

January 2026



LITTLE BETHLEHEM - EXPERIENCING LIFE AT JESUS BIRTH

 *Sr. Pastor Colson reflects on our call to mission and reminds us of the urgency in the world today and the importance of our support. See page 2*

 *See the 2026 Board of Elders assignments and how to contact them. See page 4*

 *Our Mission Partner of the Month is LifeSpring Pregnancy Centers. See what your upcoming Baby Bottle support provides in our area. See page 6*

 *Mission Week is right around the corner. Look at the event schedule and how you can be a part of it. See page 10*

This year's Christmas Festival at The Lake of the Woods Church was nothing short of inspiring as families from our community gathered to celebrate the joy, wonder, and hope of Christ this Christmas. From the moment guests arrived, the church campus was alive with cheerful activities and the unmistakable warmth of Christ-centered fellowship. It was a day overflowing with fun, faith, and family connection, an event that beautifully captured the spirit of Christmas.

Out in the Upper Parking Lot, children and adults alike enjoyed a winter wonderland of attractions. The trackless train whisked families around the lot, spreading smiles at every turn. The ice-skating rink, Nutcracker bouncy house, and inflatable maze added to the festive atmosphere, offering fun activities for children and the young-at-heart. These outdoor attractions buzzed with laughter throughout the afternoon and created a joyful welcome to the rest of the day's activities.

Inside the Discovery Zone, Little Bethlehem became the heart of the celebration. This interactive experience brought the story of Christ's birth to life with costumed characters, hands-on stations, and a lively petting zoo just outside. Children loved meeting the animals that would have filled the ancient stable, while families enjoyed stepping into a setting that reminded us all of the humble and holy beginning of our Savior's story. With around 50 volunteers serving in the Discovery Zone alone, Little Bethlehem was full of energy, hospitality, and faithful storytelling, lending to the hustle and bustle of Bethlehem in Jesus' time. In total, close to 100 dedicated volunteers, including

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From our Senior Pastor

Missions in a Time Like This



Rev. Adam Colson

January is a natural season for reflection and recommitment. As a church family, we look back with gratitude for God's faithfulness and forward with renewed dependence on His call. One call, however, never changes with the calendar: the call to missions.

Jesus' words remain as urgent today as the day He first spoke them:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19)

Missions is not an optional program of the church; it is the very heartbeat of the church. From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture reveals a God who is sending, sending His people, sending His Word, and ultimately sending His Son for the redemption of the world.

The Apostle Paul reminds us of our shared responsibility in this mission:

"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard?" (Romans 10:14)

A Global Family, A Shared Burden

As we commit ourselves to supporting and participating in missions (locally and around the world) we must also acknowledge a sobering reality: many of our brothers and sisters in Christ

face daily persecution simply for bearing the name of Jesus.

In particular, the situation for Christians in Nigeria has become increasingly dire. Believers there endure violent attacks, displacement, kidnappings, and loss of life at alarming rates. Churches are burned, pastors are targeted, and families are forced to flee, all because they refuse to deny Christ.

Scripture tells us plainly:

"If one member suffers, all suffer together." (1 Corinthians 12:26)

To support missions, then, is not only to send resources or missionaries, it is to stand in solidarity with the persecuted Church. It is to pray fervently, give sacrificially, and speak courageously on behalf of those who cannot speak freely.

Why We Must Act

Jesus Himself warned that persecution would accompany faithfulness:

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

The growth of persecution does not signal the retreat of the Gospel; it often marks its advance. Church history shows us that the Gospel spreads most powerfully when believers remain faithful under pressure. As theologian Tertullian famously wrote,

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

Our response must never be fear or indifference, but obedience and compassion.

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Our Call as a Church

Supporting missions means engaging right where God has placed us, serving our neighbors, caring for the hurting, sharing Christ in word and deed, while also lifting our eyes to the nations. It means praying for missionaries, supporting ministries on the front lines, welcoming the stranger, and discipling the next generation to see the world through God's redemptive lens.

Jesus said,

"As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you." (John 20:21)

This January, may we recommit ourselves to being a sent people, rooted in Christ, moved by compassion, and faithful to the mission entrusted to us.

Let us pray for the persecuted Church. Let us support the work of missions with generosity and joy. And let us go 9across the street and across the world) proclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord.

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." (Luke 10:2)

May the Lord find us faithful laborers in the year ahead.

Till Everyone Knows CHRIST,
With hope and gratitude,

Pastor Adam Colson
Senior Pastor
The Lake of the Woods Church

Christmas Cantata



It wouldn't be Christmas at the Lake of the Woods Church without the Choir's presentation of the Christmas story, joined by narrators Donna Blackistone, Gillette Elvgren Jr., Tom Tower, and Vera Moody. Directed by Worship Minister Kevin Paxton, it was performed for record audiences Friday and Saturday nights. A glorious opportunity to share the message of Jesus Christ with family, friends, and community.

MEET THE PASTOR

THE LAKE OF
THE WOODS
CHURCH

FOR VISITORS AND THOSE CONSIDERING
BECOMING MEMBERS OF LOWC

EVERY SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE 11:00 SERVICE
FRIENDSHIP HALL

BEGINNING
JANUARY 11

Board of Elders

Meet Your Board of Elders: Leadership, Service, and Connection

As our church continues to grow in mission and ministry, we are blessed with leaders who serve with humility, wisdom, and a deep love for our church family. In December, the Congregation approved an expansion of the Board of Elders to twelve members—an affirmation of our commitment to effective leadership, faithful stewardship, and the ongoing work God is doing in and through The Lake of the Woods Church. Over the past two years, the Board has thoughtfully adapted its structure to meet the evolving needs of our congregation and community.

The Role of the Board of Elders

The Board of Elders is entrusted with spiritual leadership, oversight of ministries, and stewardship of church resources. Under the authority of the Congregation and guided by Scripture, the Board is responsible for:

- Establishing policies and procedures for all ministries, committees, services, and business aspects of the church.
- Overseeing the management and operation of all church activities.
- Licensing pastors and ministers.
- Creating and abolishing ministries and committees as needed to serve the church's mission.
- Approving all policy matters of concern to ministries and committees.
- Meeting regularly (at least ten times per year) to address church needs and ensure unity and direction in all matters.
- Electing a chair and other officers from among their members to preside over meetings and represent the Board.

Each Elder serves not only with responsibility, but with a genuine desire to shepherd, encourage, and

support the people of The Lake of the Woods Church.

Terms of Service for Elders

- The Board of Elders is composed of twelve members, each elected by the Congregation for a three year term.
- The Board is divided into three yearly classes, with either three or four newly elected members rotating onto the Board each year.
- No Elder may serve more than two consecutive three year terms; after two terms, an Elder must wait one year before being eligible for re election.
- Elders are elected without regard to sex, race, nationality, or previous church affiliation.
- The Senior Pastor serves as a non voting member of the Board.
- If a vacancy occurs, a new Elder may be appointed by the Board to serve until the next Congregational Meeting.

A Journey of Growth and Adaptation

These thoughtful adjustments reflect God's ongoing provision as He equips our church for meaningful ministry in a changing world.

2024:

The Congregation increased the Elder Board from ten to eleven members. Recognizing the importance of focused outreach, the Board refined responsibilities so the Elder for Community Outreach could concentrate more fully on outreach ministries. Communications responsibilities were assigned to a newly created Elder for Communications. Benevolence ministries were moved under the Ministrils, under the pastoral care of the Senior Associate Pastor, to better serve those in need.

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Board of Elders

Helps, Scouts, R.I.S.E., Brisben meal preparation, Good News Across Supports, and Germana Heights.

3. Elder for Communications and Technology (modified) – Erich Wachendorf, elder.comm@lowchurch.org

Manages church communications, website, newsletters, social media, and technology infrastructure to keep the congregation informed and connected.

4. Elder for Administration and Budget (modified) – Frank Kalder, elder.ab@lowchurch.org

Oversees church administration, personnel actions, financial planning, and stewardship initiatives. Positions Continuing as in the Past

5. Elder for Worship – Stephanie Austin, elder.worship@lowchurch.org

Oversees worship services, music ministries, and the spiritual atmosphere of church gatherings.

6. Elder for Adult Education – Bob Harbick, elder.adulted@lowchurch.org

Guides adult discipleship, Bible studies, Home Groups, and spiritual growth programs.

7. Elder for Building and Grounds (modified) – Lee Merrell, elder.bg@lowchurch.org

Manages facilities, cabins, grounds, maintenance, property usage, and safety operations.

8. Elder for Missions – Joe Roth, elder.miss@lowchurch.org

Directs global and local missions, oversees missionary support, coordinates Mission Week, and leads Good News Camp – Navajo Nation.

9. Elder for Congregational Care – Mike Green, elder.congc@lowchurch.org

Coordinates care for members, prayer opportunities, fellowship events, and spiritual support.

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Mission Partner for January Life Spring Pregnancy Center

The ministry of the month for January is LifeSpring Pregnancy Center. This Christian ministry is dedicated to helping women, teens, and families facing crisis pregnancies. LifeSpring serves ten counties and the city of Charlottesville, sharing the abundant love of Christ. Since 1984, LifeSpring has supported women and families locally through times of crisis and trauma. God has proven Himself faithful as the ministry impacts the lives of those facing crisis pregnancies and risky sexual behavior by offering hope and sharing truth through no-cost pregnancy tests, STI/STD testing and treatment, ultrasounds, and material assistance. An eternal difference is being made in our communities, grounded in God's Word and transforming love.

About the work of LifeSpring Pregnancy Center: The clinics are places where clients are welcomed, hear the truth, and are loved right where they are. In 2025, LifeSpring served 638 distinct clients. They were able to have 368 spiritual discussions, with 4 clients choosing to rededicate their lives to Christ. A total of 298 pregnancy tests were performed, 64 STD tests were provided, 172 ultrasounds were administered, and 92 babies were born. Life assured for every baby. Hope renewed for every family. Lives transformed through Jesus Christ.

What's New? The ministry's aim is to continue investing in the Culpeper community and encouraging more decisions for life. There is an increasing need to broaden the online presence to attract more at-risk women to the centers. Last year, at least 63% of abortions were due to the abortion pill. A new partnership was formed with "Infinite Worth," a 24/7 nurse chat support service that connects with women around the clock to listen, respond, and prioritize care for women

facing unexpected pregnancies. Infinite Worth reports that 46% of women considering abortion connect with a nurse online and schedule an appointment. There will be increased ultrasound services at the headquarters location, just steps from the only two abortion clinics in Central Virginia.

The ministry also offers a mentorship program designed to provide expectant fathers with the support they need to become STRONG DADS. Partnering with experienced mentors can help fathers grow in empathy and communication skills, build their parenting skills, and actively participate in their child's life.

Ways to connect with and support LifeSpring Pregnancy Center: The pregnancy centers receive no governmental assistance but host fundraising events, walks, and appeals in order to support the Sanctity of Human Life. Recently, a "Baby Shower" was held at Lake of the Woods Church that blessed LifeSpring with items like diapers, newborn clothes, baby toiletries, and items for mothers. Lake of the Woods Church partners with LifeSpring Pregnancy Center to SAVE BABIES, RESTORE WOMEN, and RENEW FAMILIES.

The Baby Bottle Campaign is in full swing at Lake of the Woods Church. Thank you, church family, for your prayers and support for the needs at LifeSpring. Your donations, along with baby items, are blessing those in need.

The director at the Culpeper clinic shared these prayer requests:

- Strengthen the ministry and give wisdom to the staff, specifically client-facing staff
- Focus on promoting the Sanctity of Human Life and protecting unborn children
- Additional male volunteers to become part of a one-on-one mentoring initiative

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- To reach more abortion-minded clients at the centers

If you are interested in learning more, check out the details at LifeVA.org (volunteers) and LifeSpringVA.org (clients).



Prayer for LifeSpring

Our Gracious Heavenly Father, you hold all life as precious. We ask you to cradle, guard, and protect those most innocent and defenseless among us who are still in their mother's womb. We thank you for the work of LifeSpring in preserving the lives of these little ones whom our Lord Jesus Christ invited to come to Him. We ask it in His name. Amen.

continued from page 5 Elder's

10. Elder for Young Families and Children – Kristen Ulrey, elder.childfam@lowchurch.org

Supports ministries for children and young families, ensuring safe, nurturing, faith building programs.

11. Elder for Youth – Mike Phillips, elder.youth@lowchurch.org

Leads youth ministry, discipleship, and outreach to teens.

12. Chairman of the Board of Elders – John Gingrich, elder.chair@lowchurch.org

Presides over meetings, provides leadership, and ensures unity and direction in all church matters. For detailed position descriptions, refer to the Position Description Handbook in the Human Resources Office.

How to Contact Your Elder

Our Elders are here to serve, support, and pray for you. If you have a question, need guidance, want to get involved, or have a prayer request, you are warmly encouraged to reach out.

- Find Your Elder: Refer to the list of Elders and their ministry areas in this newsletter.
- Send an Email: Contact the Elder whose ministry area matches your need.
- General Inquiries: If you're unsure whom to contact, email the Chair of the Board of Elders.
- Confidentiality: All communication with Elders is handled with care and respect for your privacy.

We invite you to connect with your Elders—they are eager to walk alongside you in your faith journey and to serve our church family with joy.

John R Gingrich
Chairman, Board of Elders
lowchurch.org
(m) 703-863-8511

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Christmas Festival 2026

teens, worship leaders, safety teams, and others, helped make the entire festival possible.

Across the campus, families continued to make memories. In the Gathering Place, a beautifully decorated Christmas Photo Op provided the perfect backdrop for festive family pictures. The Sanctuary remained open for quiet prayer and reflection, its soft lighting and peaceful atmosphere offering a sacred pause amid the day's festivities. Chaplains were available to pray with anyone seeking comfort, connection, or simply a moment to breathe.

Meanwhile, the Worship Center provided the sound of voices lifted in praise. Carols and Lessons were held at 1:00 and 2:00 p.m., joined by Christmas Carol Readings by Gil Elvgren. The worship music was beautifully done and served as a meaningful reminder of the true center of our celebration.

A steady stream of families also visited Friendship Hall, where our outstanding youth team served bag lunches with hot dogs, chips, and water, along with comforting cups of hot chocolate to warm hands and hearts.

In all, over 150 children attended the event. As one walked around, it was encouraging to see how guests naturally spread across the different activities and were able to explore the entire church campus.

This year's Christmas Festival was a joyful expression of our mission to love God, serve people, and make disciples. Thank you to everyone who volunteered, attended, and prayed for this special day. Together, we celebrated not just a season, but the greatest story ever told.



A Newly Born Baby Goat was the Star of the Petting Zoo



Learning the importance of Pottery in Bethlehem

Calendar for church activites for the next 90 days...See lowchurch.org for latest information

January	February	March
1 OFFICE CLOSED New Year's Day	1-8 Mission Week	14 - Church Beautification Day
6 Life Line Screening	14-15 Winter Mission Retreat	19 - Women's Gathering
15 Women's Gathering	16 Presidents' Day Office Closed	28 - Easter Egg Hunt
19 Martin Luther King Day Office Closed	19 Women's Gathering	29 - Palm Sunday
31 International Dinner	21 Women's Ministry Event	
	24 5pm Sewing Class	
	28 Scouts Pinewood Derby	



Cross Currents is published monthly. Comments, suggestions, interests in helping with content should be directed to:
Elder of Communications
email: elder.comm@lowc.org

Mission Week 2026: Serving Beyond our Walls

Every year, Mission Week calls us to pause, reflect, and act—to step beyond the familiar and embrace God's mission in tangible ways. In 2026, our theme *"Serving Beyond Our Walls"* reminds us that the gospel is not only proclaimed with words but demonstrated through deeds. It's about living out our faith so that Christ's love is seen and felt in our homes, our neighborhoods, and across the world.

Building on Last Year

Mission Week 2025, themed "Witnessing Beyond Our Walls," was a powerful time of prayer, teaching, and outreach. From local service projects to global partnerships like our work with the Navajo Nation, we saw lives touched and hearts ignited for missions. That week reminded us that missions meet urgent needs, shine Christ's light, and plant seeds of eternal hope.

However, last year's Mission Week was held in May—a season packed with the Youth *Go Ye Therefore* Banquet and the end of the school year. While it was fruitful, we recognized the need for a time that allows greater focus and frames our year with a missional mindset. That's why Mission Week has moved to February—a strategic shift to give missions the spotlight they deserve and set the tone for the months ahead.

Beyond Physical Walls—and Personal Walls

Serving beyond our walls is not just about leaving the church building. It's about breaking through the personal walls we often build—walls of comfort, fear, routine, and self-focus. These invisible barriers can keep us from seeing the needs around us and responding with Christlike love. Mission Week challenges us to go beyond those personal boundaries, to reach out with compassion, and to let God's Spirit lead us into relationships and service that reflect His heart.

Why Mission Week Matters

Mission Week exists to awaken and equip our church family to steward God's grace through acts of service. Rooted in the gifts God has given us, empowered by His Spirit, and visible in our deeds, we seek to inspire, educate, and mobilize believers to join in God's mission. When Jesus said, *"You will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth"* (Acts 1:8), He was calling us to live beyond comfort, beyond routine, and beyond our walls—both physical and personal.

Our guiding verse for this year is clear:

God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. — 1 Peter 4:10 (NLT)

This is our call: to use what God has entrusted to us—our time, talents, and resources—to serve others and glorify Him.

The Heart of Our Theme

Why "Serving Beyond Our Walls"? Because:

- **The need is urgent:** Millions live without hope, without Christ, and without basic care.
- **The call is clear:** Scripture commands us to let our light shine so others may glorify God (Matthew 5:14–16).
- **The impact is eternal:** Every act of service, every prayer, every gift plants seeds of faith that last forever.

Missions is not optional—it is the heartbeat of the church. Our neighbors, our nation, and the nations need to see Christ's love in action.

Mission Week Highlights

Here's what's ahead:

- **Jan 30 – Prayer Meeting:** Begin on our knees, asking God to move powerfully.
- **Jan 31 – International Dinner:** Celebrate global flavors and hear how God is working worldwide.

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- **Feb 1 – Mission Speaker & Partner Tables:** David Cooper, Chief Executive Officer of the Brisben Center, will speak in all three services. Tables in the Gathering Place will feature ministries like Living Water Community Clinic, Brisben Center, and Child Evangelism Fellowship.
- **Feb 2–7 – Missionaries in Bible Studies:** Hear firsthand stories of God's work across the globe.
- **Feb 5 – Mission Movie Night:** Be inspired by a powerful missions-focused film.
- **Feb 8 – Mission Sunday:** Ed Lyons of the Persecution Project will speak at all three services. Additional mission partners will be available in the Gathering Place for connection and engagement.

Your Role in God's Mission

Mission Week is more than an event—it's an invitation. Here's how you can be part of it:

- **Pray:** Ask God to prepare your heart and open doors for ministry.
- **Participate:** Join us for the events—each one designed to inspire and equip you.
- **Serve:** Use your gifts! Whether through local outreach, global partnerships, or behind-the-scenes support, there's a place for you.
- **Give:** Your generosity fuels missions that change lives and advance the gospel.

Let's make Mission Week 2026 a defining moment for our church family—a time when we step boldly into God's mission and let His light shine through us. Together, let's serve beyond our walls—both the walls of our building and the walls of our hearts.

Stay Connected

As planning continues, more details and opportunities will be shared. Watch for updates during Sunday announcements, and on our church website. If you have questions, contact Joe Roth, Elder for Missions at elder.miss@lowchurch.org. Let's prepare our hearts now for what God will do through Mission Week 2026!



INTERNATIONAL DINNER



MISSION SUNDAY GATHERING PLACE DISPLAYS

January Birthdays

Martha Adams
Ed Aguirre
Claire Anderson
Holly Anderson
Breana Austin
Gerald Baker
Stacy Bennett
Donna Blackistone
Jonathan Bledsoe
Christian Bove
Scott Bowman
Mark Bridgman
Phillip Brown
Robert Chapman
Donna Chernowetz
Deborah Christie
Adam Colson
Cindy Coover
Carl Cornwell
Stephanie Costa
Nadia Cress
Jonathan Cruz
Chun Davis
Kris Davis
Gillette Elvgren
Trina Ewing
Barbara Farmer
Anthony Frezza
Melanie Graham
Jane Gullickson
Tanya Hall
Debbie Harris
Kyle Helsel
Pamela Hemmen
Bryson Higginbotham
Larrissa Higginbotham
Will Jett
Tracy Jilliard
Anna Kaler
Bruce Killian
Gordon Klooster
Olivia Knights
Terry Kranz
Tom Latta
Michael Lemay
Cindy Livingston
Ana Lyon
Jennifer Manelli
Faith Marburger
Melvin Moore
Kevin Paxton
Harold Pellegreen
Michaela Phillips
Kathryn Pistole
Marty Poch
Pam Poulton
Marjorie Radle
Marcele Ramirez
Kasey Reynolds
Ruth Rosenberg
Jack Ruther
Mary Ryan
Jonathan Sadler
Julie Sadler
Jesiree Santana
Nancy Sargis
John Sawyer
Greg Soukenik
Mark Strickler
Anna Sullivan
Ron Swarthout
Iris Thompson
Jackie Thompson
Tom Tower
Sara Turney
Jane Ulrey
Donna Valentine
Erich Wachendorf
Christine Wagoner
William Wemmerus
Lora Wood
Felisa Woodson
Carolyn Zachies

January Anniversaries

Matthew & Carrie Bernd
Gary & Lynn Duley
Robert & Mary Ann Hamilton
Gregory & Cathy Kutz
Maurice & Vera Moody
Vijay & Shalini Paul
Wesley & Barbara Seaman
Erich & Vicki Wachendorf



Heather Austin
Janet Bocook
Luanne Coffee
Carl Cornwell
Danny DeLongis
Nancy Doseff
John Eckman
Steve Gaines
Phil Harris
Andres Idrovo
David McCune
Lee & Nancy Moore
Tom & Lois Northam
Selena Rave
Bob & Ellen Schwartz
Normajean Solebello
Greg Soukenik
Beth Sundberg
Pat Watterworth
Silvana Babikow
Laurel Buongiovanni
Lindsay Cole
Millie Davis
Jim Divelbiss
Susan Dyer
Warren Gage
Bob Harbick
John Hines
Olivia Knights
Herbert McKittrick
Ann Nadwodny
Barbara Rakes
John & Ann Sawyer
Shelly Seymour
Martha Somerville
Bobbie Stone
Darrell Turner
Newt Wilson

BEREAVEMENT ~ Grieving Family & Friends of:

Carol & Jimmy Lee ~ service 1/17/26, 11 a.m.
Peggy Grella ~ service 1/24/26, noon
Carol Twedt ~ service 2/7/26, 11 a.m.