

OAKWOOD OAKLEAF



JANUARY 2026



HAPPY NEW YEAR

The Lord has certainly been with us in 2025 and because we know his promises never fail, he will be there in the new year too. He has been with us in our planning for the new year, and this issue is filled with news about our ministries for 2026 as well as a review of 2025.

We plan to focus on the food insecurity in our community by growing our food pantry and encouraging those who come shopping to stay for supper. Our Wednesday nights are filled with kids, youth and energy. We are planting seeds.

As a congregation, we will be reading the *Bible Year* in 2026. Each day we will have Bible readings, then on Sunday, Rev. Alexis will give her message on what we have read. It promises to be a very worthwhile experience!

Happy New Year



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CONNECT

GROW

SERVE

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

This Bible Study meets every Saturday at 8:00 am. All men are welcome. Please contact Mike Feldman if you are interested.

Classics

Classics will next meet on January 8 at noon. Be sure and join us for this potluck meal. You will have great food and fellowship.

SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP

9:30 am

*In-person or Online at
www.Oakwoodlife.org
Childcare is available*



Happy New Year!!

The Mission Committee wishes to thank you for the generous response to our Oakwood Angel Tree this year. We were able to serve 20 of our Food Pantry families. That included 51 children. This year was especially important for people to feel Oakwood's love and service. May we continue to experience success with our outreach in 2026.

I would like to update you about my trip to Liberia. It has been postponed until March due to shipping issues. I would love to be there today as it is currently 85 degrees. Thank you to everyone who donated to the Serve Africa funds. The monies will be used to pay for parts of the kits and any additional funds will apply towards the shipping costs.

May God bless and protect you in the new year,

Laura W. Anspach, Co-chair for Oakwood's Mission Committee

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

Oakwood Investment Policy

This past year, the Finance Committee devoted considerable time to developing an investment policy to guide current and future leaders in the stewardship of Oakwood's financial resources.

The policy, which has been approved by the Finance Committee and Administrative Board, expresses gratitude for Oakwood's financial gifts and establishes a framework for the faithful, prudent, and transparent management of those gifts.

The policy defines the roles and fiduciary responsibilities of the Finance Committee and Administrative Board, requiring decisions to prioritize the church's long-term financial health.

Investments are guided by ethical considerations and risk management principles, avoiding high-risk and value-inconsistent investments such as cryptocurrency and speculative securities. The policy emphasizes diversification, inflation protection, sustainable growth, and preservation of principal.

The policy requires regular monitoring, annual review, and formal approval of any amendments by both the Finance Committee and Administrative Board, ensuring accountability and ongoing alignment with Oakwood's mission and financial needs.

The policy will soon be on Oakwood's website. Copies are available on request. Questions can be directed to Kathy Bolten or Don Timmons.



Thank You!

We raised \$1200 from the Children's Bake Sale. Wow! Thank you so much to those who purchased items, donated items and to those who organized the event. All the money collected will go to help fund our children's ministries in 2026. We thank you for your support throughout the year!

On Christmas Eve your offerings totaled \$2226. All of this money will be used for our food pantry. Thank you for your generous support.

Hospitality

Thank you to all who have hosted fellowship and those who have greeted at the east door and sanctuary door during December. What a busy month! You all are a **HUGE** help in spreading the love of Jesus to the many who were new to Oakwood.

Each week a Request for Greeters is sent via CCB email and you can sign up on that Request. The January-February Fellowship sign up on the Café Court counter. There is a couple of dates available to sign up and host. A Request for Fellowship will be sent out via CCB when a fellowship host opportunity is empty.

It's easy to donate either baked or prepackaged treats for fellowship. Just place them in the tall freezer and be sure to mark them "Sunday Fellowship". If you have them in a pan, you would like back, be sure to have your name on the pan.

Both of the above are acts of kindness and volunteerism which express to others how we at Oakwood show our Christian love for each other and that "All Are Welcome". The Hospitality Team will be hosting a "Holiday Smorgasbord Sunday" on January 4, 2026. Everyone is invited to bring their extra unused holiday treats on January 4th and deliver them to the kitchen. They will be used during Fellowship. If you have them on a pan, you would like back, please be sure to put your name on it. Our Team's next big event will be Ash Wednesday (February 18th) Pancake and Sausage supper.

The Hospitality Team remains active. The Team members are each assigned with a date and they serve as the Narthex Monitor. This volunteer position assists those who come after the church service begins. We also assist the Worship Team with different tasks that require a few more hands.

Our Team sadly lost Dari Storms this month as she had to return to Venezuela. The Hospitality Team is always in need of additional team members. We meet the third Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Many hands make light work. Any questions about any of the above volunteer opportunities, be sure to ask Angie Acker (515-720-6918)/acker1234@msn.com or Pam Schwartz (641-425-9919)/pamschwartz72@yahoo.com.



Birthdays and Anniversaries

January Birthdays	January Anniversaries
5– Emma Buchacker, Sandra Baumgart	11-Craig and Sandy Winn
8- Layne Brown, Bill Slagle,	22-Bob and Cheryl Egger
10– Nancy Rendall	
11– Tyler Paterson	
13—Penny Van Rossum	
15-Conner Vitek	
18—Dawn Melissa	
19—Joe Luce	
22– Wilma Pack	
23– Julie Feldman	
24— Jessica Butler	
27—Don Harvey	
28—Melissa Wilson	

CONNECT - GROW - SERVE

*I will bless you...so that you will
be a blessing.* Genesis 12:2

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Pleasant Hill, Iowa 50327
515-262-6007 Office
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WEB SITE:
www.oakwoodlife.org

**SEND PRAYER
REQUESTS TO**
prayers@oakwoodlife.org

Senior Pastor, Rev. Alexis Johnson
Alexis.Johnson@oakwoodlife.org

**Small Group Ministry &
Connections Associate**
Julie Feldman
Julie.feldman@oakwoodlife.org

**Connections &
Welcome Associate**
Angie Acker
Angie.acker@oakwoodlife.org

Music Ministries Associate
Brian Acker
Brian.acker@oakwoodlife.org

Children's Ministry Associate:
Jessica Ruby
Jessica.ruby@oakwoodlife.org
Tania Bentley, 515-360-9817
Tania.bentley@oakwoodlife.org

Administration
Nancy Berggren
Nancy.Berggren@oakwoodlife.org

Youth Director
Nathan Fischer
nathan.fischer@oakwoodlife.org

Oakwood Finances

If you were to ask how did Oakwood spend money in 2025 the common answers would be on the children and youth, missions work, or staff salaries and you'd be right; your money was used for those things. Few, if any, would say to keep the lights on, the building warm, the water running, paying for insurance, keeping the building clean, mowing the grass, plowing the snow, or printing the bulletins. Not to mention making repairs that were delayed while we paid our mortgage or using technology that gets more complex and necessary each year. Is it worth it? You bet! We are working to spread the glory of the Lord and bring more souls to Him.

So what have we accomplished this year while spending money on our ministries and infrastructure?

When Rev. Alexis first arrived at Oakwood you probably recall that she held conversations with our congregation to get a "lay of the land". One thing she heard over and over was that we needed more young people. Well this is happening! You can see this on Sunday morning when we have kids during the children's time or Vacation Bible School that attracts neighborhood kids. And we have around 40 children and youth on Wednesday. Willing staff and volunteers make this possible in addition to curriculum and other supplies that will teach all those young people about Jesus. We are planting seeds.

We also give the young people backpacks containing food each Wednesday thanks to the work of the mission committee and other volunteers. In addition, serving a meal on Wednesday draws people into the church. To make that happen, these meals must have people willing to cook and serve, as well as the food, some donated some not. Your gifts enable this ministry.

In the late summer, Caring Hands told us that there are no other food pantries in Pleasant Hill and we learned about the issues of food insecurity in our neighborhood. We decided we could help. So we started the Oakwood free food pantry. We get many food donations from Hy-Vee, Fareway, Caring Hands, Pleasant Hill residents and our congregation. We have volunteers who stock the shelves, greet our shoppers and do clean-up. One week we even had 40 families visit the pantry. Our partnership with Caring Hands is paying dividends, not only through the food pantry, but by helping to support the work that Caring Hands does for people in need.

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Continued on next page

Oakwood also welcomes the community into our church through Boy Scouts and 4-H meetings, quilters, and all who use our building. Some of the groups give us donations, some not, but the goodwill it creates is priceless. The community repays us by supporting our spaghetti supper each year, donating food, coming to our regular and special worship services or asking us to provide a worship service at the Shores once a month, which is another opportunity to serve.

We are so grateful to our congregation for all you have done to make these ministries this successful. Your gifts of time talent and resources show the promise of the Lord in all we do. January does start a new budget year and we thank everyone that has stepped up to give to Oakwood. All the faith you show in what we do here is so appreciated

We know some of you may want to know more specifically how we spend money. Below are those numbers. If you have any questions, please see our Treasurer, Marlys DeVries, our Finance Committee co-chairs, Kathy Bolten or Don Timmins or any member of the Finance Committee.

Ministries

Program Expense	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 1,848.00
Mission Expense	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 2,158.00
Youth Camp Scholarships	\$ 22,500.00	\$ 4,550.00
Youth Program Expense	\$ 7,150.00	\$ 3,966.00
	\$ 38,650.00	\$ 12,522.00

Administration

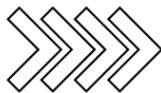
Building Operations and Maintenance	\$ 52,770.00	\$ 12,557.00
Custodial Expenses	\$ 17,200.00	\$ 1,452.00
Insurance	\$ 24,000.00	\$ 12,200.00
Office Supplies/Technology (Licenses)	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 920.00
Utilities	\$ 28,000.00	\$ 2,957.00
	\$ 127,970.00	\$ 30,086.00

Staff

Salaries **** Includes salaries and all related expenses, such as benefits, and continuing education	\$ 218,077.00	\$ 5,405.00
	\$	-
Operating Expense	\$ 384,697.00	\$ 48,013.00
Apportionments paid in full (Portion paid to be determined based on our income.	\$ 55,108.00	\$ 43,108.00
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$ 439,805.00	\$ 91,121.00

Our 2026 Christmas Album





Oakwood Leadership Committees

Administrative Board Chair

Kris Benge

Lay Leader

Roger Johnson

Representative to Annual Conference

Todd Buchacker

Finance

Co-Chairs Kathy Bolten and Don Timmins
Treasurer Marlys DeVries
Diane Plym
Brenda Gustafson
Kelley Buchacker
Nancy Berggren
Rev. Alexis

Hospitality

Co-Chairs Pam Schwartz and Angie Acker
Sharon Kirkpatrick
Sarah Davis
Cindy Slinger
Sandi Stone
Cheryl Timmins
Stacie Newton

Congregational Care

Rev. Alexis
Sherri Anderson
Sharon Bergeson
Todd Buchacker
Sue Forest
Kitana Fischer
Roger Johnson
Sandi Stone
Sandy Olson
Nancy Pinkerton
Mary Kay Buchacker
Stacie Newton
Jan Diamond
Julie Feldman

Children and Youth Ministry

Nathan Fischer
Tania Bentley
Ruby Ruby
Nancy Pinkerton
Kitana Fischer

Trustees

Co-Chairs Gary Schwartz and Mike Feldman
Mike Kirkpatrick
John Bergeson
Hunter Davis
Larry Keller
Carrie Sponheim
Stacie Newton

Staff Pastor Parish Relations

Chair Cheryl Egger
Sharon Kirkpatrick
Connie Doud
Sandy Olson
Spencer Sponheim

Worship Team

Brian Acker
Kris Benge
Charlene Shallabarger
Cindy Brody
Sarah Hager
Connie Doud
Laura Anspach

Memorials

Pat Harvey
Karen Anderson
Joyce Delk

Missions

Co-Chairs Marcus Lucas and
Laura Anspach
Food Pantry Director Cassie Lahmann
Sandy Baumgart
Kitana Fischer
Kim Smith
Susan Moritz
Julie Feldman
Rev. Alexis

Small Groups

Julie Feldman
Nancy Berggren
Mike Feldman,
Rick Slinger
Cindy Slinger
Roger Ruby
Judy Wadding
Todd Buchacker

The Power of Volunteering

You didn't raise me that way," said my oldest, Noah.

He was responding to me saying that I didn't care what he wore to Christmas Eve service. Honestly, I was just so glad he was home in Des Moines and willing to go with me. That comment sparked one of many conversations we've had this year about how he was raised—and why.

Those conversations have come up often, but most frequently when we talk about community.

I intentionally taught all my boys that volunteering and improving our community matters. They were "voluntold" from a pretty young age. They came with me as I volunteered at CAP Theatre and here at church. They helped on Christmas Eve—Noah serving in the food pantry and handing out candles at the 11 p.m. service. Not all my boys respond to volunteering in the same way (Noah is by far the most willing), but all of them were shaped by those experiences.

Recently, I've watched many other parents model that same spirit by bringing their children to volunteer in the food pantry. Some families are from within our church, while others have come from the wider community. I've seen students working toward their high school silver cord and other achievements.

But more important than the recognition, I've watched compassion and empathy grow.

I've seen young people realize they can make an impact beyond themselves. Meeting people from different backgrounds while working toward a common goal can be life-changing—for both the volunteer and the person being helped.

One of the most meaningful lessons my boys learned through volunteering was the importance of standing up for others when necessary. Every person is valued in God's eyes. All three of my children have shared stories of moments when they chose to speak up for someone else.

This year, I asked Noah about one of those moments—why he decided to say something when it would have been easier to stay quiet. His answer humbled me:
"I've watched you do it my whole life, Mom. How could I not?"

As we begin a new year, I am deeply grateful for the food pantry and for the dozens of volunteers who make it possible. I'm blessed by every one of you—and by the people who visit the pantry. Oakwood has raised many of us to answer the call to serve, and I'm thankful to be part of a community that continues to do so whenever and wherever we're needed.

Thank you,
Cassie Lahmann

January Bible Year Reading Plan

1 31-Dec Genesis 1:1 - 3:24	20 19-Jan Exodus 15:22 - 18:27 52
2 1-Jan Genesis 4:1 - 5:32	21 20-Jan Exodus 19:1 - 21:36 53
3 2-Jan Genesis 6:1 - 9:17	22 21-Jan Exodus 22:1 - 24:18 54
4 3-Jan Genesis 9:18 - 11:32	23 22-Jan Exodus 25:1 - 27:21 55
5 4-Jan Genesis 12:1 - 14:24	24 23-Jan Exodus 28:1 - 30:38 56
6 5-Jan Genesis 15:1 - 17:27	25 24-Jan Exodus 31:1 - 34:35 57
7 6-Jan Genesis 18:1 - 20:18	26 25-Jan Exodus 35:1 - 40:38 58
8 7-Jan Genesis 21:1 - 23:20	27 26-Jan Leviticus 1:1 - 4:35 59
9 8-Jan Genesis 24:1 - 25:18	28 27-Jan Leviticus 5:1 - 7:38 60
10 9-Jan Genesis 25:19 - 28:9	29 28-Jan Leviticus 8:1 - 10:20
11 10-Jan Genesis 28:10 - 30:43	30 29-Jan Leviticus 11:1 - 14:37
12 11-Jan Genesis 31:1 - 36:43 44	31 30-Jan Leviticus 15:1 - 18:30
13 12-Jan Genesis 37:1 - 41:57 45	32 31-Jan Leviticus 19:1 - 23:44
14 13-Jan Genesis 42:1 - 45:28 46	
15 14-Jan Genesis 46:1 - 50:26 47	
16 15-Jan Exodus 1:1 - 4:31 48	
17 16-Jan Exodus 5:1 - 7:13 49	
18 17-Jan Exodus 7:14 - 12:30 50	
19 18-Jan Exodus 12:31 - 15:21 51	