

# The Petra Press

## Newsletter of the Williamstown Lutheran Church

Stephen Sweyko

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### Pastor's Corner

Blessings in the name of our risen Lord.

As I'm writing this, it is still the season of Christmas. Today is the twelfth day of Christmas, and that's because Christmas in the liturgical calendar is a season and not just a single day. It's still Christmas, and so, my Christmas tree is still up. We leave it up even through Epiphany because we have been fans for a long time fighting the secular fixation to somehow make Christmas all about a lot of warm, fuzzy feelings and gifts and family. The world wants the joy of Christmas without there being mention of the reason for the warm, fuzzy feelings and the gifts and the family gatherings and that is the birth of Christ our Lord.

Recently, there's been more of a focus in our society on getting the "X-mas" and the "Happy Holidays" out of our speech and being more direct about this season being about the birth of the Savior. It wasn't all that long ago when store clerks would be reprimanded for saying, "Merry Christmas" to departing customers instead of the more nebulous "Happy Holidays." Now, it's safe again to say, "Merry Christmas." The place where I used to work before moving out here went out of its way to keep from ever mentioning "Jesus" or "Christ" in their "Holiday" celebrations. If Christmas was mentioned at all, it was always "X-mas." They were trying to be more inclusive and not offend those who do not know acknowledge Jesus as the Savior. It is a great irony because in the end, they ended up proclaiming the birth of the Savior.

And that's because it is impossible to "de-Jesusify" Christmas, even with what secular society views as the linguistic doges of "Happy Holiday" and "Merry X-mas." The word "Holiday" has its roots in an Old English word that meant "Holy Day." And that word "Holy" is the biblical meaning of holy day, a time set aside for use by God, the Father who sent His Son, Jesus, and usually included a day of rest and worship.

Now it is true that the meaning was expanded over time to include any celebration, not just Christian ones. But you just can't get away from the fact whenever somebody is saying "Happy Holidays," they are saying underneath it, "Happy Holy Day." I pointed that fact out to one of my non-religious associates at work, and it was fun to watch how convoluted their language became trying to wish everybody a happy "whatever it is" day without somehow, even if by accident, mentioning that it involved the celebration of Jesus.

And then there's the hated "X-mas." That debate is really much ado about nothing. And that's because for almost 1000 years, the letter "X" has been an abbreviation for the Greek word "Xristos" which we know as "Christ." In Greek, the letter is "chi" which is the first letter in the word "Christ." So even when the secular world tries to take Jesus out of "X-mas," there is great irony in how the "X" comes right back at them as an abbreviation that's been used for a millennia for the title "Christ."

Merry last day of X-mas (and let the "X" ring with the word "Xristos"). See you next holy day in church!

In Christ,  
Pastor Stephen Sweyko

### **Lutheran Study Bible**

Concordia Publishing House currently has the Lutheran Study Bible on sale for \$28.00 instead of \$69.99. It's a great Bible!

The website is [www.cph.org](http://www.cph.org).

### **Missions Update**

During the November council meeting, it was decided to allocate a portion of our mission's budget toward outreach within our local community. We are grateful to share that, as a result, 12 children from Williamstown Elementary School and Northfield Elementary School had their Christmas Wishlist's fulfilled on behalf of Williamstown Lutheran Church. This outreach was a meaningful way to share Christ's love during the Christmas season. As we look ahead to next Christmas, we hope to begin this effort earlier and invite the congregation to join us in expanding this mission so that even more children and families can be blessed.

## **Thrivent Choice Dollars®**

Williamstown Lutheran Church is proud to be a Thrivent Choice®-enrolled organization.

Thank you to everyone who directed Thrivent Choice Dollars® to WLC. In FY-2025, the total donated was \$955.94!

If you're a Thrivent member, you have until March 31, 2026, to direct 2025 Choice Dollars®.

## **ENGAGEMENTS**



**Terrie Chaffee and Paul Haak are engaged to be married !**

**Congratulations Terri and Paul!**

**(Have you noticed how happy Paul has been – now you know why!)**



**Elizabeth Laughlin and Nick Dastoli are engaged to be married !**

**Congratulations Elizabeth and Nick!!**

**Nick proposed on January 4 right in front of the church, and Pastor Swayko captured the moment.**



The deadline for the February 2026 Newsletter is Friday February 6, 2026. I would appreciate stories, articles, pictures, cartoons, etc.

A special THANK YOU Pastor Sweyko, Emma Laughlin, Sheila Walther, Gail Andrews, Terrie Chaffee and Barb Currier for your contributions to this newsletter.

Kathy L

