



**Would you like us to email you your newsletter? As long as you're not a Russell Boxholder we can email you the Russell Newsletter.**

Email your request to:  
[russellnews@fibmn.com](mailto:russellnews@fibmn.com)

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**NOTICE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**  
TO ENSURE YOUR AD GETS IN THE PAPER PLEASE SEND TO THE ABOVE EMAIL BY THE FRIDAY BEFORE NEWSLETTER WEEK.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**A BIG THANK YOU TO EVERYONE THAT HAS DONATED MONEY TO THE RUSSELL NEWSLETTER LATELY! YOUR DONATIONS KEEP THIS NEWSLETTER GOING!**

Russell Newsletter,  
PO Box 360,  
Russell, MN 56169.

# Russell Newsletter

December 2025



Join Grace First Parish for church every Sunday at 9:00 a.m.

**Sunday School Christmas Program is December 21st!**

Sunday School will resume on January 11th after church.

The Coon Creek Cheerful Workers 4-H Club held their annual Santa Days on December 7th at the Russell Community Center. They had a great turnout of about 65 people along with Santa, Mrs. Claus and even the Grinch! They displayed some of their 4-H projects, had games and goodies as well as visits with Mr. & Mrs. Claus!



## **Did you know???**

**As we all know the City of Russell's property taxes will be rising in 2026. We are all feeling the impact. However, did you know that there are property tax refunds out there?**

**There are two types of property tax refunds; the Regular Refund & the Special Refund.**

**The Regular Refund is based off of your income. If you make less than \$139,000, you qualify for the regular property tax refund.**

**With the Special Refund, if your property tax is increasing more than 12% and is raising your property taxes more than \$100 you are eligible for the Special Refund!**

**Talk to you tax accountant and/or go to the Department of Revenue website for more information.**

**Russell Bar & Grill  
Open Monday thru Saturday  
at 11:00 a.m.**

**If you would like to order  
take out, call 507-823-9766**

**Holiday hours: Christmas Eve 11-4,  
Christmas Day, closed.  
New Year's Day, closed.  
Happy Holidays to you all!  
Thank you for your patronage!**



**Kitchen Help Wanted!  
Looking for cooks that are  
willing to work days, nights  
and weekends. Stop in to  
the RBG and pick up an  
application if interested!**

## ***Holiday Lights Contest!***

Russell Bandwagon Days is sponsoring a Holiday Lights Contest in Russell!

Light up your home & businesses and enter to win some great prizes!

Homes and businesses must be located in the City of Russell.

Judging will be based on overall design and appeal no matter the amount of lights. There is no charge to enter.

**We will be judging this week!**



**Watch for details in January about our new downtown Christmas lights. We are still accepting donations but are waiting to purchase them until January so that we are able to get them at a phenomenal discount! Thank you to all that have donated so far! Tough Enough to Play greatly appreciates this! We are still accepting donations as these lights are not cheap. So if you are still interested in donating, please make your check payable to Tough Enough to Play. Thank you!**

**City of Russell Clerk**

**Office Hours:**

Monday 6:30 am-2:00 pm  
Tuesday: 11:00 am-5:30 pm  
Wednesday: 6:30 am-2:00 pm  
Thursday: 6:30 am-2:00 pm  
Friday: 6:30 am-2:00 pm

Hours are subject to change due  
to appointments.

If you have any questions, please leave a message at 823-4366.



**The City of Russell is offering for  
sale 3 buildable lots in  
Bulldog Addition. Please contact  
the City office at 507-823-4366 for  
more information.**

***Blood Mobile***

Monday, January 26th from 1:00 - 6:30 P.M.  
At the Russell Community Center



The Russell City council held their regular meeting on Wednesday November 5<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm in the City Hall meeting room. Present were Mayor Hilary Buchert, Council members, Matt Kerkaert, Joel VanDamme and Dawn Garbe. Also present were Jason Alberts, Public works, Laurie Millner, Clerk, Shelly Sanow, RBG, Matt Gross, City Attorney and members of the community.

Mayor Buchert called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance.

M/S/C Joel VanDamme/ Dawn Garbe to open the public hearing regarding the special use permit for Cindy Hook to keep horses.

M/S/C Joel VanDamme / Dawn Garbe to close the public hearing regarding the special use permit for Cindy Hook to keep horses.

M/S/C Dawn Garbe / Joel VanDamme to approve the agenda as presented.

M/S/C Joel Van Damme / Dawn Garbe to approve the minutes from the October 14<sup>th</sup> regular meeting.

M/ S/C Joel VanDamme / Dawn Garbe to approve the special use permit for Cindy Hook to keep 2 horses and 2 mini horses on the 3.09 acres as requested. The entire parcel is to be fenced.

M/S/ C Matt Kerkaert/ Joel VanDamme to contribute .22% of the premium for MN PD leave beginning January 1, 2026. (MNPL) benefits.

M/S/C Matty Kerkaert / Joel VanDamme to allow employees to use MNPL in intermittent periods of time of 1 hour.

M/S/C Joel VanDamme / Dawn Garbe to certify the outstanding water bill for customer #924 to their property taxes.

M/S/C Matt Kerkaert / Dawn Garbe to approve the bills as presented.

There will be a Truth in Taxation meeting on Tuesday November 25<sup>th</sup> beginning at 6:00 pm in the Community Center.

The next regular meeting will be December 9<sup>th</sup> in the City Hall meeting room beginning at 5:30 pm.

M/S/C Joel VanDamme / Dawn Garbe to adjourn the meeting.

Laurie Millner  
City Clerk

## Russell City Council

Special meeting November 25, 2025

The Russell City Council held a special meeting on Tuesday November 25<sup>th</sup> in the Community Center at 6:00 pm. Present at the meeting were Mayor Hilary Buchert, Council members Matt Kerkaert, Glen Grant, Joel VanDamme, and Dawn Garbe and members of the community.

Mayor Hilary Buchert called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance.

M/S/C Joel VanDamme / Matt Kerkaert to open the meeting.

Council members discussed the proposed levy and answered questions from the community members.

M/S/C Glen Grant / Matt Kerkaert to adjourn the meeting.

Laurie Millner  
City Clerk

By Mail.



By Phone.



In Person.



Bank Draft.



Drop Box.



Check out our Bill Payments options.

You can now pay your utility bill online from our website if you wish to! For more information go to our website [russellmn.gov](http://russellmn.gov) or contact Laurie at the city office.





Russell Bandwagon Days had a GREAT turnout for Turkey Bingo in November! Thank you to everyone who participated and hope you all had a great time! Bandwagon Days is taking the month of December off.  
**\*\*Our next BINGO will be held on Friday, January 16th starting at 6:30. Blackout Jackpot is at \$600 in 55 numbers!\*\***

We can't wait to see all of you there for a great time and a chance to win BINGO!

***Happy Holidays to all of you and as always thank you for your support to Russell Bandwagon Days!***



### Minnesota Memories December 2025...a memorable Christmas

On Christmas Eve, 1945 we gathered in my maternal grandparent's Florence, MN home. It was a uniquely memorable Christmas gathering because WWII was over and many of the boys who had been sent off to fight had come home. Three of those boys (certainly to be considered men at this point) were present at our little gathering, my mother's two brothers, Walter and Keith Wixon, and my father, Edward Burckhardt. They had all served in the Pacific Theater and returned unscathed. I was there as a four year old but truthfully do not remember this specific gathering. I "inherited" this memory during a conversation with another of my Wixon uncles, Kenneth (known to all of us as Barney for some reason unknown), who was a nine year old at the time. I asked him why he remembered this so vividly and he said, "Because I was there and your father threatened to shoot Santa Claus and all we kids were begging him not to do so." This rings true to me because I remember Dad making the same threat in subsequent Christmases...he did not want those reindeer messing up the roof. Fast forward many years and I made the same threat...obviously, neither my father nor I was serious, but it always added a little drama to Christmas Eve. So, what to make of this inherited memory story? First, if you have family elders, encourage them to share such memories. Second, if you are a family elder, share such memories with the youngsters. Shared family memories enrich the present and the future and speak to who we were, are and will be. So, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year...make some holiday memories...and be careful out there. © Marland J. Burckhardt



**Betty Louise McConnell (Otto)** was born on January 24, 1941 at home to Martin and Alice (Streiff) Otto south of Warroad, Minnesota. They moved with their family to a farm northwest of Warroad. Betty attended school in town. She liked algebra and home education while in high school. She took care of the younger children in her family, which kept her very busy. One special memory she had with her father was getting to help clean fish with him while the other kids did chores. On August 2, 1958, Betty married Dennis Battles. Following an unfortunate illness, Dennis passed away before their son, William “Bill” was born. Betty moved with her son to Marshall, Minnesota where she worked for Rowe Construction as a secretary.

Betty met Donald McConnell while at a roller rink in Balaton, Minnesota. They married on December 31, 1960 and made a life together on a farm near Ruthton, Minnesota. Betty was a homemaker and worked on the farm with Don while raising their five children. They retired in 2006. During their retirement, they enjoyed traveling across the country and spending winters in Texas. They also spent many years together working at the Marshall Avera Thrift Store. Don passed away in 2023. On Saturday, November 22, 2025, Betty passed away while at Prairie Home Hospice in Marshall at the age of 84 years, nine months and 29 days.

Betty was a member of Grace First Parish in Russell, Minnesota. She was part of a quilting circle which made baby hats for local hospitals, made backpacks for books, volunteered to help with church meals and fundraisers and many other church activities. She always kept busy on the farm taking care of the vegetable gardening, canning and tending to the flower gardens. She enjoyed traveling, card clubs, knitting, sewing, quilt making, playing scrabble, visiting with friends and spending time with her grandkids. She loved the cat Don brought home; Maxi became a very special companion after Don passed away.

Betty will be remembered for her kindness. She never said a bad word about anyone. She loved kids and enjoyed living in the country. She was very hard-working and devoted to the relationships she held with her friends and family.

Betty is lovingly survived by her four children, William “Bill” McConnell of Verdi, Minnesota, Roger (Marcy) McConnell of Ruthton, Sandra (Scott) Niemela of Pequot Lakes, Minnesota, and Paul (Gwen) McConnell of Wall, South Dakota; 12 grandchildren, Tracy (Steve) Mankowski, Tyrel (Mary) McConnell, Nathan (Nancy) McConnell, Alisha McConnell (Cody Brunson), Jessica (Jake) Keenan, Michelle (Dewayne) Carollo, Jennifer (Joe) Stein, Chelsea (Peter) Noding, Emily (Noah) Melhorn, Courtney (John) Sullivan, Melissa (Trevor) Fricke, and Breanna McConnell; 29 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren; four siblings, Gloria Tesarek of Roseau, Minnesota, Martha (Eugene) Krzoska of Roseau, Alice (Paul) Hahn of Warroad, and Allyn Otto of Warroad; and other family and friends. She was preceded in death by her two husbands, Dennis Battles and Donald McConnell; daughter, Kristine McConnell; great-granddaughter, Silver Brunson; parents; and four brothers, Floyd, Bobbie, Phillip and Martin.



**Vernon Swanson, age 82**, of Russell, Minnesota, died on Tuesday, December 2, 2025, at the Avera Dougherty Hospice House in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Funeral Services are 11:00 a.m. Saturday, December 6, 2025, at Grace First Parish in Russell, Minnesota. Interment will be at the Russell Cemetery, followed by luncheon at the Russell Community Center. Visitation will be held one hour prior to his celebration, from 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, also at the church.

Vernon Albin Swanson was born on January 25, 1943, in Russell, Minnesota. He was the son of Albin and Sophie Swanson. Vernon grew up on the family farm near Russell and was baptized as an infant and confirmed in his youth at Grace Lutheran Church in Russell. He attended school in Russell before continuing to help his family on the farm.

On September 26, 1964, Vernon was united in marriage to Leigh Schuchard in Elkton, South Dakota. After meeting the love of his life at a local football game and the couple spent 56 years of marriage together prior to her death in 2019. They made their home on a hobby farm just outside Russell where they raised three children.

Vernon was proud of his hobby farm where he primarily raised and trained horses and later took on sheep. He drove truck for various places, namely over 30 years at Schwan's. Later he would serve as custodian for the Russell School and enjoyed his time as school bus driver in his home community.

Vernon's interests in life included hunting, fishing, time spent at their cabin on Nest Lake near Spicer, playing with his dog, and attending horse shows. In recent years Vernon could also be found trying his luck on video lottery games.

Vernon Swanson died on December 2, 2025, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He reached the age of 82 years, 10 months, and 7 days. Blessed be his memory.

He is survived by his 3 children, Tara (and TJ) Law of Brandon, SD, Russ (and Nancy) Swanson of Aberdeen, SD, Troy Swanson of Harrisburg, SD; 4 grandchildren, Tasha Swanson, Teya (and Devin) Berndt, Rex Swanson, Trinity Law; 7 great-grandchildren, Briley, Ella, Sophie, Derek, Blayne, Iris, Bowman; sister, Judy Swanson of Balaton; beloved dog, Bella; nieces, nephews, other relatives and many friends.

Vernon was preceded in death by his parents, Albin and Sophie Swanson; wife, Leigh Swanson; and a sister in infancy, Eyvone Swanson.

Arrangements by the Hamilton Funeral Home in Marshall, Minnesota. 507-532-2933  
A recording of the service and a guestbook are available online at [www.hamiltonfh.com](http://www.hamiltonfh.com).

Russell Community Newsletter  
PO Box 360  
Russell, Minnesota 56169

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