

# JANUARY 2026

## NEWSLETTER



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## HAPPY NEW YEAR 2026!!

"Lord, Whether we're leaving behind a year of joy and blessing or trials and difficulties, we pause to give thanks. We thank you that you are always with us, every single day of every single year. Please remind us of your presence in the year ahead, even when life is busy. We are so thankful that we serve a God who makes things new and gives us the grace of fresh starts and new beginnings. Be glorified in our lives this year. In Jesus' name, Amen."— Heather C. King

# “God Pause”

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! “For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven.” – Ecclesiastes 3:1.

We write this letter to you on the cusp of Christmas Eve with anticipation and hope that you are filled with peace, hope, joy, and love that comes from our dear Savior’s birth. The season of Advent, the season of waiting and anticipation for our Christ Jesus to be born unto us, is coming to a close and we are soon to enter the season of Christmas, a time of great joy as we remember that our God, Emmanuel, has come to dwell with us. Even though the seasons change, our God remains constant. For everything there is a season, and that includes the many seasons of life we experience together at GA Church. In 2025, we have known seasons of laughter and dancing, of building one another up, and of planting and bringing new ideas to life—discovering new ways of being church together, both within and beyond the four walls: We are building people up together as we support our high school students to lead Sunday school and invite our young children to help with Holy Communion. We laughed and danced and birthed new ways of being church together with our Christmas Pageant, “Mary Said Yes,” on December 14th. We modeled together what it looks like to say YES and participate in God’s story (and worship service) as the entire congregation took part in the pageant. We have mentors working with confirmation students to implement service projects throughout the community and beyond. These projects are building up our youth’s faith and leadership, and teaching them how to live out their baptisms. This last year we have also experienced times of mourning, dying, breaking down, losing, and weeping: the death of loved ones. Acknowledging the end of GA Church’s Lutefisk Supper, new and chronic illnesses of community members, financial strain for our community members and church. Even though the seasons of our faith community at GA Church change, our God remains constant.

As the seasons continue to change, we write this letter to you as a reminder that Pastor Jaime’s role at GA Church is also changing beginning January 1, 2026. GA Church will be going through a season of change as Pastor Jaime goes down to 75% time as our pastor. As a result of this change, Pastor Jaime will be leading less worship services throughout the year and letting go of more responsibilities. This decision was voted on and passed at our 2025 annual congregational meeting last March. Over the past few years, as an act of faithful stewardship and shared responsibility for the financial health of GA Church, we have together discerned the decision to reduce Pastor Jaime’s contracted time in place of increasing her salary. It is our hope that GA Church will not only survive the seasons ahead, but we will thrive and continue to be a place and community that risks big things for good things in order to serve our community and ever-changing world.

In the midst of this change, Pastor Jaime’s priorities as our pastor will include praying for God’s people, nourishing them with word and sacraments, and leading them by her own example in faithful service and holy living. Pastor Jaime will continue to work alongside the council to find a resolution to our roof problem, practice faithful stewardship, and create spaces of belonging.

We know that change is oftentimes difficult. So, in order to make this change easier for our faith community, Pastor Jaime is planning to be non-contracted the first Sunday of every month, when possible, and during slower seasons of the church year. We are also working with a few SAMs (Synod Authorized Ministers) from Sargent County to lead worship services on a consistent basis during those times Pastor Jaime is non-contracted. As usual, if you have a pastoral emergency during the weeks when Pastor Jaime is not available, please contact Kirstin Kempel, council president, or Carrili Larson, church secretary, and they will help you get in contact with a pastor.

Drawing from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, we are reminded that for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven. In this season of change in our faith community, we recognize the holy rhythms named in scripture: a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to break down and a time to build up; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance. In every season and every matter, we trust in the Christmas promise that God is with us.

We invite you to check the weekly announcements, monthly newsletter, and our website, [galutheran-church.org](http://galutheran-church.org), to keep informed of changes and/or Pastor Jaime’s schedule. We ask that you offer grace in this season of change as it will be an adjustment for us all. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us. In Christ + Pastor Jaime Decker, Kirstin Kempel, Council President

# Keeping You in the G.A. Loop



**Jan 01:** Church Office closed for New Years Day

**Jan 04:** 9:30am Worship: Lessons & Carols Service—Lead by Worship & Music  
Pastor Jaime (non-contracted time)

**Jan 05-12:** Pastor Jaime off for Continuing Education

**Jan 08:** Ruth Circle 2:30pm

**Jan 11:** 9:30am Worship, No Communion—Leader Kirstin Kempel

**Jan 18:** 9:30am Epiphany Worship with Communion—Pastor Jaime

**Jan 18:** Potluck after worship service—all are welcome

**Jan 19-Feb 1:** Pastor Jaime (Non-Contracted Time)

**Jan 25:** 9:30am Worship with Communion—Leader Deacon Erin Power  
Pastor Jaime (Non-Contracted Time)

**Jan 25:** ANNUAL REPORT DEADLINE

**Jan 26:** February Newsletter Deadline



venmo

**Venmo:** GA Church has Venmo! If you would like to use Venmo to place your Weekly, Monthly, and Annual Offerings or any other donations please do so!! Just scan the QR Code. Thank you!

**Youth Of GA (YOGA) Soup, Sandwich & Auction:** On behalf of YOGA, we would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped make our annual Soup, Sandwich & Christmas Auction such a success. Thank you to all who donated food, auction items and time, and to those who attended and supported the event. Your generosity and support mean so much and directly help our youth programs and activities throughout the year. We are truly blessed by this congregation and grateful for the continued encouragement and involvement. Thank you again for supporting our youth and our church.

**Annual Reports:** Reminder: 2025 End of the year Annual Reports from all GA group Presidents/Leaders and Treasurers are due to Carrili by January 25th, 2026. The 2026 GA Church Annual Meeting will be held February 8th.

**Free-Piano:** GA Church has a piano to GIVE AWAY! The Piano is located in the Narthex (entryway). If you are interested, talk to Pastor Jaime or our secretary Carrili Larson. If you need assistance loading the piano, please let us know and arrangements will be made.

**Thank You:** A heartfelt thank you to the members of GA Church and the Gwinner community for your generosity toward us. God has used your kindness to lighten our burden. Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas. With sincere gratitude, Gary, Abbi, Joseph and Julia Myers.

**Potluck:** on January 18th we will celebrate Epiphany and have a potluck following worship to share our gifts with one another. Spread the word, bring a dish to share and we will see you there.

**Secretary Office Hours:** Starting January 1st, Carrili will be moving her office hours to Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30-1:00pm. She will still be available by phone: 701-680-1190 and email: galutheran-church@outlook.com as she has been in the past. Thank you.

# Keeping You in the G.A. Loop



**Our Sympathies :** Go out to the family and friends of: Patty Ulven. May God's loving embrace help you through this difficult time, and may the many happy memories ease your pain.



**Food Pantry:** The Gwinner location of the Sargent County Food Pantry Ongoing Needs: Any shelf-stable, non-perishable Items are needed. Suggested items: Canned items, ready-meals (hamburger helper, mac-n-cheese, stuffing mix), pasta & pasta sauce, pancake mix & syrup, shelf-stable juice, cereal, peanut butter. We also can use household items (toilet paper, paper towels, kleenex, laundry soap, dish soap) and personal items (shampoo, body wash, bar soap, deodorant, toothbrushes, tooth-paste). Monetary donations are also appreciated, they can be sent to PO Box 101, Forman ND 58032. Monetary donations are used for: vouchers for the grocery store for perishable items (milk, eggs, bread, potatoes, fresh vegetables and fruit). Drop off places in Gwinner are GA Lutheran Church, Zion Lutheran Church, or you can drop off items at the Food Pantry located in the Gwinner Community Center: 104 Main St., every Tuesday, 1:00-4:00pm. Thank you for your continued support and generosity! If you or anyone you know are in need, feel free to stop by the Gwinner location on Tuesdays from 1-4pm and pick up some supplies. Food Pantry Phone #: 701-680-7049.

**Bulletin Donations:** The bulletin donation sheet for the 2026 Church year is available on the table in the narthex. Bulletins cost \$15.00 per worship service to sponsor, please give payments to Carrili. Thank you!

**Snow Removal:** It's that time of year again! Just a reminder, snow removal at GA is done on a voluntary basis. If you have the equipment and the time your help with keeping the church safe this winter season is greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your help!

**WELCA Booklets:** Booklet updated for 2026 will be Available on the table in the Narthex (front entry). Please feel free to grab a copy!

**Stewardship Update:** Sunday December 7th was our reveal Sunday. Did we receive 45 intent cards? Will we be able to take advantage of the generous offering from 4 anonymous families of another \$10,000 toward our budget? It is amazing the generosity at GA. We all understand that any church operates solely on giving received. Your donations make it possible to serve our members and the community beyond. Whether it is a baptism, new bibles, backpacks of food, or a comforting, caring place to gather and walk alongside families in the loss of a loved one. Take a minute to think or look back at how GA has been a part of your life. Share your memories of GA, these stories help to show how GA matters. A Big Thank You to all those who returned their intent cards, and also to ALL those who have contributed in 2025. We currently have received \$180,000.00 toward our \$232,550.00 budget. Because of your intentions to give we did reach our goal of 45 intent cards, in fact we received 51 intent cards!! So, we can continue the good works of GA Church. Thank You, Thank you!

## **Church Finances:** For the Month of November 2025:

Beginning Balance: \$17917.18 Deposits: \$ 16,921.23 Payments: \$9458.82 Ending Balance: \$25,379.59

## **2025 Year to Date Giving:**

**GA 2025 Budget:** \$232,550.00      **2025 Giving to Date:** \$ 175,880.49      **Giving Needed:** \$ 56,669.51

GA Church now has Venmo! If you would like to use Venmo to place your Weekly/Monthly/Annual Offerings please do so!! Our account is @GustafAdolf-LutheranChurch or scan the QR Code. Thank you!



**Because you give...we worship, fellowship, learn, serve & grow. Thank you for your generosity.**



# Keeping You in the G.A. Loop

## **Looking Ahead!**

**February 08:** 2026 GA Church Annual Meeting



**Poinsettias:** 2 Jingle Bell Poinsettias were donated by David & Donna Hansen in Memory of Ardell & Doreen Hansen and Charlotte & Henry Melting, 2 Jingle Bell Poinsettias were donated by Roger & Linda Johnson in Memory of Clara Johnson and Ida Nelson, a Red Poinsettia was donated by David & Linda McFarland in Memory of Dwight Hanson and Karen McFarland, Shannon & Toni Hajek donated a Jingle Bell Poinsettia in Memory of Sarah Hajek, and a Red Poinsettia in Memory of Mavis Hajek, a Jingle Bell Poinsettia was donated by Rosi Odegard in Memory of ElRoy & LaVelle Odegard, 2 Jingle Bell Poinsettias were donated by Steve & Deb Johnson in Memory of Family & Friends, a Red Poinsettia was donated by Danny & Joey Hegle in Memory of Manny Hegle, a Jingle Bell Poinsettia was donated by the Ciesynski Family in Memory of their Loved Ones, a Jingle Bell Poinsettia was donated by Kirstin & Torey Kempel in Memory of their Grandparents, a White Poinsettia was donated by Kirstin & Torey Kempel in Honor of their Children & Grandchildren, a Pink Poinsettia was donated by Shirley Fuss in Memory of her Mom, 2 Red Poinsettias were donated by Kent & Julie Johnson in Memory of their Grandchildren, a Red Poinsettia was donated by Becky & Jerrod Sandness in Memory of their Loved Ones, a White Poinsettia was donated by Lynn Anderson in Memory of Clair, Margaret, Sylvan & Myrna Anderson, a Red Poinsettia was donated by Geneva Waswick in Memory of Corwin Waswick, 2 White Poinsettias were donated by the Altar Guild in Memory of Ginger & Rod Utecht, a Jingle Bell Poinsettia was donated by Amber & Tanner Kempel in Memory of Grandpa, 2 Pink Poinsettias were donated by Adam & Nancy Wrage in Memory of their Parents, a Red Poinsettia was donated by Darrel & Becky Salberg in Honor of their Children, Grandchildren and Great Grandchild, a Jingle Bell Poinsettia was donated by Ken & Lori Wiederholt in Honor of their Grandchildren, a White Poinsettia was donated by Julie Waswick in Memory of Phil & MaryLou McDaniel, a Pink Poinsettia was donated by Mary Stroh in Memory of Loved Ones, a Red Poinsettia was donated by Barb & Steve Melroe in Memory of Grandpa Stan, a White Poinsettia was donated by Barb & Steve Melroe in Honor of their Grandchildren, a Red Poinsettia was donated by Miles & Lannae Johnson in Memory of their Parents, a Pink Poinsettia was donated by Martin Potts & Julie Waswick in Memory of Grover & Jane Potts, 2 Jingle Bell Poinsettias were donated by Shirley Waloch in Memory of Gail and Debra. Thank you to all who donated Poinsettias to make our worship space beautiful this Advent/Christmas Season.

## **January WELCA Action Group**

**Co-Chairs:** Rachel Nelson

Dawn Anderson

Paula M Hansen

Carolyn Klemetson

Nicole Shockley

LaVon Stoppeworth

Tanya Walth

Laurie Lee

Karla Waloch

Janelle Mairs

Kristy Mairs

Sandra Nerison

Jessica Peterson

DeAnna Youle

Emma Waloch



# January Birthdays

PAGE 6

- 1 Bryan Christensen  
Jackson Odegard
- 2 Kylie Anderson
- 3 Athena Erickson  
Deb Johnson  
Ashley Hansen
- 4 Kent Johnson  
Megan Enge
- 5 Austin Johnson  
Matthew Stubbert
- 6 Ryan Holden  
Jenna Johnson
- 8 Jan Melroe  
Jericho Brockman
- 9 Doug Anderson  
Chloe Beck
- 11 Jason Bauer  
TJ Johnson
- 12 Jan Bjork  
Troy Jacobson
- 14 Masyn Stahl
- 15 Bret Buckingham  
Morgan Temple
- 16 Angelica Olson
- 17 Karla Frederick  
Elijah Hanson  
Amelia Hejtmanek
- 18 Charles Klemetson
- 19 Jace Odegard  
Hattie Kempel
- 21 Logan Decker  
Jaden Gilje  
Della Teske  
Jeremy Walth
- 22 Elizabeth Hardy  
Scott Udem
- 23 Marissa Hanson
- 24 Alyssa Tindell  
Heather Swanson



- 26 Lucas Osier  
Jessica Peterson
- 27 Shelley Anderson  
Richard Jacobson  
Karah Weinand  
Helen Mairs
- 28 Skylar Peterson
- 29 Nicole Flannery  
Karla Ulven
- 30 Payten Herman

# January Anniversaries

- 3 Lynnae & Dennis Decker
- 25 Lynn & Troy Jacobson
- 28 Peggy & Richard Olson

***Have you been left out  
of the birthday and  
anniversary page?***

***Or is the date always  
wrong?***

***If you have noticed any  
mistakes in the monthly  
newsletters, please con-  
tact the church office at  
678-2552 or email us at***

***[galutheran-  
church@outlook.com](mailto:galutheran-church@outlook.com)***

***Thanks!***

# January Worship Assistants

## Communion Assistants

If you feel called to help offer God's gift of Holy Communion to God's people, please let Pastor Jaime or the ushers know before worship service or come forward when Pastor Jaime asks for communion assistants. All ages are welcome to assist with Holy Communion.



## Readers

04	Joan Peterson
11	Nancy Wrage
18	Michelle Ciesynski
25	Karla Waloch



## Greeters

All Members of GA Are Invited To Welcome our Visitors and Each Other.



## Sound System

Sound System is now

A Paid Position.

Contact Kris Beck if you are Interested.



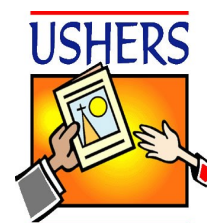
## Ushers

**Captain: Steve & Barb Melroe**

Jerrold & Becky Sandness

Tanner & Amber Kempel

Troy & Lynn Jacobson



**Reminder:** If you are unable to fulfill your duties it is up to you to find a replacement. Thank you!

## **Council Meeting Minutes 12/14/25:** Written by Walter Wrage

Members present: Kirstin, Mike, Walter, Martin

Meeting called to order: Pres. Kirstin called meeting to order at 5:36pm

Devotions and Prayer:

Adopt the agenda: Kirstin added christmas gift discussion and staff hours adjustment for Carrili. Discussion was held on 2026 compensation and benefits for Pastor Jaime as she moves to 75% call beginning January 1st. Mike made a motion to adopt the new agenda. Martin seconded the motion.

Pastor Jaime joined the meeting after the discussion at 6:10 pm.

**Secretary Report:** Walter made a motion to approve sec.report, Martin seconded the motion.

**Paster Report:** -It was confirmed that we met the minimum intent card to initiate the anonymous donor contributions. -Jaime updated us on the grant submission through Church Anew. Nov. 16: Funeral for Ginger and Rodney Utech Nov. 14-16: Meta Herrick Carlson, my coach and leadership consultant from Church Anew's Renewing Reformation Program, was in Gwinner and joined in conversation with community members, as well as led us in singing our Peace on the Prairie worship service Sunday, November 16. Nov. 23 - last day of SS for fall session Nov. 28: met with Scott Searl, stewardship consultant from Church Anew, to show him around our church and community of Gwinner, and have discussion around possibilities, challenges, and opportunities in GA and Gwinner. Nov. 30 - Advent Season starts. This year's theme is "The Power of Yes" through Church Anew resource. December 2-8: vacation December 11: Ruth Circle in Lisbon at hospital nursing home; confirmation lock-in December 11: started a four week Advent devotion in place of book study December 14: drew names for Blue Camel Gift Exchange - had 21 people/families that participated Dec. 16: had eval with Kirstin and Lori; Multi-community Cantata at GA Christmas Eve traditional service will be at 4pm. No service on Christmas Day.

## **Work group reports**

**Property and grounds:** -Walter added sensors in the attic for temperature and humidity monitoring. -The heat tape is plugged in on the roof. -We need to check on the sump pump at the parsonage. -The parking lot light has been fixed by Ottetail, the city covered the cost. -Need to scoop the snow from in front of the Sunday school exit door, Martin will take care of it. -Walter brought up winter time overnight parking.

**Welca:** 2 bake sales, the leftovers will be donated. Successful sales with good turnout.

**Mens Group:** no update.

**Yoga:** Confirmation class had a lock-in, Soup and sandwich and auction was held after worship on December 14th. Raised over \$1200. New leaders Mason Stahl, Caleb Adams.

**Education:** -Need to decide an end date for the make a change offering. Also need to choose a date for picking gifts to donate.

**Alter Guild:** Christmas season, poinsettia fundraiser. Worship and Music: Meeting in January, Lent season will be decided at that point.

**Old Business:** -Financials will be posted in the bulletin every month. Will be doing financial reports and sending out twice a year. Will be sending a thank you letter for people who have given.

**New Business:** communion served by SAMs. "They" have training to give communion. The council president will have to email the synod for authorization for SAMs to preside at GA Church at least 10 days before the Sunday they will be leading.

**-Constitution:** Meta Herrick Carlson, leadership consultant and coach through Church Anew, and Pastor Jaime went through the constitution and found we do not need to have two separate congregational meetings nor two votes to make changes to the constitution. We only need to have the meeting date and info for the vote/meeting to be announced on the two consecutive Sundays before the date of the congregational meeting.

-Will not be adding a section on family members on council who can't be immediate family members of paid staff. -Discussion on the pastor as the person in charge of the paid staff. Will not be adding this provision. This would be open to reconsider this in the future.

-Pastor contract for next year, will be giving the congregation options in the annual meeting. Discussed at length for payment, benefits, vacation, etc.

-Parking lot light fixed.

-Process for getting replacement members for council.

**Treasure's Report:** -51 intent cards came in. -discussed lay-pastor pay. -Balance as of today: \$25,379.59


Mike made a motion to approve, Martin seconded. Adjournment: 7:10pm

-Mike made a motion to adjourn. Walter seconded.

-Next meeting Jan 11th at 5:30



# JANUARY 2026

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
				01 Bits 'N Stitches Quilting 9am to Noon <b>Offices Closed</b>	<b>02</b> Jaime's Sabbath	03 Jaime's Sabbath
04 9:30 Worship Music & Wor- ship Leading Pastor Jaime (Non-Contracted Time)	05 12 Noon Bulletin Deadline Pastor Jaime At Continuing Ed	06 Pastor Jaime At Continuing Ed	07 Pastor Jaime At Continuing Ed	08 Bits 'N Stitches Quilting 9am to Noon <b>Ruth Circle 2:30PM</b> Pastor Jaime At Continuing Ed	09 Jaime's Sabbath Pastor Jaime At Continuing Ed	10 Jaime's Sabbath Pastor Jaime At Continuing Ed
11 9:30 Worship Kirstin Kempel  Pastor Jaime At Continuing Ed	12 12 Noon Bulletin Deadline Pastor Jaime At Continuing Ed	13	14	15 Bits 'N Stitches Quilting 9am to Noon	16 Jaime's Sabbath	17 Jaime's Sabbath
18 9:30 Worship w/ Communion Pastor Jaime  <b>Potluck after Worship</b>	19 12 Noon Bulletin Deadline Pastor Jaime (Non-Contracted Time)	20 Pastor Jaime (Non-Contracted Time)	21 Pastor Jaime (Non-Contracted Time)	22 Bits 'N Stitches Quilting 9am to Noon Pastor Jaime (Non -Contracted Time)	23 Jaime's Sabbath  Pastor Jaime (Non-Contracted Time)	24 Jaime's Sabbath Pastor Jaime (Non-Contracted Time)
25 9:30 Worship w/ Communion Deado Powers <b>Annual Reports Due!</b> Pastor Jaime (Non-Contracted Time)	26 12 Noon  Bulletin Deadline <b>February Newsletter Deadline</b> Pastor Jaime (Non-Contracted Time)	27 Pastor Jaime (Non-Contracted Time)	28 Pastor Jaime (Non-Contracted Time)	29 Pastor Jaime (Non -Contracted Time)	30 Pastor Jaime (Non-Contracted Time)	31 Pastor Jaime (Non-Contracted Time)

Gustaf Adolf Lutheran Church—E.L.C.A.  
207 1st St SE  
PO Box 176  
Gwinner, ND 58040-0176



2026 January Newsletter

**CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB AND FACEBOOK!**

**WWW.GALUTHERANCHURCH.ORG**

**WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GALUTHERANCHURCH**

**CHURCH STAFF**

PASTOR.....JAIME DECKER  
SECRETARY.....CARRILI LARSON  
TREASURER.....MICHELLE GOETTLE  
CUSTODIAN.....ADALEE HILL  
COUNCIL PRESIDENT.....KIRSTIN KEMPEL  
SCS SUPERINTENDENT.....  
YOGA LEADERS.....MASYN STAHL & CALEB ADAMS

**PHONE NUMBERS**

CHURCH.....(701) 678-2552  
JAIME CELL.....(701) 680-2637  
SECRETARY CELL.....(701) 680-1190

**EMAIL ADDRESSES**

PASTOR.....JAIMEDECKER4@GMAIL.COM  
CHURCH OFFICE.....GALUTHERANCHURCH@OUTLOOK.COM

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**

KIRSTIN KEMPEL (PRESIDENT), MARTIN POTTS ( VICE PRES.),  
WALTER WRAGE (SECRETARY) , MIKE LARSON, LORI WIEDERHOLT,  
SHARON BECKSTROM, PAUL WHITE, AND YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE