

St. Pauli News in Detail



Christmas Eve

Bell Ringing
5:30 pm

Worship Services with Communion
5:00 pm



Greeting and Ushering

Dec. 1	Marc Haugen
Dec. 8	Ryan Haugen
Dec. 15	Gary Iverson (SS Program)
Dec. 22	Kari Iverson
Dec. 24	Jim Strandlie (Christmas Eve – 5 pm)
Dec. 29	Bruce Mathson
Jan. 5	Barb Nelson

Altar Preparation: Jan Strandlie

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Richard Geske Update

Richard has had some extensive surgery. His other leg was amputated and he has moved to a different home.

Richard Geske
Regency Hospital Company
1300 Hidden Lakes Pkwy
Golden Valley, MN 55422

Sunday School Christmas Program

We always look forward to this annual event, which will be held this year on Sunday, December 15, during worship services. Potluck follows with Lydia Circle serving.

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Join WELCA and Circle

We invite all church women to join either or both of these groups. They are faith in action and are vital to keeping St. Pauli alive and thriving. A plus is that you develop deep and lasting friendships. Meeting times vary, so check the weekly bulletin and your handbook.

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Middle River Choir

December 8th – 3:30 pm

The Greater Middle River Community Choir will perform at St. Pauli on Sunday afternoon, December 8th, 3:30 pm. Freewill donation for the Choir and refreshments.

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December Milestones

Birthdays

Dec. 5	Roxane Rondorf
Dec. 12	Heidi Haugen
Dec. 23	Jim Strandlie
Dec. 28	Ella Rondorf
Dec. 29	Neil Bugge
Dec. 30	Richard Geske

Anniversaries

Dec. 1	Jordan and Erin Rondorf
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In Memoriam

Elinor Irene Wiskow

March 31, 1940 – November 12, 2024



Elinor and her husband Walt were long-time members of St. Pauli Church where Elinor was baptized, confirmed and married. She was baptized on April 21, 1940 by Rev. Fjelstul with Mr. and Mrs. Olaf Snetting and Mr. and Mrs. Carl Alberg as sponsors. She was confirmed by Rev. Person in 1954 along with Roger Belange, Lyle Bjorge, Roger Hanson, Carmen Lokken, Gary Rolandson, Carol Rude, and Corine Torkelson.

One of the Lord's faithful servants, Elinor Irene (Gustafson) Wiskow, age 84, of Wadena, Minnesota, joined Him in heaven on November 12, 2024. She passed peacefully with family at her side after a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer. Memorial services were held Saturday, November 23, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. at the Immanuel Lutheran Church in Wadena, with the visitation one hour prior to services at the church.

Elinor Irene Gustafson was born March 31, 1940, at Mercy Hospital in Thief River Falls, Minnesota. She grew up with her parents Gustaf "Gust" and Marie (Peterson) Gustafson and her older sister Melba on the family farm at Hazel, Minnesota.

As a child she loved playing outdoors in all weather, playing with paper dolls with her dear friend Connie, helping her mother with cooking and baking, roller skating on Friday nights in town, and Nordic skiing. She especially enjoyed meeting her dad as he walked back from work at the railroad switch in Hazel, later getting to practice her "driving skills" under Gust's tutelage. Elinor went to country school until 8th grade when she transitioned to town school and graduated from Lincoln High School in Thief River Falls in 1958.

In the summer of 1956, she met Walter Dean Wiskow on a blind date. They made their relationship official in the summer of 1958, and were wed at St. Pauli Lutheran Church on July 5, 1959. They quickly transitioned to married life in Seattle, Washington. Walt was drafted and they moved to San Antonio, Texas, where Walt was stationed with the Army from 1960 to 1962. They moved back to a farm near Hazel after his honorable discharge. During this time Walt worked for Bridgeman Dairy and Elinor worked in the office of a local optometrist. Elinor became a stay-at-home mom when Steven joined them in October 1965, with Suellen following in September 1969 and Sara in June 1977. She later helped Walt run his grocery business in Lake Park, Minnesota where they made many good memories, and the family moved back to the St. Hilaire area and then Thief River Falls in the early 1980s.

They moved to South Dakota, Montana, and Iowa, then retired to Wadena in 2006. Along the way Elinor worked as a CNA for nearly 20 years and was adored by her co-workers and patients alike. She made valuable friends with whom she shared many giggles and cups of coffee. She and Walt made multiple tractor rides as far south as Iowa. She was also a devoted Legion Auxiliary Member, and active as a volunteer with Meals on Wheels, Food Shelf and at the local hospital.

She will long be remembered for her loyalty, grace, and compassion. Elinor was mom to the neighborhood kids and always had some sort of cookies in the jar. She would drop everything to help a friend and has sewn more quilts than she can count. Elinor was a faithful wife, amazing mother, and a doting grandmother and great-grandmother. She was cherished by all who knew her.

She is survived by her husband of 65 years Walt; son Steven (Margaret) Wiskow; daughters Sue (Bob) Kiffe, and Sara (Rich) Dungan; grandchildren: Luke, Olivia, Joey, and Eli Wiskow, and Rachel (Ryan) Johnson, Katie and Michael Austad, and James Dungan; great-grandchildren: Nathan, Paige, David, Nina and Isabella; sister Melba Lundeen; and numerous sisters and brothers-in-law, nieces and nephews. She is preceded in death by her parents, brothers and sisters in law and nieces and nephews.

The family would like to thank Knute Nelson Hospice for their grace and compassion. Memorials are requested to Immanuel Lutheran Church in Wadena to support their community and charity outreach programs.

In Memoriam

Leslie was baptized at St. Pauli on September 25, 1927 by Rev. Jacobson with Mr. and Mrs. Lars Roseland and Myrtle Roseland as sponsors. He was confirmed by Rev. Skibsrud on September 6, 1942 along with Kermit Finstad, Esther Hanson, Rosemary Hauge, Beverly Netteland, Mabel Torkelson, and Marion Torkelson.

Leslie John "Les" Snetting, 97, of Thief River Falls, wore out his last day and went home to God's kingdom Thursday November, 14, 2024, with his loving daughter, Cheryl, by his side.

Leslie Snetting was born August 22, 1927, the last of four children, on the family farm south of Thief River Falls, MN, to Hilda (Roseland) and Olaf Snetting. He attended a one-room schoolhouse and later attended Lincoln High School graduating in 1945. As a child, Leslie attended St. Pauli Lutheran Church and throughout his life would proudly recite the 23rd Psalm in its entirety, which he had memorized for confirmation. He later joined Trinity Lutheran Church in Thief River.

Leslie contracted rheumatic fever when he was five years old and was not expected to live. He did recover but had "spells" as his family called them and would feel faint with over exertion.

Leslie learned to work from at young age on the family farm. The Snettings milked cows, raised livestock and crops. Leslie tells of clearing fields, planting, harvesting and threshing grain, with horse teams. His father embraced farm machinery early on, and Leslie was an avid operator of any machinery he used.

With World War II, his brothers left for war. Leslie enlisted, but was turned down for health reasons, learning his heart was damaged from illness at five years old. He stayed behind on the family farm to work, later working at Hormel meat packing in Grand Forks becoming the manager of the pork loin line. Leslie went on to be a salesman for American Republic Insurance, becoming a regional supervisor. He began saving money with the goal of starting his own business.

Leslie would return to Thief River Falls and the family farm when not selling insurance. He met Marlene Langevin who was working at a popcorn wagon in town. They began dating and were wed March 21, 1954. Their family later grew with the births of their two daughters, Rebecca and Cheryl.

Leslie purchased a mobile home for him and his bride but could not find a place to put it in town, so the mobile home was moved onto the family farm. That's when Leslie knew what his business venture would be. In 1955 Leslie partnered with Dan Helle, bought property located along the Thief River, by Eight Street in Thief River Falls and founded Northwestern Trailer Court and Sales. After the mobile home park was built Leslie moved the family's mobile home off the family farm next to his new business office.

The business boomed and in 1963 another mobile home park was built off Highway 1 West in Thief River Falls. In 1967 another mobile home park was built in Warren. The partnership dissolved in 1970. Leslie retained the company name, Northwestern Homes and Northwestern Trailer Court, the right to sell mobile homes, and the mobile park on the west side of Thief River Falls. Mobile home sales were moved to Highway 1 West and his family moved to the south side of town.

Leslie added to his portfolio of mobile parks by expanding Northwestern Trailer Court in 1970 and again in 2015, purchasing Greendale Manor in 1974 and in 1997 Challenger Park was built on the south edge Thief River Falls. Sales of mobile homes continued to grow with Leslie selling many brands over the years. Leslie won many sales and service awards along with enjoying dealer trips abroad. Along with the sales, installations and transportation were also done by Northwestern Homes. At the office he answered phone calls with "Snetting speaking" and ended the calls with "You bet." At closing time he would announce to his staff, "Well, we wore out another day, it's time to go home." Leslie loved his job and truly enjoyed his housing customers, park residents, staff, and contractors. He continued to come into the office until 2020 at the age of 93, when his wife developed cancer and the Covid pandemic was rampant. Leslie did not return to his office after that, but continued as consultant until the business was closed 2022. During the 67 years of operation, just over 2700 homes were sold and 243 mobile home lots were managed through Leslie's company. He has been called the grandfather of the mobile home industry in Minnesota, an icon and a pillar of the community by other people by simply doing a job he loved.

Leslie generously provided for and loved his family. He enjoyed time with his wife, daughters, his three grandchildren and extended family, hunting, boating, fishing, water skiing, snowmobiling, the family horses, the pets, and taking trips. There were many happy times at his cabin at Lake of the Woods and his brother's cabin, and winters at his condo near Destin, Florida.

Leslie lived a good, long life, was loved and will be missed. "You bet."



Survivors include daughters Rebecca (Mickey) Moe of Eysian, MN, Cheryl (Pat Andersen) Snetting of Thief River Falls, MN; grandchildren Benjamin (Anna Yesberger) Moe of Minneapolis, Beth (David) Meissner of Plymouth, MN, Tyler (Heather) Snetting of Birmingham, AL, great grandchildren Isabelle, Jonah and Adalyn; and nieces and nephews.

He is preceded in death by his parents, wife Marlene Snetting, brothers Omer (Irene) Snetting, Ernie (Ruth) Snetting and sister Myrtle (Victor) Moen.

Visitation began at 12:30 PM with the service to celebrate Leslie's life at 2:00 PM on Saturday, November 23, 2024, at Johnson Funeral Service in Thief River Falls. Rev. LeRoy Flickinger officiated. Burial will be Friday, December 8, 2023, at Fort Snelling, Minneapolis and a memorial service will be held Saturday, December 9, 2023, at 2 pm at Redeeming Grace Community Church, 213 N. Oak St., Lake City, MN 55041. All are welcome. In lieu of flowers, please consider a monetary gift to Redeeming Grace Community Church.

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Minutes of the St. Pauli Church Council

September 19, 2024

The St. Pauli Church council held its regular meeting on Thursday September 19, 2024 at 7:00 pm. Members present: Marisa Benson, Wade Benson, Sue Kotz, Kevin Reich, Jim Rondorf and Barb Nelson.

President Wade Benson called the meeting to order. Kevin Reich led us in prayer.

Secretary's report was read. Motion to approve by Marisa, seconded by Sue. Carried.

Treasurers report was presented by Marisa via email earlier. Motion to approve by Barb, seconded by Jim. Carried.

Checking account balance as of July 31:	\$ 27,974.89
August revenue	3,620.00
August expenses	<u>(1,666.95)</u>
Checking account balance as of August 31:	\$ 29,927.94

Other account balances as of August 31:	
Education fund	\$ 549.09
Edward Jones	83,358.60
Memorial fund	8,616.20
Mission grant fund	5,644.71
Savings	<u>38,434.80</u>

Total account balance as of August 31: \$166,531.31

Cemetery association funds as of August 31: \$ 75,863.23

Total funds under mgmt. as of August 31: \$242,394.54

Reports of members and friends in distress or sickness:

Jim Kotz is getting along well since his surgery. A friend, Glenice Johnson is having a lot of medical issues. Sherry Rondorf is also having medical issues. We remember these people and anyone not mentioned in our prayers.

Other reports:

WELCA: Fall event will be held October 27th with the musical group "The Overtones" presenting the program. A supper of soup, rolls and bars will be served following the

program.

The Christmas Tea will be held at the Schoolhouse on December 8th from 3:00 to 6:00.

Board of Education: Rally Sunday was held September 8th. We have 10 students this year. Teachers will be Katy Haugen, Erin Rondorf, and Gary Iverson.

Old Business:

Faye will contact Northwest Electric for a time frame for the installation of the new lights in the basement. Marisa has the AED signs and also a plastic box containing all the supplies we will need along with the AED. She is going to ask the Sunday School children if they would like to decorate the box and she will also get the signs placed so anyone will know where to find the AED.

New Business:

Discussion was held regarding purchasing a generator to have in case of a power outage so we would always have power for the sump pump since the insurance company has increased our deductible to \$10,000.00. We also discussed some kind of a cooling system. These will be brought up at the annual meeting.

Kevin reported he and Faye had attended the Synod Conference. It was very informative and he would like to incorporate Mental Health and Suicide in a sermon. The council unanimously agreed. He also mentioned there are 12 suicides every 12 hours in the U.S. He also suggested singing the Lord's Prayer occasionally. The council also thought this is a good idea.

Meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Motion to adjourn was made by Marisa, seconded by Jim. Adjourned at 7:50.

Barb Nelson, St. Pauli Church secretary

Minutes of the Women of the ELCA

October 16, 2024

The St. Pauli Women of the ELCA met on October 16, 2024 at 7:00 pm at the church with 6 members present.

The evening began with putting together layettes for Lutheran World Relief.

President Jan opened with devotions "Path to Peacefulness" based on Psalm 139:3

Secretary's Report: Minutes of the September meeting were approved as read.

Treasurer's Report: September 19 to October 16:
Expenses: \$112.15; Income: \$171.00. Checking account balance as of October 16: \$1,531.01; Savings account balance as of September 30: \$596.52. CD balance: \$6,500.41. Sue Kotz moved to approve both reports, Virginia second. Carried.

Stewardship: 13 layette kits and 6 school bags for LWR were put together tonight. Shipping is November 2.

Council report: Electricians should be here to do the basement lights the end of this week. Council has been canceled for tomorrow due to no quorum. Church cleaning is done.

Old Business:

Heritage Center wall hanging: Jan and Virginia are going to Grand Forks on Monday, October 21, to meet with the framer and get a quote. They will also get their recommendations on backing and what to do with it.

New Business: Death of Marvin Torkelson. Memorial gift of \$25 was given to the family. Funeral service will be held at 12:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 3rd, at St. Pauli church with a meal following. Kevin Reich is officiating.

Marv's last gift to the congregation was the engraving of "Built on a Rock the Church Doth Stand" on the stone in front of our church.

Fall Event: Cost for The Overtones is \$450. Virginia has received a Thrivent Card for payment of the entertainment. Sally has a Thrivent card for supplies. Publicity: Jan got 50 posters from The Times and sent out 9 press releases to area newspapers. Cathy Erickson is promoting it on her show. It is also on Facebook so we can share. KTRF will put it on their community events, as well as Pioneer 90.1. Scheduled time for soup making on Friday the 25th is 9:30 am. French bread will be sliced, buttered and heated in foil. Sign-up sheet still has some blanks. Jan will call additional people.

Lydia Circle is November 13 at the church with potluck snacks. Shelley is the communion server for October. Thank you to Faye for serving tonight. Thankoffering meeting is in November along with election of officers. Potluck snacks for WELCA meeting on November 20th.

The Lord's Prayer was prayed and prayer partners exchanged. Meeting adjourned.

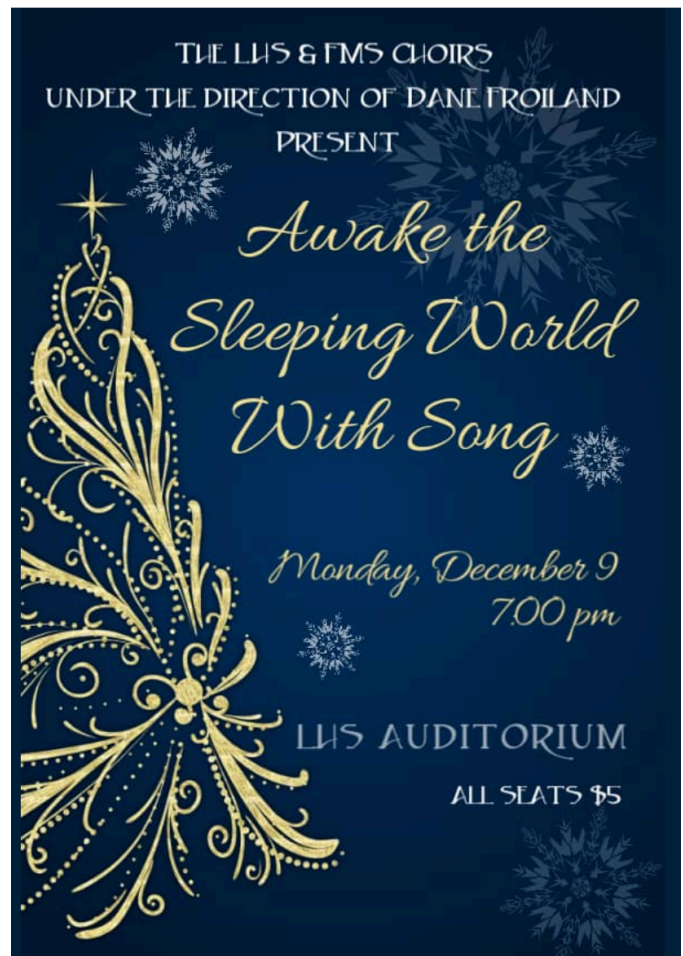
Faye Auchenpaugh, Secretary

2024 "Fall Event" Donations

Net profit this year totaled \$2,315.46. WELCA at their November 20th meeting decided to donate a total of \$2,400, as follows:

ELCA Good Gifts	\$ 500.00
ELCA Scholarship Fund	300.00
Heritage Center	250.00
BIO Girls	100.00
Pennington County Salvation Army	500.00
Northlands Rescue Mission	200.00
(plus misc. clothing donations)	
TRF Area Community Fund	100.00
Little Brother/Little Sister Program	100.00
North Country Food Bank	100.00
Minnesota Public Radio	50.00
Lincoln High School Prowler Pantry	<u>200.00</u>
	\$2,400.00

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St. Pauli Board of Education Meeting Minutes

August 4, 2024

Board Members present: Heidi Haugen, Kari Torkelson, Val Torstveit. Others present: Katy Haugen, Gary Iverson, Erin Rondorf.

Sunday School Calendar:

September 15 - Rally Sunday
September 22 - First Day of Sunday School
October 20 - No Sunday School
December 1 - No Sunday School
December 15 - Christmas Program during church services
December 22 - No Sunday School
December 29 - No Sunday School
April 20 - No Sunday School
May 11 - Last Day of Sunday School

Students:

Lydia Torkelson – 7th grade
Shea Dicken – 6th grade
Elsa Haugen – 6th grade
Ella Rondorf – 5th grade
Aksel Haugen – 4th grade
Eli Torkelson – 4th grade
Hunter Klamar – 3rd grade
Ky Rondorf – 2nd grade
Emma Klamar – 1st grade
Seth Klamar - Kindergarten

Curriculum: Katy and Erin, our teachers, report that the TeachSundaySchool.com curriculum has been working well. They like the easy access and user-friendly options it provides. The Old Testament lesson format works better than the New Testament format. Kari T. will look into options for lessons from the same organization and report back to the group to see if we want to purchase different lessons.

Teachers: Erin and Katy have both agreed to teach every other Sunday and will work out the teaching schedule between them. There are others who are willing to substitute for teachers, if needed.

Budget: Val reports that we have a balance of \$3,042.21 in the checking account.

There was a donation from Larry Hurst in memory of his wife. Val will have the students send him a thank you note in the fall after classes start.

Confirmation: Gary reports that Lydia Torkelson would be at the age to start confirmation this year. There was discussion about moving Elsa and Shea up with her, so she isn't the only student. Gary will discuss this with the parents and work out the confirmation schedule with them.

3rd Grade Bibles: Kari T. will get a bible for Hunter Klamar that will be given to him at the Christmas Program

Other: We discussed how rehearsal for the Christmas Program will need to begin before Thanksgiving since

there aren't many Sundays in between. Gary agreed to continue leading opening exercises and Ella and Ky went to Bible Camp this year and would like to teach the group some of those songs.

Kari T. asked about Vacation Bible School. Some of the other Lutheran churches in town combine their students and Erin reports that her kids attended. She will look into the process of having St. Pauli be a part of that group of churches offering vacation bible school and what our role might be if we decide to join.

Kari T. will find and contact the person who makes the ad for St. Pauli's announcement in the Times' Church Directory and have them announce Sunday School and that any students are welcome to attend.

Submitted by Kari Torkelson



“Bringing Home” the Christmas Tree

Thank you to Leroy & Carol Stumpf for donating a beautiful fresh tree for our church. The Andersons enjoyed their Saturday morning pick-up visit in the cool fresh air.



AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The week of November 18th, the Pennington/Red Lake Poultry Team represented Minnesota in the National Avian Bowl in Louisville Kentucky. Fourteen of the best poultry teams from across the country competed, and the team from Minnesota finished in 3rd place! Chad Torstveit is their coach.

The 4-Hers in the picture are as follows: Hailey Hanson - Red Lake County, Brianne Ellison and Briley Olsonawski - Pennington County. Brianne has St. Pauli ties in that she is Chris Ellison's daughter

Rylan Torstveit would have also been competing on this team, but he is currently on a different kind of team.

On Halloween, Rylan graduated from Basic Training in Fort Jackson South Carolina. He is currently going through his AIT (Advanced Individual Training) in Fort Moore Georgia (formerly Fort Benning). After completion, he will be serving in the Minnesota Army Reserves as a Bradley Fighting Vehicle Mechanic. The Army's dress uniforms are throwbacks to the uniforms from the WWII era.





Aksel is in age ten and under (10 U) travel soccer. The season runs from end of April until end of July. They traveled as far this summer as Fergus Falls.

Elsa was Dory in the TRF Area Community Theater's production of "Finding Nemo."



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In this season of Christmas baking, the History of the Most Famous Cookie of All!



The most notable chocolate chip cookie recipe was invented by American chef Ruth Graves Wakefield in 1938. She invented the recipe during the period when she owned the Toll House Inn in Whitman, Massachusetts. In this era, the Toll House Inn was a popular restaurant that featured home cooking. A myth holds that she accidentally developed the cookie, and that she expected the chocolate chunks would melt, making chocolate cookies. That is not the case. Wakefield stated that she deliberately invented the cookie. She said, "We had been serving a thin butterscotch nut cookie with ice cream. Everybody seemed to love it, but I was trying to give them something different. So I came up with Toll House cookie." She added chopped up bits from a Nestle semi-sweet chocolate bar into a cookie. The original recipe in *Toll House Tried and True Recipes* is called "Toll House Chocolate Crunch Cookies." Wakefield gave Nestle the recipe for her cookies and was paid with a lifetime supply of chocolate from the company.

Later history

Wakefield's cookbook, *Toll House Tried and True Recipes*, was first published in 1936 by M. Barrows & Company, New York. The 1938 edition of the cookbook was the first to include the recipe "Toll House Chocolate Crunch Cookie" which rapidly became a favorite cookie in American homes.

During World War II, soldiers from Massachusetts who were stationed overseas shared the cookies they received in care packages from home with soldiers from other parts of the United States. Hundreds of soldiers wrote home asking their families to send them Toll House cookies, and Wakefield

received letters from around the world requesting her recipe, helping spread their popularity beyond the east coast. Chocolate chip cookies were first sold in the UK in 1956 by Maryland Cookies.

Original Recipe

Sue Brides, a baker who worked with Ruth Graves Wakefield at the Toll House Inn, passed down the original recipe to her daughter, Peg, who shared it in a 2017 interview:

- 1-1/2 cups (350 mL) shortening
- 1-1/8 cups (265 mL) sugar
- 1-1/8 cups (265 mL) brown sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1-1/2 teaspoon (7.5 g) salt
- 3-1/8 cups (750 mL) of flour
- 1-1/2 teaspoon (7.5 g) hot water
- 1-1/2 teaspoon (7.5 g) baking soda
- 1-1/2 teaspoon (7.5 g) vanilla
- chocolate chips (The *Tried and True Recipes* cookbook specifies "2 bars (7 oz.) Nestlé's yellow label chocolate, semi-sweet, which has been cut in pieces the size of a pea").

Memorial Marker Placed at Vietnam War Vet's Grave

by April Scheinoha, *Thief River Falls Times*, November 13, 2024

[The following article is included in the St. Pauli newsletter because Jerry Ofstedahl's grandparents were Edwin and Evelyn (Peterson) Nelson, longtime members of St. Pauli and the community. Jerry was the son of their daughter Lois and husband John Ofstedahl.]



Jerry Ofstedahl

It's been 55 years, but a memorial marker has been placed at a Vietnam War veteran's grave at Greenwood Cemetery in Thief River Falls. A bronze marker now denotes Jerry Ofstedahl's gravesite. Tommy Thompson, one of his comrades, helped make it happen.

Jerry, 20, died August 13, 1969, in Quang Ngai Province, Vietnam. Before entering the U.S. Army in April 1968, Jerry worked full-time at a ranch near his home in Napa, California. He met his future wife, Claire, there, according to an article posted at findagrave.com. At the end of December 1968, he was deployed to

Vietnam.

Jerry married Claire while on an R&R to Japan two months before his death. They had no children, and she later remarried. His memorial service was held at the ranch where they met. Even though Jerry graduated from high school and live in Napa, his ashes were interred in a plot next to his grandfather, Edwin Nelson, in Thief River Falls.

Jerry was a squad leader in A Company, 1st Platoon, 2nd squad in the 11th Infantry Brigade of the American Division. On the day of his death. Jerry, Staff Sgt. Robert Swindle and Richard Wellman moved toward the sounds of enemy weapons. "A large enemy force in a well-concealed ambush opened fire, with AK-47s, Rocket-Propelled Grenades (RPG) and a 51-caliber machine gun, on the platoon, killing Ofstedahl, Swindle and Wellman in seconds. The enemy wounded Frank Brown as he moved toward the sound of the weapons firing. Mike Dankert and a medic administered lifesaving first aid to Frank Brown during the attack," according to a blog written by his comrade Glyn Haynie.



Glyn shared his memories of Jerry on his blog. "I found Jerry to be an outstanding leader, someone I wanted to emulate. He always shared his experiences and knowledge to help us survive our year in Vietnam and treated the squad members without favoritism."

Ofstedahl was Tommy's squad leader. Eight years ago, Tommy began searching for Jerry's gravesite. With Glyn's help, he learned Jerry's ashes were interred in Thief River Falls. "Following the confirmation of Jerry's gravesite, I made a promise to one day place a quarter on his veteran's headstone," Tommy said in an email to *The Times*. "Even though I only knew him for five days as my squad leader, he made me feel welcomed and was the only one who shook my hand."

As Tommy put it, new guys weren't a welcome sight. "Jerry told me to learn from those who had been there the longest and you will eventually be accepted," he recalled.

In June, Tommy and his wife, Connie, traveled to Thief River Falls after attending Tommy's 2024 Hill 4-11 Biennial Reunion in Altoona, Iowa. With help from City of Thief River Falls employee Nick Olson, they were able to locate Jerry's gravesite.

"To my utter disbelief, nothing but Bermuda grass was on his grave," wrote Tommy. "I left a quarter and a Hill 4-11 ball cap on Grandfather Nelson's tombstone and made a promise I would find a way to have his deserved veteran headstone on his grave."

Tommy eventually located Jerry's sister Mary through ancestry.com. She and their other sister Karen both live in California. They, too, were surprised to learn there wasn't a headstone on their older brother's gravesite. They filed the appropriate paperwork with the U.S. Department of Defense to obtain a bronze marker.

In anticipation of installing the bronze marker, Nick, the cemetery technician, contacted Johnson Funeral Service. The funeral home donated the concrete base. The bronze marker was installed November 7, 2024. The quarter and baseball cap were placed on the memorial.



Why place a quarter on a veteran's grave?

The tradition of leaving coins on veterans' graves dates back to the Roman Empire, when soldiers would put coins in the mouths of fallen soldiers to pay for their passage to the afterlife. The practice became common in the United States during the Vietnam War as a way to honor fallen soldiers and show respect to their families.

- A penny means the person leaving the coin visited the grave.
- A nickel means the person leaving the coin trained at boot camp with the veteran.
- A dime means the person leaving the coin served with the veteran in some capacity.
- A quarter means the person leaving the coin was present when the veteran died.

Good King Wenceslas looked down on the feast of Stephen...."

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

I have heard this carol since I was a child, but didn't really know the story behind it. It turns out that Good King Wenceslas (ca. 907 - 935 AD) was the Duke of Bohemia (now the western portion of the Czech Republic). His grandfather and father had turned from paganism to Christianity. His mother, however, was the daughter of a pagan tribal chief. When Wenceslas was 13, his father died, and his mother, having embraced paganism once more, tried to turn him away from Christ.

But when Wenceslas was 18, he gained the throne, had his mother exiled, and sought to reign over his people with mercy and justice as a truly *Christian* monarch.

He is best known for his acts of kindness - one of which is immortalized in the carol we sing at Christmas. An early biographer wrote of his legendary deeds:

"Rising every night from his noble bed, with bare feet and only one chamberlain, he went around to God's churches and gave alms generously to widows, orphans, those in prison and afflicted by every difficulty, so much so that he was considered, not a prince, but the father of all the wretched."¹

Though he ruled for but a decade, he was beloved by his people. At the age of 28, Wenceslas was assassinated on his way to church by his brother, but his influence lived on. He was considered a martyr, was canonized by the Catholic Church, and today is the patron saint of the Czech state.

The carol was written in 1853 by English hymnwriter John Mason Neale. You've probably sung a verse or two of the carol without thinking of the story it tells or the Christian values it teaches - and some stanzas are omitted in modern hymnals.

The first stanza observes Wenceslas, who watches a poor man collecting wood on a cold winter's night. The Feast of St. Stephen is celebrated on December 26th each year.

"Good King Wenceslas looked out, on the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about, deep and crisp and even;
Brightly shone the moon that night, tho' the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight, gath'ring winter fuel."

The king asks his page or servant where the poor man lives.

"Hither, page, and stand by me, if thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he? Where and what his dwelling?"
'Sire, he lives a good league² hence, underneath the

mountain; Right against the forest fence, by Saint Agnes' fountain."³

Wenceslas commands the servant to gather meat, drink, and firewood that they will personally carry to the poor man's home.



English illustrator Ethel Larcombe (1876-1940),
"Good King Wenceslas."

"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine, bring
me pine logs hither:
Thou and I shall see him dine, when we bear
them thither.'

Page and monarch, forth they went, forth
they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament and the
bitter weather."

The servant almost gives up, but Wenceslas
calls on him to walk directly behind him. And
miraculously, the servant can feel the saint's
warmth as he walks in his footprints.

"Sire, the night is darker now, and the wind
blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know not how; I can go no
longer.'

'Mark my footsteps, good my page. Tread
thou in them boldly.

Thou shalt find the winter's rage freeze thy
blood less coldly.'

In his master's steps he trod, where the snow lay dinted⁴;
Heat was in the very sod which the saint had printed."

The carol concludes with a call to all Christians to bless the
poor, and in that find a blessing for themselves.

"Therefore, Christian men, be sure, wealth or rank
possessing, Ye who now will bless the poor, shall yourselves
find blessing."

The final phrases remind me of two passages from Scripture.
The first is from Proverbs:

"He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will
reward him for what he has done." (Proverbs 19:17)

The second is Jesus' Parable of the Sheep and the Goats
(Matthew 25:31-46) that calls on all his disciples to aid the
poor and suffering. In the parable, his disciples don't
remember any acts of kindness towards him, for which he
blesses them.

"Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty
and give you something to drink? When did we see you a
stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?
When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for
one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'
(Matthew 25:34, 37-39)

So when you sing the Christmas carol "Good King
Wenceslas," understand the example that the old saint sets
for us - and do likewise this Christmas season and always.

"Therefore, Christian men, be sure, wealth or rank
possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor, shall yourselves find
blessing."

[1] Biographer Cosmas of Prague wrote about the year 1119 AD.

[2] A "league" originally referred to the distance a person could walk in an
hour, about 3 miles or 5.5 kilometers.

[3] St. Agnes of Bohemia or Agnes of Prague.

[4] "Dinted" is a poetic way of "dented" or impressions in the snow.

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O Come let us adore Him

