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Vol. 26 • Issue 06

Sat., February 8, 2025

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Math and reading performance still below pre-COVID levels



Minnesota's performance on the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reveals a mixed picture, with modest improvements in math scores but continued struggles in reading, particularly among younger students. Despite record levels of state and federal aid aimed at addressing the ongoing learning loss from the COVID-19 pandemic, Minnesota students' test scores have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels.

The NAEP, often referred to as the "Nation's Report Card," is administered every two years to a representative sample of fourth- and eighth-grade students across the United States. The results provide a benchmark for academic performance and serve as the only objective measure of student

learning outcomes that can be compared across states.

In Minnesota, the average math scores for both fourth- and eighth-grade students increased by two points from 2022. However, reading scores showed little improvement. The average reading score for fourth-grade students declined by one point, while eighth-grade reading scores remained unchanged.

A particularly concerning trend is the rising percentage of Minnesota students scoring below the basic achievement level in reading. In fourth grade, 39 percent of students performed below the basic level, a figure that mirrors the 2022 results and marks the highest percentage since NAEP reading assessments began in 1992. The percentage of eighth-graders scoring below

basic in reading increased slightly to 29 percent, setting a new high for this grade level since the test was first administered in 1998.

Disparities persist across student groups

Disparities between different student groups remain pronounced. Black students in Minnesota showed some gains in both math and reading, with improvements in average scores for fourth- and eighth-grade students in these subjects. Hispanic students also made progress, particularly in fourth- and eighth-grade math, although their reading performance showed mixed results — fourth-grade scores stayed steady while eighth-grade reading scores improved.

White students, on the other hand, experienced a decline in average reading scores at both the fourth and eighth-grade levels compared to 2022. In math, white students saw improvements in fourth-grade scores, but their eighth-grade math scores remained unchanged.

Impact of recent state legislative changes

The 2023 legislative overhaul of Minnesota's approach to literacy, with the passage

of the READ Act, is aimed at improving reading outcomes across the state. The law mandates that teacher preparation programs, school districts, and educators implement evidence-based reading instruction. While these changes represent a significant step in addressing the state's long-standing literacy challenges, they have yet to show a measurable impact in the 2024 NAEP results. Teachers are still undergoing professional development, schools are adjusting curricula, and literacy plans are being put into place.

Experts have cautioned that improvements in student performance, particularly in reading, will take time and may not be immediately visible in the NAEP results.

National trends mirror state-wide struggles

Nationally, the 2024 NAEP results echo Minnesota's challenges, particularly in reading. The national reading scores have continued to decline since 2019, reaching record lows. Daniel McGrath, of the National Center for Education Statistics, noted that the declines in reading achievement cannot be fully explained by the pandemic alone, suggest-

ing deeper, more complex issues within the educational system.

While some states, such as Louisiana and Alabama, have seen improvements in certain grade levels and subjects, the majority of states, including Minnesota, have either seen stagnant or lower scores in key areas. The continued declines in reading achievement are cause for concern, with implications for both students' future academic success and their long-term life outcomes.

Catholic schools outperform public schools nationwide

Students attending Catholic schools nationwide continue to outperform their public school peers in both subjects and grade levels tested. This trend reflects the consistently higher average test scores observed in Catholic schools compared to their public counterparts, particularly in reading and math. The performance gap between students in Catholic and public schools remains a key point of discussion among education experts, with some attributing the difference to factors such as smaller class sizes, a greater emphasis on academic rigor, and stronger community involvement.

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-OR-
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Dark Honey Molasses Bread served with honey cinnamon butter

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Saturday, February 15

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Frosty Fairway Challenge Mini Ice Golf Tournament
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READER RIBBETS

The impact of Democrats inaction

It is now day 22 [as of Feb. 4] of this disappointing Democrat no show and the 4th week that Minnesota's problems go unaddressed in the legislature. The Democrats have charged Minnesota taxpayers roughly \$208,362 for absolutely nothing at all. That's \$9,472 a day to avoid their responsibility as public servants. This level of disrespect for the Minnesota taxpayer is unprecedented.

A running start for Republicans, but no action from Democrats

The Minnesota legislative session began in mid-January, just as it always does. With so many important issues to address. Rampant fraud, rising costs, and crime policies that put our communities at risk. House Republicans immediately got to work with legislation aimed at tackling these challenges head-on.

We've introduced bills to:

- Repeal harmful taxes like the ones on delivery, social security, and gas.
- Reverse policies that drive up energy costs.
- Make sure Minnesota's tax dollars are used for Minnesotans.
- Improve our children's education.
- End soft on crime policies that degrade our communities.

We're also committed to fighting taxpayer-funded fraud, which has plagued our state under Governor Walz's watch. Scandals like Feeding Our Future, the Child Care Assistance Program, Frontline Worker Pay, and Child Autism Centers could have been prevented. Just recently, 5 Eyewitness News uncovered another fraud case within the Child Care Assistance Program.

Republicans have been sounding the alarm for years

For years, Governor Walz and Democrats have ignored Republican pleas for accountability. The Office of the Legislative Auditor has made countless efforts to warn Democrats of potential waste, fraud, and abuse in state government. Even Biden appointed U.S. District Attorney Andy Luger has echoed these statements, saying "Minnesota has a fraud problem" and "no other states have had the kinds of problems we've had with government fraud." If that's not enough, Walz himself has now decided that 7 years of negligence and unfettered spending may be too much, saying, "Minnesotans rightly have no tolerance for misuse of taxpayer dollars."

So, why has it been left to continue for so long?

Republican solutions: action on fraud and accountability

House Republicans are taking action. I've introduced a bill that would require state agency staff to report suspected fraud directly to law enforcement and legislative leaders. This bill also mandates unannounced site visits for grant recipients to ensure proper use of taxpayer dollars. State employees who fail to follow these requirements will face criminal penalties.

The impact of Democrats inaction: communities are hurting

Minnesota communities are already feeling the effects of the Democrat trifecta from last session, and now, the ongoing Democrat shutdown is making things worse. School districts are laying off essential staff due to over 60 unfunded mandates that need immediate repeal. Small businesses and job creators are also facing severe challenges.

But instead of addressing these crises, the Democrats continue to block any meaningful relief. They are obstructing efforts to lower taxes, fight crime, and stop the misuse of taxpayer money.

The stakes are high: time is running out

House Democrats are disrespecting their constituents and all of Minnesota. Just two years ago, we had a record \$18 billion surplus that was frivolously spent, and despite the Democrats \$10 billion increase in taxes, we are still faced with a looming \$5.1 billion (and rising) deficit. Meanwhile, urgent issues like community safety, government fraud, and our struggling education system remain unchecked.

The clock is ticking. We're calling on our Democrat colleagues to stop the political games and return to work. Minnesotans shouldn't be forced to wait.

Working together

I appreciate your input as we move through the 2025-2026 Legislative Session, so please do not hesitate to share your thoughts, questions, and concerns. I can be reached by phone at 651-296-0172 or via email at rep.ben.davis@house.mn.gov.

Ben Davis, District 6A
State Representative

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- Large appliances, electronics, tires with or without rims, and scrap metals can be disposed at the site for a nominal fee for recycling.

The landfill is open only to residents of Crow Wing County for recycling and disposal needs.



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LEGAL NOTICE

(Published in NewsHopper Saturday, Feb. 8 & 15, 2025)

LIBBY TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING

The Libby Township Board will meet online at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 18, 2025 to discuss matters that may come before the board. The February 18 meeting will be conducted via Zoom. Contact Jane Jewett, clerk, at wilowledge.janesfarm@gmail.com to request the Zoom link.

Dated this 1st day of February, 2025
Jane Grimsbo Jewett
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OBITUARIES

BONNIE FADROSKI

Bonnie Jean Fadroski, 69, of Aitkin died Monday, January 27, 2025 at her home.

Private services will be held.

She was born August 28, 1955 in Minneapolis the daughter of Edmund Arnold and Jean Dora (Skeates) Berg. She graduated from Edison High School in N.E. Minneapolis. She attended Vo-Tech for Graspic Art & Design. She lived in Nevada for a time, worked as a cashier at Surdyk's Liquor Store in N.E. Minneapolis, and was an award winning artist who was known for her kindness and generosity.

Bonnie is survived by her son Brian; three grandchildren; siblings: Charles Berg, Patricia Berg, Michael Berg, David Berg and other relatives.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Arrangements were with the Sorensen-Root-Thompson Funeral Home and Cremation Service of Aitkin. Leave online condolences at www.srtfuneral.com.

MARLENE LINN

Marlene Elizabeth Linn, 93, of Aitkin died Thursday, January 23, 2025 at Benedictine – Regina Senior Living in Hastings.

Funeral service was held on Thursday, January 30, 2025 at Saint John's Lutheran Church in Aitkin with Pastor David Becker officiating. Burial was in Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery at Camp Ripley, Little Falls.

She was born December 10, 1931 in Minneapolis the daughter of Edwin and Eva Mary (Proulx) Wahlund. She grew up in the Twin Cities area and graduated high school. Marlene was united in marriage to Alcuin A. Linn on September 1, 1956 in Minneapolis. They made their home in South Saint Paul and in the mid 1980's they moved to Hanging Kettle Lake near Aitkin. She was an active member of the American legion Auxiliary where she and Alcuin would help prepare meals. She was a member of Saint John's Lutheran Church in Aitkin.

Marlene is survived by sons: Tony (Karen) Linn of Cottage Grove, Larry Linn of Isle and Bob (Mary) Linn of Cottage Grove; 10 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; and many other special relatives and friends who mourn her passing.

She was preceded in death by her husband Alcuin, brother Bob and her parents Edwin and Eva.

Arrangements are with Sorensen-Root-Thompson Funeral Home in Aitkin. To leave a message of condolence go to www.srtfuneral.com

LINDA ROBERTS

Linda Carolyn Roberts, 87, of Crosby passed away on December 30, 2024.

Services will be held on Saturday, February 8, 2025, at 11 a.m., at the Aitkin United Methodist Church at 104-2nd Street NW, Aitkin. Family and friends are invited to gather at 10 a.m. for the visitation.

Linda was born in Minneapolis on November 14, 1937, to James Roberts and Dorothy Rutledge. She was raised in Edina, MN until she was 12 years old and then moved to Le Center, then to Duluth. In 1955, she graduated from Duluth Central High School. She trained as a Radiology Technologist at St. Lukes Hospital and worked before her children were born. She then went back to work when she moved from Owatonna to the Cities. She also worked part time in Aitkin after she retired. In 1959 she married John Jorissen and together they had four children. In 1993, she married Doug Kincaid. Linda and Doug had many activities they loved in common including bird watching, fishing, traveling, enjoying nature and a good game of cribbage. Linda loved Minnesota's beauty, loved her faith, had a generous spirit and truly loved life.

She is survived by her daughters: Jackie Kretsch, Cathryn Jorissen (Kenny Holden), Carolyn (Len) Schmidt, Mary (Brad) Shroenghmer, Patti (Brad) Buechele, Sandy (Dan) Scullion, Cindy Holden; and her son Robert (Donna) Jorissen; and many grand and great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband Doug Kincaid; parents; sister Susan Zimmerman; stepson Donald Kincaid; son-in-law David Kretsch; and grandson Brandon Kretsch.

LARRY AND NANCY THOMS

Larry Thoms went home to be with His Lord and Savior on January 5, 2025. Nancy Thoms joined her husband when she passed on January 8, 2025.

Lakewood Evangelical Free Church in Baxter will be holding a Joint Memorial Service for Larry and Nancy on Saturday, February 8, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. There will be a visitation held one hour before the start of the service at the church. Refreshments will be served following the service.

Larry John Thoms was born on September 13, 1945, in Brainerd, MN to Lester and Amy (Atwood) Thoms.

Nancy Kay (Harnois) Thoms was born on April 29, 1946, in Ashland, WI to Harold and Dorothy (Williamson) Harnois.

Larry and Nancy were married on June 13, 1964, and shared over 60 years of marriage, rarely spending time apart. In 1969, they purchased Grays Millworks at Bay Lake, which later became known as Timber Building Supply and Ace Hardware. Together, they worked to grow their successful business until selling it in 2013 so they could enjoy retirement.

Larry and Nancy leave behind their children Jon (Krissa) Thoms of Clovis, NM; Paul (Nicole) Thoms of Gig Harbor, WA; Marie (David) Schaefer of Deerwood, MN; and James (Pamela) Thoms of Watertown, SD with their families including 11 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. The couple are further survived by Larry's sisters, JoAnn Lindroth of Brainerd , and Sharon Norton of Portland, OR, and Nancy's sister, Charlotte Haney of Brainerd.

Larry and Nancy are preceded in death by their parents, siblings: Larry's sister Marlys (Thoms) Christiansen, Nancy's brother Leslie Harnois, and grandson Austin Thoms.

Arrangements were with the Koop Funeral Home of Crosby. To leave a message of condolence go to www.koopfuneralhome.com.

WANDA FLETCHER

Wanda Fletcher, 85, of Emily, journeyed from this life on January 17, 2025, surrounded by family and love. Her last wish was "Let's hold hands," and we did.... "we'll hold hands again one day."

Wanda was born on July 25, 1939. She was the first of four daughters born to Milton "Bud" and Elaine (Gates) Strause. Wanda spent her childhood in Wyoming, Colorado and Minnesota and graduated from Aitkin High School. Wanda met her future husband, Gilbert "Gus" Fletcher at a 4-H dance in Little Pine Township. They began their marriage of over 67 years in June of 1957 and together they partnered in many business, life, and travel adventures.

Wanda was a champion harvester of wild rice and loved her time spent picking blueberries at the logging camp in Ely. Wanda drove a school bus and provided homecare for many years. Annual trips to Paul Bunyan Land with her grandkids were always the summer's highlight. Wanda will forever be remembered for her kind heart and generous spirit. She always put others first and family meant the world to her.

Preceding Wanda in death are her parents; sister, Ardyce Hulbert; brothers-in-law, Michael Hargrave and Clarence LaBorde and infant grandson, Warren Lundquist.

Left to cherish her memories are her loving husband, Gus; daughters, Jolienne (Warren) Lundquist and Maria (Bill) Erickson; sons, Mark (Deb) Fletcher and Roy (Jody) Fletcher; grandchildren: Ann (Toby) Smith, Molly (Mitch) Swaggert, Misty (Angel) Barril, Melanie Fletcher, Bethany (Bryan) Hassett, Nadia (Fred Barrett) Fletcher, Laurie Yunker, Hannah (Harrison Segero) Fletcher, Joe Fletcher, Cassy (Jamie) Kangas and Billy (Cassie) Erickson; 17 great grandchildren; sisters, Laurel LaBorde and Karyn Hargrave; and many nieces and nephews.

The family would like to extend sincere appreciation to St. Croix Hospice, Baxter and Cremation Society of MN, Duluth.

More Obituaries on Page 4

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Wed., Feb. 26

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OBITUARIES

JOY MCCLEARY



Joy O’ June Olive (Souther) McCleary, 93, died peacefully in her sleep on Sunday, January 26, 2025 at Aicota Health Care Center in Aitkin.

A private family gathering will be held this summer to celebrate her life.

Joy was born on June 9, 1931, in a log cabin near Lakeshore, Minnesota, to William and Thelma Souther. She spent her early years in St. Paul and later attended Hamline University, where she met her husband, Robert “Bob” McCleary. The couple shared a lifelong passion for education and adventure. After their marriage, Joy and Bob began their teaching careers with a memorable year in Hawaii before returning to Minnesota. They both secured teaching positions in Aitkin, where Joy initially taught physical education before transitioning to English—a subject she taught for the majority of her career. Her love of English and dedication to education left a lasting impact on her students and colleagues. Summers

were filled with family adventures, as Joy and Bob traveled and camped across the United States and Canada with their children. After retiring, their love of exploration continued with trips overseas and visits to all 50 states. Among their favorite destinations was St. Simons Island off the coast of Georgia. Joy was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, educator, writer, and poet. Her memory will live on in the poems, essays and memoirs she has gifted to her family.

She is survived by her three children: Rob (Terry) McCleary, Beth (Roy) Joki, and Maureen (Tom) Burman; six grandchildren: Brian, Molly, Erin, Brynn, Morgan, and Alec; and six great-grandchildren: Wes, Cora, Harbor, Meya, Kinzlee, and Sophia.

She was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Bob; parents William and Thelma; brothers: Bill and Bob; and an infant sister, Cherry.

Arrangements were with the Sorensen-Root-Thompson Funeral Home and Cremation Service of Aitkin. Leave online condolences at www.srtfuneral.com.

JANICE MOORE



Janice Augusta Moore, 83 of Aitkin died Friday, January 24, 2025 at Aicota Health Care Center in Aitkin.

Private services are being planned.

She was born August 31, 1941 in Minneapolis the daughter of Oscar and Dagmar (Mattinen) Mattson. She grew up in Richfield and graduated from high school. Janice was united in marriage to David Moore on August 4, 1962 in Minneapolis. They raised their family in Bloomington. She was a homemaker and a loving wife, mother, grandmother

and great-grandmother.

Janice is survived by her husband David Moore of Aitkin

Children: Sandra Raley (Dave) of Minneapolis, Susan Gabert (Ed) of Aitkin and Sarah Moore of Aitkin; grandchildren: Sean and Alexis; great-grandchildren: Tinayah and Aveah; and many other special relatives and friends who mourn her passing.

She was preceded in death by her parents Oscar and Dagmar Mattson.

Arrangements are with Sorensen-Root-Thompson Funeral Home & Cremation Services in Aitkin. To leave a message of condolence, please go to www.srtfuneral.com.

STEWART PACKER



Stewart Lee Packer, Sr., 91, of Palisade died Saturday, January 25, 2025 at Cuyuna Regional Medical Center in Crosby.

Services will be Saturday, February 8, 2025 at 1 p.m. in Hilltop Chapel, 49448 Osprey Ave, Palisade. Visitation will be one hour prior to the service at the church. Military honors will be provided by Palisade V.F.W.

Post #1721. Interment will be in Waukenabo Cemetery, Waukenabo Township. Memorials are preferred in lieu of flowers to the Alzheimer’s Association, alz.org. To leave a message of condolence, please visit: www.srtfuneral.com.

He was born January 23, 1934 in Waukenabo Township to Levi and Hazel (Cowling) Packer. Stewart is a veteran of The United States Army who served during the Korean War. Stewart was

united in marriage to Alice Crapser. Together they had five children. Stewart enjoyed woodworking, building furniture, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling. Stewart’s philosophy was to help at least one person every day. He loved spending time with his family.

Stewart is survived by his loving wife, Alice Packer; children: Linda (Ron) Sewald, Chuck Packer, Cyndi (Sean) Johnson, Kathi Landrus and Stewart (Stacey) Packer, Jr.; 14 grandchildren: Cassie, Brandy, Sara, Ronda, Becky, Jon, T.J., Caitlin, Fawn, Charlie, Samantha, Erica, Bryan and Nathan; 21 great grandchildren; several great-great-grandchildren; siblings, Ronnie (Sharon) and Jeannie; nieces, nephews, cousins, other relatives and friends.

Stewart is preceded in death by his parents; grandchild, Stephanie; great-grandchild, Soren; brothers, Duane and Arvin.

Arrangements are with Sorensen-Root-Thompson Funeral Home and Cremation Service, Aitkin.

GEORGE HARDY



George Edwin Hardy, 78, of Crosby died at St. Cloud VA Medical Center on January 29, 2025.

A Memorial Gathering will be held on Saturday, February 8, 2025 at the Myrin-James American Legion Post in Ironton from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. with sharing of memories at 3:30 p.m. Burial will be at the Lakewood Cemetery in Crosby.

He was born on March 3, 1946

in Brainerd to Lyman and Dora (Wilmoth) Hardy. George served in the U.S. Navy for 4 years with two deployments to Vietnam. He was a member of the Myrin-James American Legion in Ironton. George was an avid hunter and fisherman.

George is survived by his sister, Judy McKanna of Crosby and his significant other, Paula Kowalke of Crosby and several nieces and nephews.

Preceding George in death are his parents; sister, Phyllis Martin; brother, Howard Hardy and niece Amber McKanna.

Arrangements were with the Koop Funeral Home of Crosby.

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CHURCH DIRECTORY

* Indicates handicap accessible. NOTE: All times are Sunday morning (a.m.) unless indicated otherwise.

ALLIANCE
Aitkin* — New Life Church of the CM&A; Worship 10:15 am; Services on Sunday at 10:15am and 6pm; 11-1st Street SW, newlifeaitkin.com 218-927-2823.
Baxter* — Pointway Alliance Church; Rev. Charles Bolstridge, 218-537-6505; 7756 Highland Scenic Road; Worship 10:30; www.pointway.org
Garrison* — Worship 10:30am
Onamia — Vineland Native American Chapel, Hwy. 169 north of casino; Worship 11; Pastor Boeringa 320-532-4449

ASSEMBLY OF GOD
Aitkin — Pastor Andrew Jergenson; Sunday Morning Service 10.
Baxter — Heritage Church, Pastor Heath Beard; 8:30, 10 & 11:30 Sundays, 6:30p Wednesdays, iamheritage.org
Crosby — Pastor Dustin McCaleb; Worship 10:30
Crosslake — Crossroads Christian, Rev. Gary Espeseth; SS at 9:30; Worship at 10:45
Hill City — Interim Pastor John Koppel, Staff Pastor Lisa Jordan; Worship 10; hillcityagchurch@gmail.com; 218-697-2662
Palisade — Pastor Charlie Bell; SS 9; Worship 10; Kids Church; Small groups during the week 218-845-2726

BAPTIST
Aitkin - Northwoods Community Church, Pastor William Verbeke, Worship 10:30, northwoodscommunitychurch.org
Baxter - Eagle Brook Church , Worship 9 & 11, www.eaglebrookchurch.com/locations/brainerd-lakes/
Brainerd* - Faith Baptist Church, Pastor Jim Stephens, 218-829-3191; SS 9:00, Worship 10:30 and 6 p.m., Wed. Classes and Clubs 6:30 p.m.; fbcbrainerd.com
Brainerd- The Church On The Wise Road, Pastor Todd Stumbo 218-829-4673, Worship 11:00, SS 9:45 www.thechurchonthewiseroad.org
Breezy Point — Eagles Nest, Pastor Zach Broom 218-562-5252, Worship 9:30, SS 11.
Crosby — Bible Baptist, Pastor Jon Thorson; SS 9:45; Service 10:45 and 6 p.m., Bible Study Wed. 7 pm
Deerwood* — Jeff Shadrick, SS 9:30; Worship 10:30 and 6 pm; Wed. Service, 6:30 pm.
Glory* — SS 9:15; Worship 10:30 a.m.; Wed 6pm Glory Family night, KidMin grades kindergarten - 6, Mad4Christ grades 7-12, aitkinchurch.com
Hill City — Pastor Lonnie Lee; 218-697-2645; Adult SS 9; Worship 10 am; Bible Study, Fri., 7 pm.
Isle — Pastor Nick Skogen; 676-3171; SS 9:30; Service 10:30; Bible Study, Wed., 7 p.m.
Opstead — 676-8859; SS 9:30; Worship, 10:30; Bible Study Wed., 7 p.m.

CATHOLIC
Aitkin* — St. James, Fr. Mike Patullo, 218-927-6581; Mass Sat. 5 pm, Sun. 10:30. Confession Sat. 10-10:45 and 4-4:45 pm.
Brainerd — St. Andrew’s, Fr. Gabriel Waweru, Sat.4:30; Sun. 10:00 and St. Mathias Sunday 8:00.
Brainerd — St. Francis, Fr. Michael Garry, Sat. 5:00; Sunday 7:30, 9:00, 11:15 and All Saints Saturday 4:00 and Sunday 10:30.
Cromwell/Wright — Immaculate Conception, Mass: Sat. 5 p.m.
Crosby* — St. Joseph’s, Fr. Eli Gieske, Mass: Thurs. and Fri. at 8; Tues at noon, Sun. 8:30 & 10:30.
Crosslake — Immaculate Heart, 218-692-3731; www.ihmstemilys.org; Mass: Sat. 4 pm; Sun. 8:30; Confession Sat. 3 pm.
Emily — St. Emily, Mass: Mon. & Wed. 8; Sun. 10:30; Confession 1st Sat. 11 or by appt. 218-763-2101.
Garrison — Our Lady of Fatima, Fr. Eli Gieske, Mass Wed. 9 & Sat. 4 pm, Confession Sat. 3:30 - 3:50 pm
Grand Rapids — St. Joseph’s, Fr. Jerry Weiss, Mass: Sat. 5 pm; Sun. 8 & 10:30. 218-326-2483
Hillman — Holy Family; Sun. 10 to Mass Sat. 6:30 pm (only through Labor Day) w/ confession before or by appt.
McGregor — Holy Family, Fr. Mike Patullo, 218-927-6581; Mass Sun. 8; Confessions Tues. 5:30-6:30 pm
Vineland — St. Therese, Mass Sun. 11; Holy Days 8:30.

CHURCH OF CHRIST
Baxter, Lakes Area — Nondenominational; 7001 Highland Scenic Road; Bible Study every Wed. 7 pm; Worship 10:30-11:30. 218-828-1362
Tamarack — Pastor Terry Banker, 608-475-1528, Worship 9:30; SS 10:45; Wed Youth 4 pm.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
Aitkin — Co. Rd. 12, Chapel Ph. 218-927-4454; Kevin Haffner 218-792-5684; Sacrament Mtg. 10

COMMUNITY
Aitkin — Nondenominational; 927-2749; at 219-1st Ave. NE., Aitkin, Services Sun. 10, 218-927-6959
Brainerd - Community of Hope Church of the Nazarene- Pastor Dave McGaffey Sunday worship at 10, SS 9; 16549 Johnson Rd -church phone 218-829-9005
Glen — Pastor R. F. Stauter, 218-838-1981; Worship 9 May-Oct.
Grand Rapids — Solid Rock Church of God, Pastor Robert Kimberling; 218-326-0711; Sun. BS 9:30, Worship 10:30; Wed. BS 6:30 pm
Jacobson — Jacobson Community Church, Pastor George Collins, 218-252-5938, Sun. SS (All ages) 9:30, Worship 10:30; Family Time 2nd & 4th Sundays; Wed. BS 7 pm
Kimberly — Nature Ave. Rev. Rick Perry; Worship 9; Adult Bible Study & Sunday School 10:30; 218-927-6256.
McGregor — The Lighthouse Christian Church; Worship 10; 99 South 1st Street (at the McGregor United Methodist church [shared] in downtown McGregor) Pastor Joel Seibel.
McGregor — Victory Mission, Pastor J. Gould, 218-768-2160; Sun. 10; Wed. Bible Study, 7:30 pm.
Merrifield — Community Church of the Nazarene, Pastor Ron Christenson; Service 11 & 6 pm. Wed. Prayer Meeting, 7 p.m.; 218-829-7536.
Merrifield — Ossipee Community, SS 10; Service 11; Wed. Bible Study Prayer, 7:00 p.m.
Nisswa — Christ Community Church, Pastor Richie Bean; Service 10; Fellowship 9:30-10
Outing* - Narrows Community Church, Pastor Kenny Holm, 218-792-5530 Worship 9:30; 6297 Woods Bay NE, just north of Hwy. 6 bridge
Palisade —Hilltop Chapel (Waukenabo Twp)*- service 10 a.m.; Adult and Children’s SS 9 a.m.; 49448 Osprey Avenue, Palisade.
Tamarack — Church of Christ, 218-768-3898; Service 9:30; SS 10:45.

EPISCOPAL
Aitkin — St. John’s, Holy Communion or Morning Prayer 9
Brainerd* — St. Paul’s, Rev. Joyce A. Rush. In-person worship service at 10 am Sunday. Online at 5 pm Saturday. Call the church 219-829-3834 and leave a message with email to receive a Zoom invitation.

EVANGELICAL FREE
Baxter — Lakewood EFC, Pastor Matt Nagel; Worship at 9:00 and 10:45. Wednesday for all ages 6:30 pm.
Crosslake — The Log Church 9:30, Pastor Troy Nelson; 218-692-4141, 37218 County Road 66, www.crosslakeefc.org
Isle — Pastor Mark Lee; Sunday School 9:00 am; Worship 10:30 am, Sun. Youth group 6:00 pm, Wed. Adult Prayer 6:30 pm and Kids Konnect 6:30 pm
Malmö — Pastor Glenn Browning; SS 9:30; Fellowship 10; Worship 10:15
Wright — Pastor Ken Mitchell, 218-426-5115; SS 9:30; Worship, 10:30; Thu., Bible Study, 7 pm.

HEBREW/MESSIANIC
Glen — Beth Shalom Tabernacle of Truth, for information 320-684-2804

LUTHERAN
Aitkin — Bethlehem (ELCA), Rev. Rebecca Hinz; Worship 9:30; Holy Comm. 1st & 3rd Sun each month.
Aitkin — First* (ELCA) Pastor Reggie Denton; worship Sun. 99am (9am service also available via livestream on YouTube — First Lutheran Church, Aitkin and broadcast on KKIN 94.3 FM radio at 10am), take out community meal every Mon. & Thurs. 5pm and Tues. 12pm; food shelf 2nd & 4th Thurs. each month 9am- 4pm.
Aitkin (Cedarbrook) — St. John’s (ELCA) Pastor Sarah Stadler, 602-318-6876, 27452 St. John’s Church Road, Aitkin. Worship on Sundays at 9:00 am followed by Sunday school at 10:00 am. stjohns-cedarbrook.weebly.com.
Aitkin — St. John’s (Missouri Synod), Pastor D. Becker; Worship Sun. 9, SS 10
Baxter — Christ Lutheran Church and Preschool (WELS). Pastor Bill Werth. Sunday Worship 9. Sunday School/ Adult Bible Class 10:15. 13815 Cherrywood Dr. in Baxter. (Corner of Ingelwood and Cherrywood). 218-829-4105. www.christbaxter.com.
Baxter — Prince of Peace (LCMS); Communion every Sunday 9, Fellowship 10:15, Adult Bible Class & Sunday School 10:30 am 218-829-7092 www.princeofpeace-lutheran.church
Beaver Township — Finnish EA, Hwy. 27, Worship 1st &

3rd Sun., 10:30.
Brainerd — First Lutheran Church (ELCA) Pastors: Patty Bjorklund and Jordan Gades, Sunday worship 9, Sunday School following worship. Services also available on YouTube and Facebook. 218-829-9552 flicbrainerd.com
424 8th Street South, Brainerd
Brainerd* — Good Shepherd Free Lutheran Church (AFLC), Pastor David Franz, find service info at www.goodshepherdfreelutheran.church, 5878 Pine Beach Road, Brainerd, 218-824-3052
Brainerd — Laestadian Lutheran Church, 1501 So. 8th St. - Sunday Worship Services 10:30 am. (www.llchurch.org)
Brainerd — Trinity Lutheran Church (ELCA) 1420 South 6th St. Brainerd, Worship time September through May 8:15am & 10:30am; worship (June through August) 9 am. 218-829-5147. Website: www.trinitybrainerd.org. Email: trinity@trinitybrainerd.org
Brainerd — Truth Lutheran Church (LCMC, Pastor James Walth, Corner of 5th and Kingwood, Worship 9
Brainerd - Zion Lutheran Church (LCMS) Pastor Steve Benson, Sunday Worship 9, Monday Worship 6 pm. Education hour Sunday 10:15 am. 220 N. 8th St. Brainerd. 218-829-4317. www.zionbrainerd.com.
Cedar Lake, Norwegian Lutheran — Third Sun 11, May - Oct. Crosby — Immanuel (LCMC) Rev. Paul Mattson; Sun. 9:30 worship; SS (Sept.-May) 10:15; 10:30 fellowship
Crosby — Zion (LC-MS) Worship 9 (alternates with Immanuel Iron Hub) 218-546-6910.
Crosslake Lutheran Church (ELCA) www.crosslakelutheran.com
Kristin Oltmann, Pastor / Becky Swanson, Pastor 218-692-3682 September 8-Mid-May: Sunday at 8:30am & October-Mid-May: Wednesday at 6:15pm
Crosslake — Mission of the Cross (LCMS), Pastor Leslie Uhrinak; Worship 9:30 with every Sunday Communion, Fellowship 10:30, Adult Bible Class 11, 218-692-4228, www.missionofthecross.org
Deerwood* — Salem (ELCA), Pastor Amanda Kempthorne; Worship: 9; Sunday School 9:50.
Garrison — Light of the Cross (ELCA), Worship 9 SS 9; 320-692-4773 or 877-406-9101.
Garrison — Shepherd of the Lake (LCMS), Rev. Caleb Worrel. Worship 10 with Communion Every Sunday, Adult Bible Study 8:30am, Sunday School Sept-May, 8:30am. Fellowship 11am. 320-692-4581. www.shepherdofthelake.org.
Giese — Immanuel, Rev. R. Langhorst & Rev. R. Lovaas; Worship 9; SS 10; Holy Communion 1st Sun. of month 8:45.
Hill City — Trinity, (Missouri Synod), Pastor M. Eckert; Worship 9; Bible Study 10:15.
Hillman — Immanuel, (ELCA) Sun. Worship 11, fellowship follows. Located on the corner of Hwy. 27 and Co. Rd. 47. (Handicap accessible)
Iron Hub — Immanuel (LC-MS) Worship 9, (alternates with Zion of Crosby) 218-534-3069
Isle — Faith (ELCA), Pastor Josh Blair; Worship 9:30; handicapped accessible.
Isle — Holden (ELCA), Worship 9:15
Isle — Trinity (Missouri Synod), Rev. Mark Maunula; Worship 9; Fellowship follows; SS 10:30; Adult Bible 10:30.
Jacobson — Carmel, Vicar Mark Wagner; SS 1st & 3rd Sun. 10, Service 11, fellowship follows.
Lake Shore — Living Savior Lutheran Church, 8327 Interlachen Rd.; Worship 9 Sunday mornings, followed by fellowship and Bible study. (Located on Co. Rd. #77 N)
Malmö — Bethesda (ELCA) Rev. James Muske: Sun. Worship 9am. Fellowship following Service. Communion every Sunday.
McGrath — Grace; Wed. potluck 5 pm, Bible study 6 p.m.; SS 10; Worship 11.
McGrath — Zion (ELCA), Worship 9; SS 9.
McGregor/Big Sandy Lake — Grace Lutheran Log Church (LCMC), Pastor Lorelie Robinson; Worship 9, Fellowship follows, SS 10.
McGregor — Our Savior’s (Missouri Synod), Pastor Joshua C. Reinke; Worship 9; SS 10; Bible Study Tue. 9, Wed. 7 pm
Outing — Our Saviors ELCA; Pastor Luke Lekander, Worship 9.
Palisade* — Bethel (ELCA), Pastor Steven Teff; Worship 9:30.
Pequot Lakes - Gloria Dei Lutheran Church (LCMS) Pastor Monte Meyer Worship 9 am, Fellowship 10 am, Sunday School and Adult Bible Study 10:15 am
Pequot Lakes* - Our Savior’s Lutheran Church (ELCA) Rev. Stephen Blenkush Worship 9:00 a.m., SS 9:15 a.m., Fellowship 10:15 a.m. Wed. Adult Bible Study 11:00 a.m.
Rossburg — Bethesda Lutheran (LCMC) Congregations in Mission for Christ) 11:30 service. Communion 1st & 3rd

Sunday each month.
Tamarack (AFLC) — Pastor Ron Staudinger; 1st, 3rd and 4th Sundays 10 am; 41163 Kestrel Ave 3.3 mi. South of Hwy 210
Thor — Zion, Worship 11; 1st and 3rd Sun. April through December.
Wright — Bethlehem, Worship; SS 9.
Wright — St. John’s (Missouri Synod), Pastor Joshua Reinke; Worship 10:30; Bible Study and Sunday School Sun. 9:30; Lent services Wed. 5:30 pm.)

NON-DENOMINATIONAL
Brainerd—Oak Street Chapel, Pastor Todd Wooden, Worship service is Sunday at 9:30, 523 SE 11th Street, Brainerd, 218-454-0984
Brainerd—Remnant Ministry Center, Pastor Ben Davis, Worship service is Sunday at 10am, 512 S 8th St., Suite 2, 218-829-2989.

PENTECOSTAL
Baxter — Christ Alive, 12485 Forestview Drive, Baxter, MN 56425. Pastor Walter Starr, 763-316-7270, Sunday Worship 10:00am, Wednesday Bible study 6:30pm
Emily — Cornerstone Church; Pastor Earl Ready; Worship 10, 41536 Birchwood Drive, Emily; 218-763-2939.
Ironton — Iron Range Christian Center; Pastor Dwight Semler; 218-546-6523; meeting at Irondale Town Hall*, Co. Rd. 12, (Deerwood Shortcut); Worship 10 & Wed. 7 pm.
Tamarack — Warriors of the Rainbow Ministry, Pastors Ken and Ron Fairbanks, Sat. 11. 218-768-3585

PRESBYTERIAN
Crosslake - Pastor Mark Ford, 218-692-4769; Worship 9; Fellowship 11, 14444 Daggett Pine Road, Crosslake, just passed the Community Center; www.crosslakepres.org.
McGrath — Calvary, Pastor - Todd Oltmann; Worship 9.
McGregor/Round Lake — Pastor Talley; Worship Sat. 5 pm.
Tamarack — First, Rev. J. Yingling; Worship 11.

REFORMED
Crosby — Lifespring Church, a member of Fellowship of Independent Reformed Evangelicals, 9:30, 30 Hallett Ave NE 218-545-5433, www.visitlifespring.com

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST
Aitkin — Pastor Josh Jeresek; Worship Sat. 9:30, Prayer Meeting & Bible Study Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.; www.aitkinadventist.org; 423-805-0933; 830 Minnesota Ave S
Brainerd — Pastor Josh Jeresek; Worship Sat. 11:10, Bible Study 10; Bible Study & Prayer Mtg. Wed. 6:30 p.m.; 2910 Oak Street, Brainerd, 218-829-1676

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
Pequot Lakes — 28877 State Hwy 371, Pequot Lakes 10:30 1st and 4th Sundays. 218-330-3476

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Brainerd — First Congregational UCC, 415 Juniper St, Brainerd. Sunday worship at 10. Pastor; Leslie Moughty. Handicapped accessible. www.uccbrainerdmn.org

UNITED METHODIST
Aitkin* — Aitkin - Pastor Dawn Houser; Worship 10, Wednesdays at 5:30 pm Bible & Brew, Facebook live.
Crosby/Deerwood* — Cascade, Pastor Gary Taylor; Sunday Worship with Youtube live streaming 10 am with fellowship to follow. Cascade Ladies meet on the first Wednesday of each month at noon. Come & Eat Community dinner on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:30 pm. Please call the office to sign up: 218-534-3507.
Cutler* (South Aitkin County) — Pine Lake Chapel, Pastor Gary Taylor; Worship Sunday 1 p.m. Fellowship follows.
Cromwell — Pastor Tim Homstad; Worship 10; SS 9
Emily* — Pastor Gary Taylor; Sunday Worship with Facebook live streaming 8:30 with fellowship to follow. UWF meet on the first Sunday of each month following worship. Men’s prayer breakfast 2nd Saturday of each month at 8. Bible Study Thursdays at 6 pm.
Fleming* — (Northern Lights Parish) SS 9:15; Worship 10:30; fellowship follows.
Hill City — Pastor Roger Lynn; Worship 10
McGregor* — (Northern Lights Parish) Worship 8:45; fellowship follows.
Onamia — Pastor Rick & Judy Wilder; Worship 11; fellowship 10; 2 bks north of Post Office; handicap ramp; 320-532-3150; office: 218-546-7656; cell: 218-360-1947

WESLEYAN
Emily — Rev. Jason Gressman; Worship 9; Friendship Time 10; SS 10:30; Wed. Activities 6:30 p.m.; 218-763-HOPE.

Central Lakes College brings back Chatty Hour for a year of connection

The popular community conversation event, Chatty Hour, is back at Central Lakes College (CLC). Every Wednesday from noon to 1:30 p.m., the cafeteria at CLC's Brainerd campus will transform into a hub of friendly conversation and social connection. This free, open-to-the-public initiative offers a welcoming space for individuals of all backgrounds to engage in casual, thought-provoking discussions with others in the community.

Building on the success of the Fall 2024 Chatty Hour, which was made possible through generous support from Essentia Health, Crow Wing County, and the Central Minnesota Council on Aging, this year's event is poised to continue fostering meaningful connections among community members. The program's goal is to strengthen social bonds and encourage an open exchange of ideas in a relaxed, non-judgmental environment.

Chatty Hour is an extension of a larger initiative led by Riaz Patel, an Emmy-nominated television producer who is passionate about building deeper human connections through open dialogue. Patel's program, ConnectEffect, which was presented in Brainerd in January and September of 2024, inspired the creation of Chatty Hour as a way to continue fostering these important conversations on a regular basis.

"Creating spaces for community members to connect and engage is more important than ever," said Joey Yow, Director of the Performing Arts Center at Central Lakes College. "We're thrilled to continue offering Chatty Hour as a way to build relationships, share ideas, and promote intergenerational connections within Brainerd and beyond."

The event is designed for anyone looking to meet new people, share experiences, and take part in lively, open conversations. You can drop in at any time during the session, making it easy to fit into your schedule.

For more details about Chatty Hour at CLC, contact Joey Yow at joseph.yow@clcmn.edu.

— Pie lovers unite —

On Saturday, Feb. 8, Cascade United Methodist Church is inviting everyone to indulge a sweet treat and a warm community atmosphere at their annual Pie Social. From 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., visitors can enjoy freshly baked pies served with a generous scoop of ice cream. Whole pies will be available for sale, as well as slices for those just looking to satisfy their sweet tooth.

But this event isn't just about dessert. It's about coming together, making new connections, and strengthening the bonds within the community. Church members and locals alike are encouraged to come for the pie and stay for the conversation. After all, what's better than good food and even better company?

The event will be held at Cascade United Methodist Church, located on Highway 6/210, just west of Deerwood. It's the perfect excuse to take a break from your Saturday routine and support a great cause while enjoying some homemade goodness.

SnoDaze royalty at Aitkin High School (left to right) John Pelarski, Caleb Zasmeta, Jeremiah Cortez, Owen Weyer, King Drew Paulbeck, Queen Béla May, Kira Hamilton, Natalie Crowther, Ellie Hoppe, and Giulia Peccati. They presided over dress up days all week with a dance planned for Saturday night. Cindi Hill photo

Aitkin SnoDaze Coronation royalty



SnoDaze royalty at Aitkin High School (left to right) John Pelarski, Caleb Zasmeta, Jeremiah Cortez, Owen Weyer, King Drew Paulbeck, Queen Béla May, Kira Hamilton, Natalie Crowther, Ellie Hoppe, and Giulia Peccati. They presided over dress up days all week with a dance planned for Saturday night. Cindi Hill photo

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