during church on Sunday, February 22nd.** Thank you to those who have ordered Kwik Trip Cards. Julie

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

January was a short Sunday School schedule, with days off school and holidays, we chose to spend this extra time with family. We did meet on the 11th, we distributed tickets, took 6-7 minutes going over our holiday breaks, played bingo, Apples to Apples bible edition and enjoyed some snacks. Due to the very chilly weather, Sunday school on the 25th was canceled.



Schedule

02/01/2026 - Lesson: The Beatitudes

02/08/2026 - Sunday Funday - Valentine's Edition *sing at church*

02/15/2026 - **No Sunday School**

02/22/2026 - Lesson: Adam & Eve

Thanks,
The Fox's

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



Gabriella Gilessa

Outgoing- Funny -
Sweet

Birthday: December 11, 2005

Gabriella, fondly known as Gabby, is in her second year of a Tourism and Hotel Management diploma at Volcano College. Her journey has been full of growth and discovery, especially as she learns more about Tanzania's rich wildlife

Before diving into the world of tourism, Gabby completed a 1 year in Hotel Management, giving her a strong foundation in hospitality. Outside the classroom, she is known for her energetic spirit, love for football, and helpful nature

Gabby dreams of one day becoming a professional tour guide, confidently leading visitors through Tanzania's landscapes. With her dedication and drive, we are excited to see just how far her journey will take her!



Jacob John

Independent- Loveable -
Curious

Birthday: May 11, 2021

Jacob, affectionately called Jake, is a cheerful little one with a heart full of love and curiosity. He recently graduated from Pre-kindergarten and is so excited to soon join Kindergarten, attending school outside the village alongside his elder siblings at Gyetighi Primary School.

Jake enjoys exploring the outdoors, observing animals, and discovering new things each day. He also loves storytime, watching movies, and sharing his infectious laughter with everyone around him.

He is growing into a thoughtful and happy little boy.



The next **WELCA meeting will be on Wednesday, February 11th 7:00 pm. Dahlen Hall.** We will prepare for the March Blood Drive, review the Women's Retreat and updates regarding the Spring Event and triennial.

Red Cross Blood Drive: Our next drive is scheduled for Thursday, March 5 12:00-6:00 and Friday, March 6, 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 at Dunrovin Christian Brothers Retreat Center near Stillwater. Theme: Prayer and Praise

Our leader, Theresa Siemers, provided an inspiring program enjoyed by 14 total participants. Five stayed the entire weekend and engaged in three additional sessions.

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. The singer/musician we had lined up is no longer available. *If you have ideas for music please contact Julie or Jean.* 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. We have added First Choice to those who we will distribute funds to. We will be collecting toddler clothes to size five and any size diapers to donate to First Choice.

The 13th Triennial Gathering is scheduled for July 16-19, 2026 in Des Moines, Iowa. The theme is "I am Worthy". Check it out at <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/new-triennial-event-page> you

can register on the website if you wish to attend. Janet, Doris, Tracy, Kelley, and Julie have completed the early registered. We will likely travel by charter bus or van.

Current **Funeral Committee** members: Doris Gruber, Jackie Martin, Patty Fox, Kim Chandler and Janelle Lahr.

Future Events:

Red Cross Blood Drive: Thursday, March 5, 12:00-6:00 pm & Friday, March 6, 8:30 am–2:30 pm

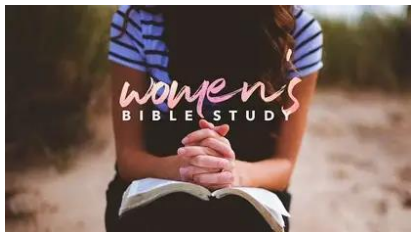
2026 Cannon River Spring Event/Salad Luncheon: April 25, 2026, 8:00 am-12:00 pm Cross of Christ

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, February 10th 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
January 13, 2026

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

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

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

Unfinished Business

* **Pastor's Report** – Pastor CJ and Janet Daley met with Pastor Emily Carson in the Synod office to plan around work related to vision and vitality. The plan going forward will be to assemble a task force to work over the next 12-18 months by hosting bible studies, conducting congregational interviews and roundtables, and community interviews to discern how we can achieve financial and congregational vitality through partnerships and renewed vision.

Pastor will begin hosting a bible study in the community room at Tinta Wita and will hopefully encourage some of the residents there to worship with us. Pastor's report also included an update on confirmation and scheduling info related to Brewed Theology and the celebration of Lent.

New Business

* February Council person: Anthony Nemcek. Coverage will be needed on the 15th and 22nd. Darwin and Sherril indicated they could fill in.

* The annual meeting agenda was approved. The budget was sent to the Council following the meeting and approved via email

vote. No lunch will be provided at the meeting. The Audit Committee is meeting the week of 1/25 and will work with Deanna to finalize financial report.

* The financial secretary has indicated that she is resigning. She'll continue to do the deposits, but a replacement is needed. The Council discussed hiring an accounting firm to fulfill this role to provide continuity going forward.

* The Council was asked to consider replacement of the flag poles at the front of the church by a member of the congregation. Replacement would be done as a donation to the church. The Council voted to tell the person to go ahead with the replacement.

Committee Reports

*Finance – Council reviewed the financial reports. The budget was sent out separately for review.

*Property Management – There is a large Christmas tree in the steeple storage room that is no longer being used. It was not a donation. Council members volunteered to remove the tree and dispose of it. A computer board was replaced on the furnace serving the fellowship hall.

*Worship & Music – The committee is assessing how coffee church has been going to determine if it's something that should continue or if it can be improved upon. Hops and harmony will happen again ahead of the tubing season to avoid conflicts with parking. Pastor asked if it would be possible to consider replacing the advent wreath.

*Learning and Youth – Planning is beginning for first communion recipients. They will bake bread as part of the process. Glass communion glasses might be used for first communion.

*Service and Witness – Pastor and Janet met with Emily Carson and will continue working on programming for financial and congregational vitality and renewal.

*Missions – the Souper Bowl soup collection is ongoing. Canned or bagged soups will be collected until Super Bowl Sunday – 2/8/26

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

The next meeting will be on February 10th 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. Booklets are available at church. Thanks!