November 2026

the first messenger



First Lutheran Church

Opening Doors to Life in Christ

November Calendar

Watch for the latest updates in the Friday email & in the bulletins. A full calendar is on our website: firstlutheranchurch.com

Worship With Us!
Sundays @ 9:30am & Wednesdays @ 6pm

All Saints Sunday & Wednesday
November 1 & 8

Theology on Tap
November 4 @ 7pm at Bucks Mill Brewing

Rebekah Circle
November 10 @ 9am

Ruth Circle
November 12 @ 1:30pm

No Oasis or Kids Fellowship
Thanksgiving Break
November 25 & 29

Office Closed | Thanksgiving Holiday
November 26 & 27

Decorate Church for Christmas
November 22 @ 10:30am

Vision Council Meeting
November 17 @ 5:30pm

Theology on Tap
November 19 @ 7pm at Bucks Mill Brewing

High School Pizza Lunch
November 19 @ Pizza Ranch

First Sunday of Advent
November 29

Weekly Activities

Quilters
Tuesday @ 8:30am

Men's Daybreak Bible Study
Wed @ 6:30am at the Holiday Inn

Wednesday Night
Oasis Meal 5-6pm
Worship Service 6-6:30pm
Wednesday School, Confirmation & The Vine 6:30-7pm
Jubilate Choir practice @ 7:15pm

Worship Team Rehearsal
Wednesday @ 5pm

Women's Bible Study
Thursday @ 8am

TURKEY BINGO
Fundraiser

Wednesday Nov. 18th

Dinner 5-6 -- Bingo 6:15-7

Menu

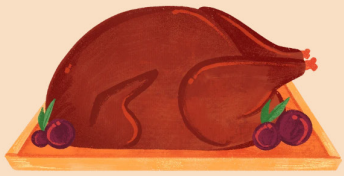
Hot Turkey Sandwiches
Mac and Cheese
Homemade Coleslaw
Chips
Pumpkin Pie
Cookies

Freewill Donation

Bingo

We will play until time runs out!

$10 per card bundle





Funds raised from this evening will go to Youth and Family Ministries to help fund our summer high school trip to the ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis at the end of June 2027

Support Our Youth

On November 18 you have the opportunity to support our youth, eating yummy food and play BINGO! Is it possible to have that much fun AND do good all at the same time --YES IT IS! See you at Turkey Bingo (Turkey hats optional)





Thin Places

by Lead Pastor, Joe Skogmo

I preached a sermon on October 11th on a theme I want to give a little bit more reflection, especially with November being the month of Thanksgiving.

On the 11th I preached on the spiritual phenomenon of thin places. These are the moments in our lives where we feel a bit more spiritually attuned, where space and time are suspended, when we feel a bit more awake to being alive, where holiness itself is noticed. These could be epic moments or in the mundane. Wedding vows, the birth of a child, or…maybe it's the steam rising from your coffee in the quiet morning sun, the sound of children laughing from another room, a meal shared around a crowded table, the first snow, or a friend who shows up when life gets hard. They are the moments where the space between life and the Divine seem unusually thin…hence, Celtic Christianity's beautiful phrase: thin places.

I don't think these moments are summoned, and I don't think they are times where God suddenly appears; rather, I think they're instances in our lives where the trance of life is broken and we suddenly, even if vaguely, become aware of the sacredness of life and the nearness of our Creator. St. Bonaventure had wonderful imagery for these: they are moments where the 'fingerprints of God' are noticed in the people, places, sights, sounds, and experiences we might otherwise take for granted.

Again, I don't think these mysterious instances can be summoned or manufactured, but I do wonder if there are spiritual practices that can keep us more awake to them. On that note, November invites us to practice gratitude, and I wonder if that's at the heart of all this.

So, this November, let's try a small experiment. Before rushing past the familiar, pause. Notice the warmth of a meal, the laughter around the dinner table, the beauty of a fading sunset, or the quiet relief of making it through another difficult day. And if you struggle to name it, there is a wonderful reflection by the author Kurt Vonnegutt, Jr. that is really helpful, or at least something to consider. In multiple books and writings (and in a lecture found here on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sn6ru7FaQns), he quotes an uncle of his who found it so "objectionable" that human beings "so seldom notice when they are happy!"; therefore, sometimes we need to "stop everything and say: 'If this isn't nice, I don't know what is!'…And I hope that you will take up this habit, too, of noticing when things are really, awfully nice."

Thin places are all around us, and perhaps spiritual maturity is being intentional about noticing them. Gratitude leads us into noticing. And, for many reasons, noticing the sacredness of life is so important. Because…these moments will pass. The children grow, the coffee cools, the sun sets, and the table eventually empties. And we just might miss the thin places we're a part of, that are constantly hiding in plain sight.

Happy November, folks. If this isn't nice…I don't know what is.

Pastor *Joe Skogmo*

Christian Reflections

I recently had the opportunity to attend a Rural Ministry Summit sponsored by the NW Minnesota Synod of the ELCA. The purpose of this summit was to "take the pulse" of churches in our part of the state so that the Synod staff could plan their programming accordingly.

Approximately 30-35 ELCA clergy were in attendance, consisting of p astors, deacons, and SAMs, and the reports and comments made by these attendees were quite sobering, if not downright depressing.

Since most of our Synod is located in farm country, the farm economy drives the relative health in many of our communities. And the farm economy, my friends, is unhealthy. High production costs, inconsistent yields, and market uncertainty are all playing a role in this situation. Is it a crisis? Some would say so.

Several conference attendees spoke of farm foreclosures occurring near their communities. Not surprisingly, other local businesses, many of which are dependent on the farm economy, are negatively impacted as well, and business closings are becoming increasingly commonplace in some communities.

Perhaps most alarmingly, it was indicated that 25% of the rural churches in this synod are without clergy, without pastors, deacons, or SAMs. And the problem is apparently far worse in the Southwestern Synod.

So where does that leave the churches? It leaves many of them with shrinking congregations, financial uncertainty, decaying buildings, and concern about viability. Some are in danger of closing their doors.

Wow, I was stunned. After the meeting I immediately emailed Pastor Joe with a simple message: Do you realize how incredibly blessed we are? How fortunate we are? How lucky we are?

I mean really, here we are in a growing church, financially strong, a diverse congregation with a strong sense of community, a wonderful, dedicated staff, and great volunteers that give freely of their time. And this is all wrapped up in a growing community with a diverse economy.

My friends, we are truly blessed. We are spared from worry about our churches' survival, at least for now. Indeed, we have multitudes of opportunities…new ministries, new programs, new ways to worship and honor the God who has blessed us so abundantly, new ways to cultivate our faith, new ways to learn and grow, and new ways to be part of a diverse faith community.

Indeed, God is great….Praise be to God!

Peace, *Barry*

Youth & Family Ministry

Olivia Sauer, Youth & Family Ministry Director | olivia@firstlutheranchurch.com
920.860.4655 | office hours : Mon-Thurs 8:30am-4pm

Loving Our Neighbors: October Service Projects

The Vine youth had their first service project of the year. They learned about our local animal shelters and some of their needs as we head into winter and decided to make tie blankets to be donated to local animal shelters.









Our **Kindergarten** kids recently had the opportunity to participate in a service project that focused on helping those in crisis. After learning about our local EMS, together they made small stuffed animals to be handed out to folks in an emergency who might just need some extra love.

PreK-5th Grade Service Projects '26-'27

Service projects are held in the chapel at 6:30pm, parents and guardians are encouraged to attend with their child.

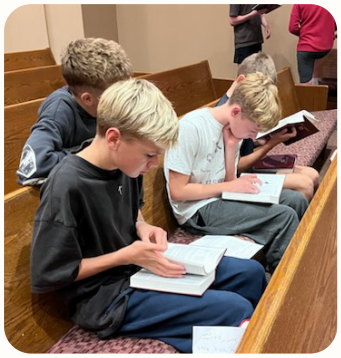
11/4 | **3rd Grade - Helping the Homeless** w/ FLC's Social Assistance
1/13 | **4th Grade - Helping the Elderly** w/ FLC's Visitation Team
2/24 | **5th Grade - Helping Victims of Abuse** w/ Lakes Crisis
3/18 | **2nd Grade - Helping Animals** w/ Humane Society of the Lakes
4/21 | **1st Grade - Helping our Planet** w/ Becker County Environmental Services



Looking Ahead

November 4 | Third Grade Service Project - Helping the Homeless
November 18 | Turkey Bingo 5-7:30pm | This will be the only event taking place.
No worship or PreK-12th grade programming.
November 19 | FREE High School Lunch | at Pizza Ranch. All FLC High school students invited.
November 25 | Thanksgiving Break; No Oasis, Worship, or PreK-12th grade programming
November 29 | Thanksgiving Break; No Kid's Fellowship
December 16 | 6pm | Children's Christmas Program, during worship. No Prek -12 programming following worship.

CONFIRMATION
STUDENTS
HARD AT WORK


Imagine More! ELCA Youth Gathering 2027

Every three years, thousands of high schoolers and their adult leaders from across the ELCA come together for the ELCA Youth Gathering. It's not just an event but a movement in which faith ignites and community comes alive. Through inspiring speakers, experiential learning and transformative connections, young people experience the church in bold, unforgettable ways.

Each night, participants share a unique faith experience through high-energy worship and powerful storytelling. The Gathering is an opportunity to ask big questions, grow in faith and be part of something bigger than yourself.





2027 Youth Gathering - Imagine More!
Minneapolis | June 28 - July 22
Open to all current 9th-12th graders
Cost: $200; $50 down payment at registration.
Watch for sign-up information!

To God – whose power now at work in us can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine. - Ephesians 3:20 (Inclusive)

Congregational Life

Baptisms
11/8 - Kynzlee Moench

Noisy Offering Beneficiaries

September | First Lutheran YFM received: $764.76
October | Churches United received: $761.80
November | Disabled American Veterans

September Financial Snapshot

Actual Revenue, YTD*:	$167,972.63
Budgeted Revenue, YTD:	$167,916.00
Favorable/(unfavorable):	$56.63

*unaudited

Memorials

Agape
In memory of Hazel Risberg, given by Claire Beardsley
In honor of Pastor Joe & Minister Barry, given by Sandy & Delyle Willprecht

Quilters
In memory of Ruth Olson, given by Gary & Tanzy Haisley

Undesignated
In memory of Gladys Bently, given by Family of Gladys Bently



2027 Giving Envelopes will be available for pick up in December. Watch the bulletin for more information.

Advent Mini-Concerts

December 2, 9 & 16 @ noon. Lunch to follow the concert.

We will once again be ringing in the holiday season with our Advent Mini-Concerts. Join us each week as we feature local musicians such as: Emma Duncan, Rich Johnson, Kyle Colby and of course Tim Eggebratten. Each concert is followed by a light lunch. Everyone is welcome, this is a great opportunity to invite a friend to FLC!

Christmas Decorating



Mark your calendars! It's time to decorate the church for Christmas! We will decorate after church on **Sunday, November 22** so we will be ready for the first Sunday on Advent on November 29.
Grab a cup of Coffee and we'll meet in the gathering area outside of the library.

Bell Ringers Needed

Saturday, November 28 | 8am - 8pm

First Lutheran is looking for volunteers to ring the bell for the Salvation Army! We have one hour time slots available from 10am - 8pm at Central Market.
Sigh up at the Information Table. This a great family opportunity!

Agape Update

Thanks to everyone who donated socks during the month of Socktober! Stay tuned for the grand total!

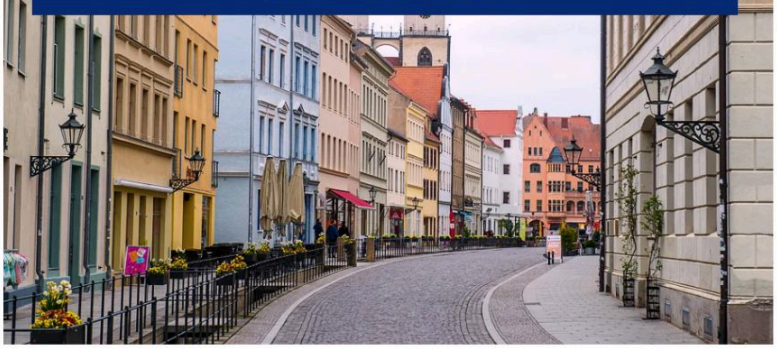
Cold weather needs:
Winter jackets, snow pants & boots.

Churches United Current Needs:

Body towels
Pillows
Twin Sheets
Personal care travel kits

AMMPARO - part of the ELCA that works to Accompany Migrant Minors through Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunity. It started as a program to provide legal representation for unaccompanied migrant minors as they go through the legal system. Due to current needs, it has expanded to include minors' families. The need is great. If you want to know how you can help, you can go to the ELCA website and enter AMMPARO. You can also contact them at: 800-638-3522.
Checks or money orders can be mailed to:
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
P.O. Box 1809
Merrifield, VA 22116-8009
Together, we can accomplish great things.

- April 12-22, 2027 -



IN THE STEPS OF MARTIN LUTHER

Hosted by Pr Wade & Holly Dutton

Visiting: Berlin, Wittenberg, Eisleben, Leipzig, Augsburg & more! More info in the church office.

New Reads in the FLC Library -- Check it out!

My Body is My Body, *by Allison Schmitt.* My Body is MY Body is a simple rhyming book for children that creates a safe space for families and communities to begin the conversation about body safety and boundaries. Children learn that they have the power to use their voices to help prevent and stop unwanted touching and sexual abuse. With resources included, My Body is MY Body is an informative and helpful tool for everyone

Lutheran Church Basement Women, Lutefisk, Lefse, Lunch and Jell-0, b*y Janet Letnes Martin, Allen Todnem.* Not only is it filled with the oldie but goodie recipes (including egg coffee and Watkin's nectar) from years ago, but it is loaded with humorous insights into proper Lutheran church basement etiquette.

Growing Up Lutheran, What Does this Mean? *By Janet Letnes Martin and Suzann J Nelson.*
A humorous 1997 memoir and cultural expose that explores the quirky, endearing, and deeply familiar traditions of mid-century Lutheran life in the American Midwest.

In Spite of Heroin *by Dana Chase.* The blunt impact of reality to any parent who believes 'this can't happen to our family'. It portrays a courageous mother and her attempts to save her sons from wasted lives and tragic drug related deaths. In Spite Of Heroin reveals a parent's nightmare and the struggle of a lifetime. Eminently readable, In Spite Of Heroin is a shocking true story that readers will sacrifice sleep to finish.

Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart, How to Relate to those who are Suffering *by Kenneth C. Haugk, Ph.D.* How to care for and relate to people as they encounter difficult times in life. With its biblical foundation, compassionate approach, and concrete ideas, Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart will help you bring God's loving presence to hurting people when they need it most.

Understanding Your Grief, Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart *by Alan D W Wolfelt, Ph.D*. This book explores every mourner's need to acknowledge death and embrace the pain of loss. Also explored are the many factors that make each person's grief unique and the many normal thoughts and feelings mourners might have. Questions of spirituality and religion are addressed as well. This book upholds the rights of mourners to be compassionate with themselves, to lean on others for help, and to trust in their ability to heal. Also has a journal.

Little Visits with God, *by Allan Hart Jahsmann.* Each devotion clearly articulates the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and offers practical examples of Gods action on Christians lives today. Each includes a Bible verse, short reading, activity suggestion, and prayer starter.

When Christ Comes, the Beginning of the Very Best *by Max Lucado.* Max Lucado believes the day Christ comes will be the "beginning of the very best." Our primary task is to be prepared and peaceful while we wait. If you have some questions about the end of time. If you have concerns about what will happen to you. If you like to look to the end of times as a source of comfort and not chaos, you are holding the right book.

The Seasons of My Mother, A Memoir of Love, Family, and Flowers *by Marcia Gay Harden.* In this lyrical and deeply moving memoir, one of America's most revered actresses weaves stories of her adventures and travels with her mother, while reflecting on the beautiful spirit that persists even in the face of her mother's struggle with Alzheimer's disease.

The Bible Says So (What We Get Right (and Wrong) About Scriptures Most Controversial Issues *by Dan McClellan.* In The Bible Says So, Dan McClellan leverages his popular "data over dogma" approach, and his years of experience in the academy and on social media, to lay out in clear and accessible ways what the data indicate the Bible does and doesn't say about issues ranging from homosexuality, abortion, and slavery to monotheism, inspiration, and even God's wife. Smart, accessible, and informative, The Bible Says So is an invaluable resource for our fractious times.

All My Good Habits I Leaned from Grandma by Laurel Seiler Brunvoll. Through inspiring, fun-loving stories, Laurel Brunvoll captures the charm and winning qualities that only grandma's possess. Endearing quotes and fun "grandma-isms" complete this package as a true celebration of grandmothers and those who adore them.

The Christmas Basket by Debbie Macomber. A heartwarming and touching holiday tale follows the lives of two women who have been feuding for years and their adult children, Noelle and Thomas, who have been in love since childhood but kept apart by their mothers' bitter battle, as they all find love, forgiveness, and happiness during the magic of Christmas.

Just Visiting

by Patti Cummins

"Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the [a]saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." 2nd Corinthians 13:12-14

"Grandma, what do you DO while I'm in Wednesday School?" Wednesday School is an option to have Sunday School on Wednesdays if they cannot attend Sunday. It is usually a packed house, so the need is there.

"Oh, I run errands if needed. Most of the time I am just visiting."

"Grandma, what do you mean by visiting?" In her mind, visiting is going someplace to see a person.

"Visiting is just talking to people."

"The WHOLE TIME?!" was her response followed by "What do you talk about?"

Hoping to avoid too much detail, I came back with "Lots of things."

I found her whole line of questioning hilarious and could barely prevent a smile breaking out on my face. When Oaklyn and a friend or cousin are together it is non-stop chatting that can embrace past memories, present experiences, and future imaginings. I sometimes wonder how they breathe amid their constant verbal eruptions.

Yet she cannot imagine what I might have to talk about with others at church.

Over and over the Bible encourages us in "sweet fellowship" without untruths or gossiping, or disparagement. A recent contestant on "Wheel of Fortune" said her mother raised her to always look for good qualities, something to lift up in another person. She managed to do it, although stating sometimes it was challenging.

I'll see you in fellowship, and with God's help hopefully the Christ in me will see the Christ in you. My greeting won't include the "kiss" mentioned in 2nd Corinthians, but God's presence whenever two or three are gathered will keep it holy.



Children Christmas Store

Saturday, December 5 | Volunteers Needed!

The Children's Christmas Store (CCS) is a ministry within First Lutheran Church that invites low-income children to Christmas shop for their family and learn the art of giving.

Roles needing volunteers:

Thursday set-up crew, December 4 | Friday set-up crew December 5

Cookie dough prep: mix up cookie dough and drop it off in the church kitchen, by Friday, to be baked by Mrs. Clause

Saturday, December 5: Welcome Table, Welcome Room (help with crafts), Cashier, Mrs Clause (bake cookies to give to the children), Gift Wrapping, Shopper Helper

To volunteer - sign up in the church entryway









Worthy Women | The Latest News From the Women of FLC

We are worthy of God's Love. We are His hands!

Rebecca Circle | meets the 2nd Tuesday at 9:00am
Ruth Circle | meets the 2nd Thursday at 1:30pm
FLC Quilters | Tuesdays, 8:30am. in the recreation room! They are doing an incredible work and welcome newcomers!

Recently, the Women of FLC assembled **80 Personal Care Kits and 57 School Kits** which were sent to Lutheran World Relief. WOW! Thanks to everyone who donated items.

Thank Offering | Watch for the Thank Offering envelopes coming soon. This special offering is collected in the month of November. All funds collected will be used for WELCA advocacy work, resources, grants, scholarships (for Seminary) and publications. Collect some change to contribute!

The **Sweet Sale** is coming December 13 | Christmas treats of all varieties to be sold. MMMM

Wanted: Bag Makers. Our School Kits are sent in fabric bags. We need a sewer or a team of sewers to assemble fabric bags. Instructions and materials are provided. Contact the church office to volunteer!

Thanks for all you do, You are appreciated, though we don't tell you often enough!!!



Thank you to everyone who brings in their Central Market We Care receipts for the Rebekah Circle. With the monies we receive from Central Market, we have donated to Churches United, Becker County Food Pantry, the FLC Radio Broadcast, Cornerstone in Frazee, ELCA Good Gifts, gloves & mittens to the Blessing Closet and have purchased items for the School & Health Kits. The receipts are turned in quarterly - March, June, September and December. This last quarter we received a check for $146.58, the most we have ever received.
Thank you for sharing your We Care receipts with us.
-the Rebekah Circle

Sweet Sale

Mark your calendars! Sunday, December 13th is the date for this year's Sweet Sale. Thanks to your help - either baking or buying - this annual fundraiser helped us raise funds for several programs serving our community and beyond. Holidays bring memories of fragrant aromas, as we share the fragrant aromas of God's love and provision.

Christmas Poinsettias

Spread holiday joy & warmth; donate Christmas poinsettias for the sanctuary in memory or honor of loved ones!
Order deadline: December 13
Each Poinsettia is $13

To place an order, fill out a form and drop it in the offering plate or return it to the Church Office. Forms are available at the Information Table. Or, to order online, scan the Code or go to our website: www.firstlutheranchurch.com.

DREAM BIG

EXPANDING WALLS • EXPANDING MINISTRY

Where Our Pledges Stand

Total Raised $490,397.96

Thanks First Lutheran!

For more information and the latest pictures of the new construction, check our website:
www.firstlutheranchurch.com/DreamBig

First Lutheran Church

Stay Connected!

firstlutheranchurch.com

Worship With Us!

Sundays | 9:30am
Wednesdays | 6pm

KDLM-1340 AM and
93.1 FM radio
Sundays at 10:00 AM.

Online:
firstlutheranchurch.com

Saturdays at 9:00 AM
on Arvig Cable channel 14.