

St. Pauli Lutheran Church  
P.O. Box 944  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701  
[historicstpauli.org](http://historicstpauli.org)

# November 2025 Newsletter



## Community Thanksgiving Services

**Wednesday, November 26<sup>th</sup>**  
**7:00 pm**

**Trinity Lutheran Church  
Thief River Falls, MN**

## November 2025

November 2025						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>2</b> NO SUNDAY SCHOOL <i>HOLY COMMUNION</i> 10:30 Worship Services Pr. Darrel Cory	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> Confirmation Class 6:00 pm	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Lydia Circle at church 9:30 am Sue Kotz, hostess
<b>9</b> 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Services Kari Torkelson	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> <i>VETERANS DAY</i>	<b>12</b> Confirmation Class 6:00 pm	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>16</b> 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Services Kevin Reich	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> WELCA 3:00 pm Potluck Snacks Program: Thankoffering Charity Decisions Confirmation Class 6:00 pm	<b>20</b> Church Council 7:00 pm	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b> 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Services Kevin Reich	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> Community Thanksgiving Services 7:00 pm Trinity Lutheran	<b>27</b> <i>THANKSGIVING</i>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>30</b> NO SUNDAY SCHOOL 10:30 Worship Services Kevin Reich						

# St. Pauli News in Detail

## NOVEMBER



### Greeting and Ushering

Nov. 2	Craig Folkedahl
Nov. 9	Bryan Grove
Nov. 16	Jerod and Tammy Haugen
Nov. 23	Marc and Heidi Haugen
Nov. 30	Ryan and Katy Haugen

**Altar Preparation:** Kathy Alberg

\* \* \* \* \*

### Community Thanksgiving Services

**Wednesday  
November 26<sup>th</sup>**

**7:00 pm**

**Trinity Lutheran TRF**



\* \* \* \* \*

### November Milestones

#### Birthdays

Nov. 7	Blaine Torstveit
Nov. 15	Marc Haugen
Nov. 16	Barb Nelson
Nov. 16	Jonathan (JD) Torstveit
Nov. 17	Larry Hurst
Nov. 25	Wade Benson

#### Anniversaries

Nov. 26 Dennis and Sharon McCollough

### Holy Communion

**Sunday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**10:30 am**

**Pastor Darrel Cory**

\* \* \* \* \*

### WELCA

**Wednesday, November 20<sup>th</sup>  
3:00 pm**

Each year at our November WELCA meeting, we decide which charities should receive the proceeds from our Fall Event donations. It is also our annual Thankoffering Program. Potluck snacks.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Fall Event Donations

If you are still interested in making a monetary donation to help fund the charitable gifts WELCA will distribute in November, please feel free to do so. Checks should be made payable to St. Pauli WELCA, and given to Cindy Cedergren, WELCA Treasurer.

We would welcome your donation until our Nov. 19<sup>th</sup> meeting when distributions are determined. A final financial report on the event will be available in November. Thanks again to all!

\* \* \* \* \*

### Candle Lighter

Our candle lighter, Gary Iverson, mentioned that the current one is looking pretty ratty, so the Board of Education agreed that the Sunday School children could purchase a new one.

Watch for a special procession in the near future!

# In Memorium



## Leonard "Lenny" Twete

May 19, 1956 - September 24, 2025

*Lenny was a first cousin of David Vatthauer.*

Leonard Roy Twete, age 69, of Red Lake Falls, Minnesota, passed away suddenly on Wednesday, September 24, 2025.

Leonard was born on May 19, 1956 to Louis and Frieda (Vatthauer) Twete. He spent his early childhood in Red Lake Falls, attending school there through the 5th grade before the family relocated to Glencoe, Minnesota. He graduated from Glencoe High School with the Class of 1975 and went on to attend Mankato State College, where he earned a bachelor's degree in Park and Recreation.

Following college, Leonard—known affectionately as Lenny—returned to Red Lake Falls, where he farmed alongside his uncles and cousins at Vatthauer Farms. He dedicated 47 years to the farm, working with pride, perseverance, and a deep respect for the land and his family's agricultural heritage.

Lenny was a passionate collector of Minnesota Twins and Minnesota Vikings memorabilia, and he took great joy in attending the flea market in Detroit Lakes every Sunday. He also loved following professional sports and was an enthusiastic supporter of Minnesota teams. In addition, Lenny was a devoted fan of Red Lake Falls school athletics, especially basketball, football, and volleyball. His pride in local and state sports was a defining part of his life.

On July 9, 2005, Lenny met the love of his life, Laurie Stigen, through Laurie's daughter Emilie. Just a year later, on July 14, 2006, they were married at the Pioneer Village Church in Thief River Falls, Minnesota. Their union was filled with love, laughter, and shared passions that enriched both of their lives.

Lenny was a very hardworking man—dedicated, reliable, and never one to shy away from a challenge. He was caring and people-oriented, with a natural ability to strike up a conversation with anyone. His generosity touched many lives, and his meticulous nature showed in everything he did. And while he could be stubborn at times, it was always rooted in conviction and love.

Known for his warmth, strength, and unwavering spirit, Leonard was a beloved member of every community he was part of. His life was marked by kindness, hard work, and a deep love for family and friends. He touched many lives and will be remembered fondly by all who knew him.

He is survived by his loving wife, Laurie, of Red Lake Falls; sister, Ruth Twete, of Minneapolis, MN; step-daughter, Emilie Fayette; sisters and brothers-in-law, Kathy Chapin of Grand Forks, ND, Jeff (LaVon) Lannoye of Thief River Falls; Cherie (Kurt) Leader of Holcomb, KS, and Gwen Stigen of Thief River Falls; grandchildren, Chloe (Kenny) Fayette and Skylar Abrahamsen; great-grandchildren, Connor, Jameson and Waylon; all of the Vatthauer Family; and many other relatives and friends.

He is preceded in death by his parents; father and mother-in-law, Ernest and Cora Stigen; brothers and sisters-in-law, Nick Lannoye, Loren Stigen, Cliff Stigen, Greg Stigen, & Susan Stigen Axtel; stepdaughter, Melonie Fayette.

A funeral service to honor Leonard's life was held at 11:00 AM on Monday, September 29, 2025 at Bethany Lutheran Church in Red Lake Falls, MN with Rev. Jonathan Dodson officiating. Visitation took place one hour prior to the service. Burial followed at Greenwood Cemetery in Thief River Falls.

Leonard will be deeply missed, but his legacy of love, kindness, and hard work will live on in the hearts of those who knew him.

# In Memorium

## Rev. Richard David Lambert “Father Rick”

August 19, 1953 ~ September 22, 2025

*During his growing-up years, Father Rick lived with his parents, Walter and Evelyn, and his siblings on the farm now owned by Ken Geske.*



Rev. Richard David Lambert, affectionately known as Father Rick, of Thief River Falls, Minnesota, passed away peacefully on Monday, September 22, 2025, at Essentia Hospital in Fargo, North Dakota, at the age of 72.

Born on August 19, 1953, in Fosston, Minnesota, he was the beloved son of Walter J. Lambert and Evelyn S. (Voxland) Lambert. He was raised near Oklee, MN, and various areas in Northern Minnesota.

From a very young age, Father Rick knew he was called to the priesthood. His sense of vocation was unwavering, and it shaped the course of his life with clarity and purpose.

He graduated from Lincoln High School in Thief River Falls in 1972, earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from St. Thomas College (St. John Vianney Seminary), and continued his theological studies at the St. Paul Seminary. He was ordained into the priesthood on May 24, 1980, at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Crookston, MN, beginning a lifelong journey of spiritual service and pastoral care that spanned 45 years.

Father Rick began his ministry as Parochial Vicar at Sacred Heart in East Grand Forks (1980–1981) and St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Moorhead (1981–1983), where he served with humility and dedication before reaching pastor status. He then led St. Stephen Church in Stephen (1983–1987) and Assumption Catholic Church in Florian (1984–1987). From 1987 to 1993, he was pastor of St. Philip’s Catholic Church in Bemidji, ministering also to Sacred Heart in Wilton and the Newman Center in Bemidji (1990–1993). From 1993 to 1997, he served as pastor of St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Fosston, with mission responsibilities at St. Joseph’s in Bagley and Our Lady of Victory in Shevlin. From 1997 to 2009, he led St. Michael’s Church in Mahnomen and its mission parish, St. Joseph’s in Beaulieu.

In 2009, Father Rick became pastor of St. Bernard’s Catholic Church in Thief River Falls, MN, where he served with devotion and grace. During this time, he also ministered to St. Anne’s Catholic Church in Goodridge and St. Clement’s Catholic Church in Grygla (2010–2015). In 2023, he entered Senior Priest status, continuing to serve the Church with wisdom and humility in retirement.

Throughout his ministry, Father Rick was a passionate advocate for Catholic education. He served the Catholic schools affiliated with St. Philip’s in Bemidji, St. Michael’s in Mahnomen, and most recently St. Bernard’s in Thief River Falls with deep commitment and joy—nurturing generations of students in faith, character, and community.

In his pastoral and priestly life, Father Rick was a remarkable shepherd—faithfully guiding and serving his parish families with compassion, wisdom, and unwavering dedication. His ministerial presence was a source of strength and inspiration, nurturing the spiritual growth of those he served and helping build communities rooted in faith, hope, and love.

Father Rick also had a unique gift for leading church and school families through building and remodeling projects. With a blend of liturgical training, practical insight and heartfelt care, he transformed physical spaces into sacred places where faith could flourish, and fellowship could thrive.

He is survived by his siblings: Jim Lambert of Thief River Falls, MN; Carolyn Bidleman of Seattle, WA; Irene (Harley) Danielson of Fargo, ND; and Kay Lambert of Moorhead, MN. He also leaves behind several nieces and nephews, and a devoted community of parish members who were blessed by his spiritual leadership, friendship, and unwavering care.

Father Rick was preceded in death by his parents, Walter and Evelyn Lambert; his sister, Pat Ueland; and his sister-in-law, Carol Lambert.

Mass of Christian Burial was held at 10:00 am on Friday, September 26, 2025, at St. Bernard’s Catholic Church in Thief River Falls, MN. Interment followed at St. Bernard’s Catholic Cemetery.

Visitation took place from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm on Thursday, September 25, 2025, at St. Bernard’s Catholic Church, with a Prayer Service at 6:00 PM. Rosary began at 5:30 PM. Additional visitation was held one hour prior to the Mass on Friday at the church.

Father Rick’s legacy lives on in the lives he touched, the churches and schools he helped shape, and the enduring spirit of service he exemplified.

**May he rest in peace - good and faithful servant of God.**

# Minutes of the Church Council

September 18, 2025

The St. Pauli Lutheran Church council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, September 18, 2025 at St. Pauli Church. Members present included Faye Auchenpaugh, Wade Benson, Sue Kotz, Jim Rondorf, Jana Johnson and guests Kevin Reich and Gary Iverson.

Council President Faye Auchenpaugh called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm. Kevin Reich opened the meeting with a prayer.

**Approval of Agenda:** The agenda was reviewed and approved. M/S/C (Kotz/Rondorf)

**Secretary's Report:** M/S/C (Benson/Kotz) to approve the Secretary's report for March and Special Congregational Meeting minutes.

**Treasurer's Report:** M/S/C (Johnson/Rondorf) to approve the Treasurer's report for August 2025.

Checking Account Balance End of July 2025	\$23,137.84
Aug 2025 Revenue	\$2,400.00
<u>Aug 2025 Expenses</u>	<u>(\$ 659.02)</u>
Checking Account Balance End of Aug 2025	\$24,878.82

Other Account Balances End of Aug 2025	
Edward Jones	\$90,125.48
Memorial Fund	\$8,867.95
Savings	\$45,371.26
<b>Total St. Pauli Balances End of Aug 2025</b>	<b>\$169,243.51</b>
<b>Cemetery Assoc. Funds End of Aug 2025</b>	<b>\$67,500.55</b>

## **Pastor's Report:**

Kevin reported that the Synod road trip is rescheduled for Tuesday, Oct 14, at Redeemer Church at 6pm. Evening meal is included.

The Synod pilot program is postponed until next spring in order to do proper prep.

Kevin attended a gathering at the former Bishop Hermanson's farm in August.

## **Other Reports:**

**WELCA** - The fall event, 7th Inning Stretch, will be on Sunday, October 5th at 3pm. Hotdogs, crackerjacks and peanuts will be served. Tammy Swick has been hired to clean the church after the fall event. WELCA received a \$500 grant from the Hartz Foundation.

**Board of Education** - Gary Iverson reported that we have 10 kids in Sunday school, 3 confirmation kids (Ella, Elsa and Shay).

## **Old Business:**

1. Generator Installation is complete including propane tank.
2. Received a Notice of Policy Conditional Renewal. Annual premiums are increasing by 21%. Our deductible is \$10k.
3. WELCA extended a loan for Heritage Center wall hanging which will be paid by grant funding
4. The cemetery memorial pavilion was put in place in early August. Thank you to the work crew for installing: Maury Smith (Wahna Smith's son), Gary Iverson, Myles Alberg, Chad Torstveit and Faye Auchenpaugh, as site manager. Benches have been delivered and were installed on Monday, September 8. Chad Torstveit custom made attachments for display stands. One stand will display a map of the cemetery and a QR code that links to the website. The other stand will have a history of the church and other information to be determined.

## **New Business:**

1. Spray for flies and ladybugs. Myles Alberg sprayed Tempo twice and we are considering asking him to spray again.
2. Power wash siding - Myles Alberg reported that the exterior west wall needs cleaning. Jim Rondorf agreed to address it.
3. Pulpit supply is scheduled as follows ...
  - o Sept 21 – Synod Authorized Minister Allen Bertilrud (communion)
  - o October 5th - Kari Torkelson
  - o October 12th - Pastor Darrel Cory (communion)

Next Meeting: Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer and adjourned at 5:51 pm.

Jana Prickett  
St. Pauli Church Council Secretary

\* \* \* \* \*

# WELCA Minutes

September 24, 2025

The St. Pauli Women of the ELCA met on September 24, 2025 at 7:00 pm with 6 members present.

President Jan opened the meeting after members assembled bags of peanuts for the Fall Event.

Jan led us in devotions titled: "Calm at All Times" based on Proverbs 15:18.

**Secretary's report:** Minutes of the June 25 and August 27 meetings were read.

**Treasurer's report:** Cindy reported for the period August 28 through September 24: Expenses: \$352.52. Income: \$580. Checking account balance: \$1,602.01. Savings account balance as of August 31: \$608.90. CD \$6,681.64. M/S/C Virginia/Kathy to accept both secretary/treasurer reports.

**Stewardship:** Virginia and Kathy made a basket for the conference from items they donated. The Thrivent card from Sally was approved, so Kathy called Oklee quilting for

white flannel. They can't get the 104" width flannel but can get 27" wide in 20-yard bolts at \$4 to \$5/yard. This is actually much easier to cut because diapers are 27" square. Kathy ordered two bolts. Hoping we will have it by our October 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Council report: Synod road trip is Tuesday, October 14, 6:00 pm at Redeemer. Church needs to be power washed on the west side. Pulpit supply was discussed. Pr. Darrel Cory will lead communion in October.

Communications: Thank you from HIA Hospice for our donation and a personal thank you note from Darcy Eszlinger. Redeemer is having a spaghetti dinner for hospice on October 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Old Business:** Tammy Swick is working on fall cleaning. She has done the windows inside and out, cleaned the sanctuary and will do basement next. Will complete before Fall Event. We need to have the basement carpet cleaned at the bottom of the steps.

We donated 10 cookbooks to the Heritage Center, donated 5 to Stray-ed Goods, and 5 to Lori Bjorgard. We will try to sell some at the Fall Event.

**New Business:** Fall Gathering is Saturday, October 4, at Our Saviors Lutheran of Thief Lake. Registration begins at 8:30, program at 9:00. Cost is \$10 per person, which includes morning coffee and noon lunch. Middle River ambulance will be the featured presenters. We are giving

\$40 for the unit offering and \$10 for the gathering donation. Personal offerings are encouraged as well as the unit offering.

Elections: Faye made a motion to cast a unanimous ballot to accept the slate of officers as presented. Seconded by Virginia. Unanimous.

President: Cindy Cedergren  
Vice President: Virginia Anderson  
Secretary: Faye Auchenpaugh  
Treasurer: Jan Strandlie

Saturday, Nov. 8, is LWR pick-up day in Thief River Falls.

The TRF Area Community Fund fundraiser is October 25. M/S/C Cindy/Virginia that we donate a quilt for their raffle.

Fall Event: We are planning for 75 people. Jan and Virginia will pick up hotdogs and buns at Hugo's. Peanuts are from Walmart, Cracker Jacks from Amazon. We need to provide a screen for Steve Larson. Faye will contact Arlo Rude to see if he can provide one. Advertising: 1) Posters are out. 2) It's on Community Voice. 3) Cindy will post on Facebook and send to the Wiktel website. 4) Jan will check with Visit TRF, Chamber, KTRF Community Calendar and 90.1 radio. We will plan to wear the Thrivent t-shirts.

The Lord's Prayer was prayed and prayer partners exchanged. Thank you to Jan for serving lunch.

Faye Auchenpaugh, Secretary

\* \* \* \* \*

## Kari Torkelson's Sermon

October 5, 2025 based on Luke 17:5-10

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

It helps to understand today's Gospel a bit better if we can understand the context of what was happening. The disciples have just heard Jesus teach about forgiveness; that they must forgive, even seven times a day if someone repents. They know this is going to be a tough task, so they turn to Jesus and ask Jesus to "increase our faith."

As Jesus often does, he answers the disciples' request in a way he hopes they will understand but seems confusing or maybe just odd as we hear it. If you had faith as small as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this tree, "Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea."

Like the disciples, you probably know that a mustard seed is very small. It's only about the size of the tip of a pen.

Speaking to a large tree and telling it to move and be planted in the sea is kind of a silly image and seemingly impossible, but even the smallest amount of faith can move a planted tree to the sea. As John T. Carroll, a professor of the New Testament says, "We need faith that, despite the evidence of sight and sound, what we do matters; that we can make a difference for good; that God isn't done with the world just yet."

It is good to be reminded that even when our faith seems small and we are struggling, it's still enough. Faith isn't about the amount of faith, but trust. Through even the smallest amount of faith we can trust that God can bring about transformation. In my study bible it asked the question, "When have you experienced a mustard seed moment?"

I see this time and time again in our congregation and I think that's one of the reasons why, unlike other small congregations, we keep going. We are small in the sense of church members, but we aren't small in putting our faith into action.

As I look out to your faces, I see people who, at one time or another, have stepped forward in leadership and helping roles when it is needed. And our congregation has even been recognized by the synod for all the good work of serving others. God's work, our hands is on display on a regular basis, here at St. Pauli.

But the work isn't over and sometimes it can be overwhelming. The work you do matters even if it seems as small and insignificant as a mustard seed.

Jesus discussed the power imbalance between the servant and the owner. Like John T. Carroll says, "This is a familiar,

yet disturbing, situation that is common during the writing of Luke's gospel."

This doesn't make it right and we must not condone it. Jesus protects the vulnerable and challenges the disciples by asking who among you would switch the power imbalance and ask your servant to have a seat at the table while you serve them? Later in Luke's gospel, we know that Jesus himself switches places. He takes our place on the cross to be our savior and redeemer.

As his followers, we are to model his service. We are called to serve God by serving others. Having more faith comes with more responsibility and should move us to more acts of service.

In our second reading today from second Timothy, Paul writes to Timothy and says he is reminded of his sincere faith, a faith that dwelt in his grandmother, mother and now Timothy. He is talking about Timothy's heritage and specifically his heritage of faith.

As many of you know, I traveled to Norway this summer and met up with Faye, Marisa, Kamin, my sister, Jodie, and some of our Iverson relatives. I have a strong Norwegian heritage in that all eight of my great grandparents came from Norway.

We all toured the Follebu Church in Gausdal, Norway where our ancestors would have worshiped. It was built 765 years ago. Then, I went to northern Norway to a town called Ibestad. My mom's family came from there and I stayed with some distant relatives. We went to see the Ibestad Church. I was told that the old church had burned but we could see the new church. I was a bit disappointed thinking that this church wouldn't have been where my great grandparents worshiped. However, to my surprise, the "new" church was built in 1881, and my grandparents were married in 1888.

The door was locked but, luckily, a caretaker was working on the lawn, and my relatives convinced him to open it for us since I had traveled all the way from America. I sat in the original marriage chairs that my great-grandparents would have sat in on their wedding day and sang "How Great Thou Art" near the altar.

This reading for today made me think of the great heritage of faith that has been handed down to me through many generations. A person doesn't need to trace their genealogy back generations to know that we are all connected to those who have come before us because we are all ancestors to one another through Christ.

We can read in the bible about the stories of our family of discipleship. In our family, we don't necessarily have deep, biblical discussions about faith but by their words and actions I have been surrounded by people of faith from day one in my family and right here at St. Pauli.

I was baptized in this baptismal font; I affirmed my faith at confirmation at this altar; and now I'm standing in front of you leading the worship service. Many of you have been there every step of the way...thank you. Of course, relatives like my parents, grandparents, siblings, brothers-in-law, nieces, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. were and are great examples.

But it is all of you in community with me and one another and reaching out to others beyond the walls of this building that lead in faith. We are ALL connected by Christ and all who have come before us.

When I think about community, I recently heard the pastor at Christus Rex, the Lutheran Campus Minister, at UND, tell a story about a big cruise ship full of people. There was a man whose cabin was at the bottom of the ship who wanted to dig a hole in his cabin. As the ship sailed, he started digging a hole in the cabin floor. He kept digging until finally there was a hole, and the water started to come into his cabin, and the ship began to sink. The rest of the passengers realized what was happening and confronted the man to ask him why he would do such a thing, and he replied that it was his room, and he could do what he wanted. He certainly didn't understand the concept of community with one another.

We might feel weak in faith like the prophet Habakkuk when he complains to God and says, "So the law becomes slack, and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous; therefore, judgment comes forth perverted."

As a little kid we would hear or say, "It's not fair!" As we get older, we realize that everything isn't always fair and that's a tough thing to realize. Sometimes that calls someone to take a stand or to make a change. A person might be called into action even though they might feel insignificant or think, "What can one person do?"

I think of an organization like the Special Olympics. Someone thought, "It's not fair that people with intellectual or physical disabilities don't have a chance to play sports" and they went about trying to make a change. I think the injustices we see in the world can move people to make a change.

God replies to Habakkuk and tells him to write the vision and make plans on tablets.

We need faith that God has a plan and that it might require us to wait. Faith starts with the Holy Spirit planted within us as God's beloved children. This is even more important than our ancestral heritage.

Pastor Jaclyn P. Williams wrote something that really got my attention. She said, "Overwhelmingly and awesomely, the same Spirit of God that rested upon Jesus in his ministry rests upon us. The ancient power that hovered over the water as creation came onto focus is with us, empowering our life and ministry." I'd never thought of the Holy Spirit in such a way and that made me feel more deeply connected to God. She goes on to say, "We are assured that the charge of carrying the Gospel within us and sharing it through our lives of Faith will be aided by the power of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, we will not need to search outside ourselves for this power, for it lives within us."

As I read that, I felt inspired to be here today. I felt this urgency or calling to be sure that we all were reminded that when hardships slap us in the face that we are empowered by all the ones who have come before us, those who walk alongside us, and the Holy Spirit who is within us to have courage, love, grace, forgiveness and wisdom.

May you have faith and trust that even a small, mustard-seed size of faith is enough...you are enough. Amen.

# “Winter’s Song – A Hymn to the North”

by TD Mischke

*“It is the life of the crystal, the architect of the flake, the fire of the frost, the soul of the sunbeam. This crisp winter air is full of it.”* ~ John Burroughs, naturalist

## First Snow

There are two distinct experiences of a “First Snow.” One is the first snowfall Northerners experience at the beginning of each winter season. The second is the snow experienced by someone moving to the Northland and taking in winter for the very first time, having grown up in a climate that never offered such a vista. They are separate and unrelated experiences, unique unto themselves.

For Northerners, the first snow each year seems as fresh and novel and filled with surprise and wonder as the first snowfall the year before, or the year before that. The months of spring, summer, and fall bring a seasonal amnesia. By the time November rolls around again, the experience of the last winter is practically forgotten. The weight of it is no longer felt. It’s been stripped away by the glory of spring’s thaw, the baking heat of summer, and the idyllic conditions of autumn. The slate has been wiped clean. I’m able to look at that first snow like I did as a child. It’s dazzling and magnificent the way the sky can send billions of fluffy white visitors of such ethereal beauty to gracefully decorate the lonely, outstretched branches and embrace the withering brown turf with something so soft, pure, and pristine. In a matter of hours, all is transformed, a new planet has appeared, and the metamorphosis is breathtaking.

But, as with the arrival of winter itself, there is always that vague accompanying grief. The grass that’s been stared at for months will be seen no more, not till well into the next year. I’ve walked on it, lain on it, ditched sidewalks just to feel it beneath me. I’ve stared at it from the window of the car, yard after yard offering a stately green welcome mat for every house. I’ve cut it, raked it, and taken note of the way it complements every tree, shrub, bush, or flower. And now it’s gone. Oh, it’s there, of course, beneath the snow, but so is the sun behind the clouds on misty gray days. It doesn’t change the sense of it having vanished. In this case, for a long, long time.

Every Northerner knows what it’s like to walk over to the window and stare out at that first snowfall, letting all the memories, mixed emotions, and random musings parade distinct through the head and the heart. I spend more time at the window with that first snow than with any snowfall that follows. The first snow is evocative in a way that can be compared to the first thunderstorm of spring, which also brings familiar sensations that have not been felt in many months. They’ve been forgotten in that same seasonal amnesia.

Spring, summer and fall creep up. There’s a slow unfolding with each of those seasons. No one can say when exactly summer arrives, or when fall is truly here, or on what day spring is suddenly in our midst. But the first snow has a way of removing autumn in one dramatic yank of the stage curtain. Instantly, the new season is here. No matter how barren the landscape was before that first snow, it still had the appear-

ance of late autumn. When the first snow descends, winter is introduced dramatically. No other season comes along in such an audacious manner. Winter seems determined from the get-go to let Northerners know it’s a season unlike the rest. It doesn’t knock gently on the front door; it kicks it down.

And when the snow is fresh and new, so too is life. I’m shaken awake, Change is something I too often don’t realize I need until I get it, but without it, I slip into routine, and too much routine leads to sleepwalking. Leave the house after the first snow, however, and walk into a restaurant, coffee shop, or bar, and everyone is carrying a palpable new energy, operating at a slightly different frequency. We’re all morphing into winter people, and I can’t help but feel slightly more alive, trying on this distinct identity. It gives me my sense of place. Here I am in a familiar setting, the one that separates Northerners from other parts of the country. I move forward to do this. For better or worse, I am home.

But there is a second type of first snow, one that is even more dramatic for those experiencing it, and that’s the first snow of one’s life. If born here, Northerners cannot remember the moment they first experienced snow. But, if arriving here later in life, from a tropical climate, it’s something a person can talk about with wide-eyed wonder.

Some immigrants from tropical regions exhibit a slack-jawed astonishment that native Northerners will never know.

Nannah Kjos grew up in Manilla where she had never seen snow. She moved to Minnesota at age 35. On that November day when the snow fell before her for the first time, her reaction was uncontrollable giggling. She asked people around her, “Is this it? Is this really snow?” She said a little-kid energy surged through her and she ran around deliriously.

“I was with some friends who had also arrived from Asia. We were racing around laughing uncontrollably. We felt so much joy. We were taking out our phones and recording it, recording each other. We were sticking out our tongues and tasting it. We couldn’t believe how soft it was. We had all expected it to be like the ice chips in a snow cone.”

When all the snow had fallen and covered the land completely, Nannah said she stood and stared at it in astonishment. “When I looked out at the white world, I actually cried. I cried at the beauty of it. It was the most wonderful thing I had ever seen in my life. It overwhelmed me.”

Thereafter, whenever it snowed, Nannah would take photos of the fresh pristine scene and send the photos home to Asia, always with the same words: “So white, so beautiful, so quiet, so cold.” She said she always made sure to include a description of the “quiet,” because after each snowfall that was what struck her most, when she stepped outside, the remarkable quiet of the world around her.

In the ensuing weeks, sights Northerners took for granted became unfathomable to her. Like the notion of a lake freezing solid. She said she couldn't understand how such a thing was possible. She would stare at lakes and watch people walk on the ice, and she'd marvel.

On a trip with her new husband to Northern Minnesota, Nannah had the scare of her life, all in a single activity. Her husband drove their vehicle onto a frozen lake. She said it was one thing for her to watch people walk on the ice, but to drive on it seemed like a death wish.

"He was driving so fast and turning the wheel and spinning us around and around. I was crying I was so scared. I was sure the lake was going to swallow us up. I was sure I was going to die. But I also found myself laughing because it was so scary and so thrilling, and also so strange. I wanted desperately to get off the ice, but part of me wanted him to keep doing it, to feel the scariness, like a thrill ride at a carnival."

Of course, many from tropical climates are more intimidated by the cold and snow than they are enthralled. Pata Simpson grew up in Jamaica and experienced the winters of the North Country for the first time at the age of 44. His first reaction to a world covered in white was that this was going to be an environmental disaster.

"I said, all of these trees are going to die, every one of them are going to die. I cannot live where there will be no trees. And these will not make it."

He had to be reassured by several locals that the trees of the North would be just fine, and would green up again come spring, but he found this impossible to believe.

Alfreda Daniels came from Liberia and told me that the first time she saw snow it just felt all wrong. "That was the word that came to mind. I just thought there was something wrong with a world like this. Why are people outside at all, why are people driving? I honestly did not understand how a person was supposed to survive in this. In fact, the day I arrived in America there was snow on the ground and within minutes of arriving I had slipped and fallen and hurt myself. That was my introduction to snow, that you just fall down all the time."

Chiqui Rosales de Ryan had a very different take. She felt a reverence for what she was witnessing. Emigrating to the Northland from Guatemala, she encountered her first snowfall in her early 20s. But it wasn't just any snowfall. It was the infamous Halloween blizzard of 1991, which dumped 28 inches of snow on the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. "I kept looking up in the sky, over and over again, trying to see where it was all coming from," she said, as if hoping to discover a cosmic bucket that had been tipped on its side. "But then I just realized it is coming from God. This is God's creation. And right then I felt a sense of awe."

Tati Unga ran out into his first snowfall barefoot. He had seen snow on TV, and on the movie screen, back in Tonga, but the screen failed to convey the temperature. "I ran out there not knowing that it would be so cold. I was shocked. I did not know the snow came with such a feeling. I didn't expect that. That first winter I did everything wrong. I was given thermal underwear, and I wore it on the outside of my clothes because I did not know any better. People all laughed at me. It took me a while to figure out how to live in this world."

To view winter through the eyes of these newcomers is to see it fresh once more, and to wake up that part of oneself that needs prodding and poking from time to time. We learn once again that experience is dependent on our frame of reference. Nature does what she does over and over again, season after season, but what we bring to our window is a constantly shifting confluence of age, experience, emotion, and perspective. Winter has taught me that, ultimately each of us will decide on our own what the season will be called. It has no stake in the matter. It has no name. We are the ones making it a gift, or a thrill, or some ethereal mystery to be pondered, or drudgery to be endured. Winter has no words, only the dance. And we are invited to the ball, to either study it from the shadows or join it under the dizzying lights, letting it lead2025 2025, and take us where it will.



## Around the Neighborhood



We had a housewarming for Jana (Johnson) and Todd Prickett to welcome them back to the neighborhood!

Their new home is lovely and is perfectly suited for country living.



Snorre Lodge secured grant funds to bring three presenters and performers to Thief River Falls and Grygla for a program on "Historic Nordic Wooden Instruments." We offered the program to Lincoln High School band and orchestra students in the afternoon, a public program in the evening at Northland College auditorium, followed by a morning program the next day for students grades 6-12 at Grygla.

One of the presenters/performers was Aubrey Connett, daughter of Keith and Dana (Torkelson) Connett, niece of Shelley and Bruce Mathson, and granddaughter of Wally Torkelson.



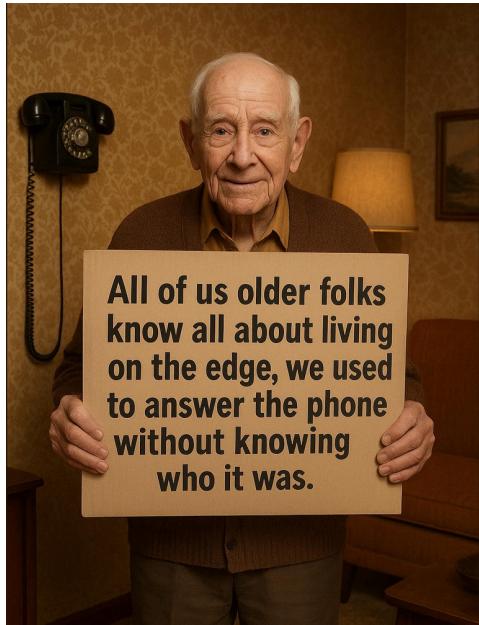
Aubrey is a gifted and talented violin player who took Hardanger fiddle lessons while a student at St. Olaf College. Here she is holding both a regular violin and a Hardanger fiddle (right) and speaking on the differences between the two and then playing both so audiences could hear the differences.

Everyone had the chance after the program to look at the instruments and try playing them.

Here is a Grygla 6<sup>th</sup> grader playing the *lur*. Not easy. Due to its length, it takes a lot of air—but after several attempts, he was successful!



# The Back Page



How can a car be two seats and a tiny gap wide, but a bus is 4 seats and an aisle wide, yet they both fit in the same sized lane.

Rabbits jump and they live for 8 years.



Dogs run and they live for 15 years.



Turtles do nothing and they live for 150 years.



Lesson learned.

