

DECEMBER • JANUARY • FEBRUARY 2025

THE FAMILY MESSENGER

Newsletter of the I Falls Covenant Church

Fall Festival 2024



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A Season of Great Joy

I am probably one of the few people who is really looking forward to January of 2025! Normally, we would be wishing our way through the cold and dark month, but I'm excited for it because on January 25, 2025, Kaitlyn and I will be getting married.

The wedding will be in Montana where Kaitlyn's parents live so I'm sorry I can't invite all of you. You are invited to a Minnesota reception on Saturday, February 15 from 3-6pm in the Family Life Center of the Evangelical Covenant Church of International Falls.

This has been a season of great joy for me and others who have celebrated wonderful things happening in our church family. It has also been a very sad season as we lost some very dear people from our church family so close together. God is reminding me that this is why we need the church.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."

Romans 12.15

I'm so grateful that you all have rejoiced with me in the joy that God has brought to my life. I'm also so grateful for the ways I've seen the church come together to support people who are mourning. We are the body of Christ and when one rejoices, we all rejoice; and when one hurts, we all hurt. May we continue to pray and reach out to people who are either rejoicing or mourning so that we can be the hands and feet of Christ.

Mercy, peace & love be yours in abundance.
-Pastor Seth

Blessed & Thankful

BY PASTOR MARCO & RACHEL



Every Tuesday morning we have a staff meeting where we check in on and pray for one another. It feels like almost every week, I find myself mentioning how overwhelmingly blessed and thankful I am for the absolute joy of being a husband and father. Casper is a little ball of energy and very chatty these days while Svea continues to be her chill, smiley self. Rachel and I are loving the time we get to spend with them and are so thankful. In ministry we have also felt very loved by our Church family. I forget pastor appreciation exists and every year the surprise of cards/gifts is a huge encouragement.

In youth group we've been blessed with an increase in numbers for both regular Wednesday nights and for special events such as Fall Retreat and the Apologetics Conference we recently attended. A lot of the topics of these events seem to coincide well with what we're studying in the book of Romans which has been awesome! Thank you for continuing to pray for our youth! Due to our kids' bedtimes Rachel has been attending our young adult group while I stay home with the kids. Rachel, being the extrovert of the two of us, has really enjoyed staying involved and I am so thankful for the special time I get with Casper and Svea on Thursdays. I often meet with the young adults in smaller groups or one-on-one at different times of the week and Rachel and I have both been very impressed with the spiritual growth we've seen with a lot of these young adults.

In our daily Bible reading, Rachel and I are reading through the Pentateuch, one chapter a day. We just finished Exodus and it has admittedly been tough to focus when the chapters describe the specific details of building the Tabernacle or making sacrifices. Despite this, it has been really cool to see how seemingly subtle details are actually pointing to Christ's eventual sacrifice on the cross. Praise God that Christ, being the perfect and spotless sacrifice, has made a way for us to be in the presence of our glorious God.

Marco & Rachel

Fall Youth Retreat at Bluewater Covenant Bible Camp



OUR YOUTH HAD A FANTASTIC TIME ATTENDING THE FALL RETREAT AT BLUEWATER BIBLE CAMP THIS OCTOBER! WE BROUGHT 18 YOUTH THIS YEAR AND CONNECTED WITH MULTIPLE OTHER COVENANT CHURCH YOUTH GROUPS TO ENJOY TEACHING FROM MICAH RUDE AND PENNY PERSONS, WORSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER, HELP OUT WITH WORK PROJECTS, AND OF COURSE HAVE A TON OF FUN HANGING OUT AT CAMP.



Apologetics Conference

BY MARCO GRIFFITH



Every November our youth group has a great time attending the Reality Apologetics Conference in Minneapolis and this year was no exception. We brought 12 youth and met up with thousands of others to worship together and learn from some phenomenal speakers. Today's youth are constantly being hit with questions from social media, peers, and culture, all with the intent to lead them away from God. This conference is designed specifically to address those hard questions from a Biblical view. Questions like "Does the Bible condone slavery?" "Does the Bible condone genocide?" "Does the Bible condone the mistreatment of women?" and "Is the Bible reliable at all?"



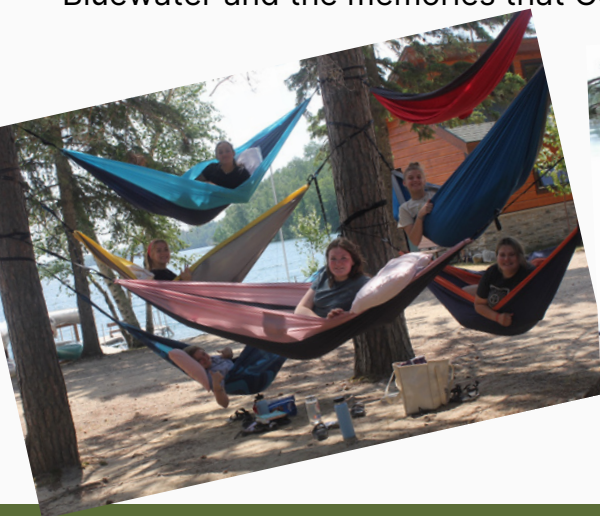
The theme for Bluewater in 2024 was “Made New.” The theme verse was 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold new things have come.” Students were encouraged to live the new life that Christ has given and leave the old life behind. Students were challenged to not stay the same

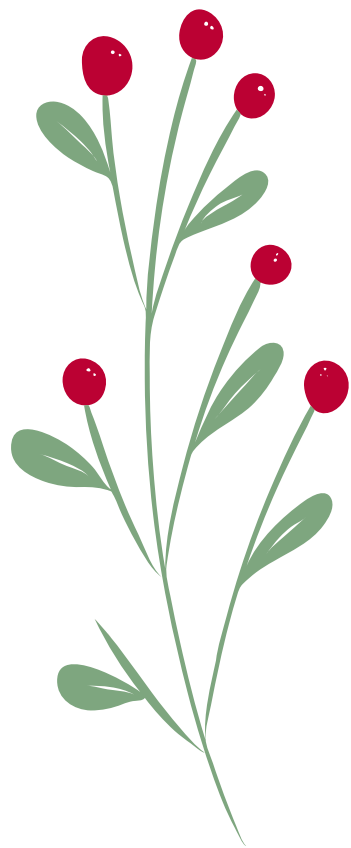
As we all know, life can be difficult and it’s not any easier just because we are followers of Christ. Students came to camp with life experiences of broken families, friends committing suicide, and everything else that life throws at them. But, through the Holy Spirit and Christ’s light shining through His body, lives were transformed. Healing was seen (both physical and emotional), transformation was seen in some of the toughest youth, and 39 youth prayed to receive Christ for the first time.

For the third year in a row, Bluewater set a new record for the number of youth campers with 1,139. 39 students decided to follow Jesus for the first time and 319 students decided to recommit their life to Christ. The high number of youth at the early camps creates a need for staff to be trained well and early, especially this year with so many new staff. Despite these difficulties, the staff served well and with unity. The large early camps also meant that the girl’s leadership in training (LIT) had to be pushed to later in the summer.

Around camp, the new speaker’s/cook’s cabin is in the process of being built. The building exterior is water tight, the electrical has been roughed in, and the plumbing will be roughed in next. The current speaker’s cabin has been remodeled into a new youth cabin. The walls are ready for mudding/taping, then it just has to be painted and finished.

Overall, it was another full year of ministry at Bluewater. We continued to see God move in camper’s lives. The camp director (Chad Persons) expressed his thanks for all the people who support Bluewater and the memories that God creates in the lives of everyone at Bluewater.





Women Growing Together

BY RACHEL GRIFFITH

Women Growing Together has now been meeting for a couple months and we've been so blessed to have about 50 women sharing, listening, and praying together at our gatherings. Personally, my favorite part of the evening has been the opportunity to pray for and be prayed for by the women at our table. Not only do I get to know these women on a deeper level, but it allows me to feel more deeply known and cared for. What a tremendous blessing!

Our next gatherings will be at 6:30pm on:

- December 16 with Debbie Griffith
- January 20 with Mary Fish
- February 24 with Kaitlyn (Radi) Bjornrud

Upcoming Winter Calendar

Waffles & Widows • Saturdays at 10am

December 7

January 11

February 8

Women Growing Together • 6:30pm

December 16 - Debbie Griffith

January 20 - Mary Fish

February 24 - Kaitlyn Bjornrud

Teens • 6-8pm • Each Wednesday evening;
doors open at 5:30pm; free supper at 6pm.

Covenant Kids • Wednesdays • 5:30-6pm • free
family supper; 6-7:30pm club activities.

Covenant Kids/Teens Christmas Gathering •

December 18; Join us for a free family supper
from 5:30-6pm; at 6pm there will be a short
program in the sanctuary for youth & parents.

Christmas Eve Service • Sunday, December 24,
5-6pm. Join us as we gather for Christmas
carols & a reading of the Christmas story.

All Church Retreat at BCBC

• July 11-13

Merry Christmas!