



The Messenger

A Message from Pastor Lars

Church membership is a funny thing. It's not like most other organizations, where the lines of in and out are concrete. Did you pay your dues? Did you attend XYZ events? Did you learn the secret handshake and take the oath? You're a member. In ELCA churches, it's not that simple.

First, there are multiple ways to join. We become members when baptized, but cannot vote or serve in leadership until after confirmation. You can also join through transfer from another church, or by affirming your baptism if you are baptized but not currently a member anywhere. You can join by being baptized as an adult. The oldest I've done was 96.

You are not removed from membership until at least two years without a recorded contribution and communion. But this is not automatic; congregations usually keep people on the rolls far longer for a host of reasons. We try to give grace.

But the key word here is "recorded". If you give anonymously, which is totally your right, there is no way to count it, even though we may suspect you do. To make sure you are recorded, just drop any amount in an offering envelope, sign your name, and you're good. Or, make any size donation electronically.

Now we get to the issue of "voting" vs. "non-voting" members. The ELCA constitution specifically states that to be a voting member you have to have had one recorded contribution and have taken communion once in the preceding year. I don't think that's a terribly high bar. Most organizations have far higher thresholds. The rule is there to make sure that there is at least some measure of who is involved, who is invested, who participates, before taking votes on things that can be impactful in the life of the church. One service and \$1 in one year does not feel burdensome or unreasonable to me.

Where churches get into trouble is when we don't stick to our rules, and then we do. Most votes are not contentious or closely divided. Rarely do I have more than one person "fighting" for a council seat. Most close votes involve 1) sexuality 2) property 3) leaving/not leaving the ELCA (usually over sexuality) 4) terminating the call of a pastor. Because these are uncommon, most places just go through the membership directory, and anyone who "looks" active is kept on the voting list. And what difference does it make if the votes are near unanimous? But if they're close, it matters immensely if people are not technically allowed to vote. Then we have to be sticklers.

I worry that the confusion over membership definitions leads to hard feelings. It is NOT the case that people are “kicked out of the church” if they don’t meet voting membership requirements. You’re still a member, you just have to show up and make a RECORDED contribution, and you’re back on the voting list.

As annoying as these processes can be, and as nose-bleed as some of the Roberts Rules of Order questions can become (“can one make a subsidiary motion to a motion after the motion is in discussion?????”), they give us a process and order for making decisions that make sure votes are fair and proper process for debate and decision-making is followed.

Becoming an RIC (Reconciling in Christ) congregation is a big decision. It’s not to be taken lightly, and should not be done with a specter of bad process hanging over it. I want to make sure that everyone who votes is legally allowed to, and there is no allegation of ineligible people tipping the election. I may not get the outcome I want, but the process should be clean and fair so I can respect it and not feel cheated.

A couple other notes on how membership works:

As for kids, anyone confirmed is considered an adult member of the church and can vote and serve on all committees. We do not expect youth to make their own recorded contributions; we assume the family/parents’ contribution. This is extended through college or college-aged. Once over that (about 22), we assume you could have your own job and make your own \$1 contribution and come once of your own volition.

Spouses are considered family, so only one contribution is expected from the two.

So this month we will come back again, as a church, on January 11 and take a vote on whether or not to become an RIC congregation. We (Dee and I and council and others in the office) have gone over the membership lists again and again to make sure nobody gets left off, as happened last time. We will still be cross-checking RECORDED contributions against membership data, so get that \$1 bill in the offering envelope (hopefully more, but you get the idea) or scan the QR code and do it that way.

Here's to a good meeting with respect, healthy dialogue, and Spirit-based discernment of where God is calling us.

Pastor Lars

Teamwork at Christ Lutheran Church

At the December Church Council meeting, two new committees were formed: A Design Committee to review property needs and possible future upgrades and a Model Constitution/Bylaws Review Committee. The Design committee will be chaired by Anne Swant and Pastor Lars. The Model Constitution/Bylaws Committee will be chaired by Kay Shelton. If you are interested in joining either committee, please contact these Council members.

Other teams/committees are in the works for 2026 as well. Pastor Lars will meet with a core group to begin groundwork on hiring a Youth Coordinator, under the umbrella of the Youth Program. He will also meet with several Council members to discuss a Congregation Care Ministry under the umbrella of Outreach. Stay tuned for service opportunities as these teams develop!

More info on the Model Constitution/Bylaws Committee:

A new model constitution was approved by the ELCA in August 2025. There are some updates in language that should be approved by the Christ Lutheran Church (CLC) congregation at a congregational meeting. Kay has highlighted the new sections to discuss with committee members. If you are interested in seeing the changes, please email Kay at kkayshelton@gmail.com for a highlighted copy of the new ELCA model constitution.

Non-profit bylaws should be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect the organization's reality. Because the bylaws are incorporated into the model constitution, now is an ideal time to review the CLC bylaws. After the new committee finishes their study, the revised CLC Constitution with any proposed changes will be reviewed and approved by the synod/ELCA prior to a vote by the congregation. Because of the multi-step process, we will start the committee work in January with a goal to adopt the new model constitution at a congregational meeting held late spring.

Kay Shelton, Church Council President

WORSHIP REPORT FOR DECEMBER

Advent and Christmas worship can't happen without lots of help. Thank you to Pastor Lars for his worship planning for this season. And also a big thank you to Leslie and Nick Anderson for their work adorning the sanctuary for Advent and Christmas. Carmen and Deanna are much appreciated for their extra work on Altar Care in December.

Giving Statements will be available in the CLC Narthex in mid-January. Contact Gene Spangrude 509-240-6455 for questions about them.

hooray!

The new website is up and running!
Same web address:
christwallawalla.org
Please go and see the design.
Pastor Lars has done a great job
with building this new site.

Attendance Report

*Average Sunday Worship
Attendance*

November 2025 - 105

November 2024 - 111

CLC'S FINANCES

November 2025

Total Income: \$24,542

Total Expenses: - 21,325

Net Gain \$3,217



Year To Date (approximate):

92% of projected revenue through
November has been spent



January Birthdays!

Nona Benzel	1/1
Peter Anderson	1/2
Cheryl McCoy	1 /2
Renee Clark	1/9
Martin Manny	1/9
Erin Prattt	1/9
Traci Hein	1/11
John Knapp	1/12
Paul Austin	1/13
Sloan Prutsman	1/16
Barbara Fryhling	1/20
Maria Montoya	1/20
Brynlee Zeller	1/22
Gracie Nelson	1/23
Pastor Lars	1/24
Mary Beth Holce	1/27
Jessica Swanson	1/30
Gerhard Hoffman	1/31

**CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH
CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

December 9, 2025

Council president Kay Shelton called the meeting to order at 6:02pm. Those attending were Pastor Lars Hammar, Julie Swenson, Gordon Heimbigner, Anne Swant, Jim Peterson, Barbara Hoffman, Janet Mobley, Melanie Hein, Kirsten Brannon, Peggy Haug and Peter Swant.

Incoming council members present: Julie Michener, Lori Peterson and Greg Romaniuk.

Pastor Lars opened the meeting with prayer.

The November minutes were approved by email affirmation on November 17, 2025.

Financial Report: Monthly report: Christ Lutheran's operational income came in \$1,088 less than budget for November. Operational expenses were \$5,478 less than budget for November. Operational funds combined for a net inflow of \$3,217 for November. Designated/restricted activity resulted in a net outflow of \$1,067 for November.

Year To-Date: We have collected approximately 89% of the revenue through November. We have spent approximately 92% of the budget through November.

Balance Sheet Items: CLC's checking and saving account ended November with a \$173,569 balance.

Restricted/endowments fund totaled \$290,840 as of 11/30/2025. CLC had \$1,805,505 in positive equity on 11/30/2025.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Lars Hammar provided a written report to Council.

Committee Reports:

Property: Leaf collection has almost been accomplished - one more session will need to occur. Thanks to everyone that has helped this fall - it's a group effort - Anne appreciates everyone's efforts. The lawn mower is scheduled for pick up for winterization. The budget for 2026 has been adjusted to just include monies for some seating in the front and back of the church. Other items will be dealt with on a larger scale as per Pastor Lars' report to the council. WW Electric came to the church to adjust the sensor for the front door for exiting the church.

Finance & Budget: Jim Peterson presented the Budget for 2026.

Worship: Advent and Christmas worship can't happen without lots of help. Thank you to Pastor Lars for his worship planning for this season. And also a big thank you to Leslie and Nick Anderson for their work adorning the sanctuary for Advent and Christmas. Carmen and Deanna are much appreciated for their extra work on Altar Care in December.

Evangelism: Karleen is working on the end of year report and Voting Members list. Thanks go to Janet Mobley for filling in for her on Sunday.

Fellowship: Sign up sheets went up for the three "Soup Suppers" we have during Advent. And a big thank you to Kari Isaacson for heading up a night of Christmas Caroling to the VA, Wheatland Village as well as a few homes of members. Afterwards Kari & Jim have graciously invited everyone to their home for fellowship & treats!

Outreach: The Giving Tree is up and the materials for Advent are out.

Mission Group teamed with Youth Education and sponsored an afternoon of making personal care kits. They put together 191 kits. Thank you to those who helped put kits together and Laura Berry for organizing it. We continue with serving meals at the Christian Aid Center and the Sleep Center. All in all, Outreach has had a busy year and we are looking forward to the coming year.

Youth Education:

Youth and Family: Family Advent night was enjoyed by over 17 youth and several adults. Thank you to Melanie Hein and Laura for assisting the teens with creating Care kits for Lutheran word relief. The kids made around 200 kits.

Thank you to Jim Peterson and John Funderburk for making and supplying Advent Logs for the kids to decorate. They loved it!! Sara P, Sarah H, Emily, Lars, Robert and Allison (Kirsten may be forgetting some) pitched in to help wherever needed. We made a bunch of sugar cookies for the upcoming cookie sale.

Adult Education: Peggy has nothing new to add at this point.

Stewardship:

Continuing Business:

Peggy Haug made a motion to approve the 2026 Budget as presented by Jim Peterson. Kirsten Brannon seconded. Motion passed.

Jim Peterson updated Council on the solar panel installation. Hopefully, the solar panels will be operational in December.

Pastor Lars updated council on the new church website.

Peter Swant made a motion to hold the RIC vote on January 11, 2026. Kirsten Brannon seconded. Motion passed.

New Business:

On November 23, 2025, Karleen Heintzberger made a motion to approve the Building Use Request by Charleen Kaaen for use of the fellowship hall and kitchen on November 27, 2025. Julie Swenson seconded the motion. Motion carried by Council members voting November 23, 2025.

Barbara Hoffman made a motion to approve the Building Use Request by Anne Swant for a Spaghetti Feed Fundraiser for Mila Guzman on February 15, 2026. Janet Mobley seconded. Motion passed.

Barbara Hoffman made a motion to cancel the debit card and get a credit card in the name of Pastor Lars Hammar. Anne Swant seconded. Motion passed.

Anne Swant made a motion to create a Design Committee to review property needs and possible future upgrades. Melanie Hein seconded. Motion passed.

Peter Swant made a motion to create a Model Constitution/Bylaws Review committee. Barbara Hoffman seconded. Motion passed.

A Church Council Retreat will be held on January 10, 2026. Details to follow.

Council members recognized those retiring from council at the end of December.

Future dates:

Financials: December 17, Jan. 7 (reimbursement or credit card requests due before church, on prior Sunday)

Wednesday Advent services Dec. 10, and 17

December 14 – Tri-City Americans Hockey Game

December 21 – Christmas pageant and Cookie Tin Sale

December 24 – Christmas Eve candlelight services at 4 pm and 6 pm

December 29 – 31 – Pastor Lars on vacation

Important! January 2 – (first Friday) – Deadline to submit Council member annual reports to office manager

January 4 – Install newly elected Church Council/officers

January 11 – RIC vote (notice in bulletin Dec. 28 and Jan. 4)

January 25, 2025 – Annual Congregation Meeting (notice in bulletin Jan. 11 and 18)

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:08pm with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted, *Julie Swenson*, Council Secretary

Weekly Happenings at CLC

- Adult Education - Sundays at 11am
- Godly Play - Sundays during Worship
- Quilt/ Mission Group - Tuesdays 9 to noon & 6:30pm on the 1st and 3rd
Tuesday of the month
- Men's Group - every other Tuesday at 10am

Sunday December 21st was the youth Christmas program “Sing with us” - A Christmas Story. All the youth did a great job. As always a BIG THANK YOU to all of the volunteers who worked so hard to put this program together.





CAROLING CAROLING CAROLING

A Big THANK YOU to Charleen Kaaen, Kirsten and Rowan Brannon Hammar family (Lars, Kristie, Johan) Grinsteeds (Dan and Amelia) Funderburks (John and Carmen) Deanne Johnson, Anne Swant Robert and Alison Tabacco-Hines with Thomas and Robert, Kari Isaacson, Peggy Haug, Kathy Krebs, Myriah and son (friend of Alison's) who went Caroling on December 13th. 21 Carolers sang to about 10 people, plus an entire Dining Room at Brookdale Walla Walla. (A Senior living Facility) Kari said thanks go to Pastor Lars for leading the singing. Afterwards people went to Kari & Jim's for treats and fellowship. This was a very positive fellowship and service opportunity. Thank you Kari for heading up such a wonderful event! We have had calls and in person thank you's from people you visited who were extremely grateful. What a blessing you all are!



Advent Soup Suppers were well attended.
Thank you to Nick & Leslie, Council Members
as well as everyone who helped out and
attended!



January 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4 9:30 _{am} Worship Service 9:30 _{am} Godly Play	5	6 9 _{am} Mission Group 10 _{am} Men's Group 6:30 _{pm} Mission	7	8 10 _{am} SJAG Meeting 1 _{pm} Bible Study	9	10
11 9:30 _{am} Worship Service 9:30 _{am} Godly Play 10:30am Congregational Meeting	12	13 9 _{am} Mission Group 5:30pm Church Council Meeting	14	15	16	17
18 9:30 _{am} Worship Service 9:30 _{am} Godly Play	19	20 9 _{am} Mission Group 10 _{am} Men's Group 6:30pm Mission	21	22 1 _{pm} Bible Study Newsletter Deadline	23	24
25 9:30 _{am} Worship Service 9:30 _{am} Godly Play 10:30am Congregational Meeting	26	27 9 _{am} Mission Group	28 3pm Confirmation Class	29 1pm Bible Study	30	31



Christ Lutheran Church

**1420 South 2nd Avenue
Walla Walla, WA 99362-4502**

Return Service Requested

We're on the Web!

www.christwallawalla.org

January 2026 Newsletter

CHURCH COUNCIL AND STAFF

·President· Kay Shelton	Pastor Lars Hammar	Finance/ Budget· Jim Peterson
·Secretary· Julie Michener	·Office Manager· Dee Kasten	·Worship· Peg Haug
·Treasurer· Greg Romaniuk	·Sexton· Jeff Wagner	·Youth Education· Vacant
·Stewardship· Lori Peterson	·Organist· Eleanor Elkins	·Youth & Family· Kirsten Brannon
·Fellowship· Janet Mobley	·Personnel· Mara Palumbo	·Adult Ed/ Library· Vacant
·Outreach· Melanie Hein	·Property Management· Anne Swant	·Evangelism· Linda Lohrmann

Mission

We are God's people, united by faith in Jesus Christ, forgiven, chosen, and called by him through the Word and Sacraments to make disciples, and to serve in the world God loves.