

# First Lutheran NEWSLETTER



December  
2025

Oh Infant Jesus, Son of our Lord  
Who spreads special love and is widely adored  
You brightened the world on the day of your birth  
And many years later, saved people on earth

Many people had seen and followed the star  
They came from all over, some traveled afar  
All came to praise You, the young and the old  
Some came with gifts, like frankincense and gold

All those who looked in the manger and saw  
The little Lord Jesus were filled with great awe  
The Blessed Mother Mary gave birth to God's Son  
And Saint Joseph raised him, as God would have done

As He lay sleeping, on His small bed of hay  
The people all rejoiced, He has come, praise the day  
The shepherds, the angels, and the wise men of three  
All came to gaze on the Savior to be

No one who came to the infant yet knew  
All the wonderful miracles this child would do  
He would heal the sick, and give hope to the poor  
He would give all He had to His people and more

The Light of the World, the Savior is here  
He will teach us and guide us and we'll have no fear  
He will bring us a message, the word from above  
And that message is simple, the message is love

## Important Dates

Blue Christmas	Dec 3
Advent Service	Dec 10
FLY Grinchmas Party	Dec 12
WAFL program	Dec 17 & 21
3 & 5 pm Christmas Eve	Dec 24
Office Closed	Dec 25 & 26
FLY Christmas Party	Jan 9
Pasta Class	Jan 23
Faith Haven MTG	Feb 1
Weaving Class	Feb 7
Game Day	Feb 21

**Pledging for our 153rd of  
ministry begins in  
December as we receive  
the greatest gift EVER from  
God.**

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Far up in Heaven, the joy of Christ rang  
The angels were smiling and happy souls sang  
Come hear the good news, they said with great joy  
Praise our dear Lord and His new baby boy

God gave Him a message, His one only Son  
To save all his people, to make them as one  
He was sent down to help us and show us the way  
So we may be part of God's Kingdom someday

The Infant Jesus came as God's Eternal Light  
A light that shines forever, so clear and so bright  
I will follow that light till the end of my days  
I will worship my God and give him my praise

I celebrate His birthday at Christmas each year  
A day that fills people with laughter and cheer  
The presents don't matter, but I know what does  
My Jesus, who will be, is now, and who was.

*Author Unknown*

May we never forget that the little baby Jesus born in a manger  
is the same precious Jesus who died on the cross.

Serving Christ, Pastor Lynn

## **Advent is here!**

Our theme this year will be HOPE > FEAR. Can you imagine the fear Mary and Joseph faced as they served God? The new territory they were exploring - the changes to their lives? And yet their hope fed and nourished them throughout their physical and spiritual journey.

**Advent invites us not simply to "be not afraid," but to act with love in the midst of fear. Not to fix everything, but to show up with courage.**

**Let us believe, with trembling hope, that fear does not have the last word.  
Because fear doesn't stop us. Love leads us forward.**

Rev. Dr. Boyung Lee,



## New stuff Alert!

1. **Blue Christmas** - Christmas can be lonely, sad, and stressful for many of us. Perhaps we miss loved ones, have financial or family struggles, or need healing. This service honors these realities. It is a powerful service
2. **Acolytes!** Once again, our confirmands will be acolyting - starting January 4<sup>th</sup>. Some of our confirmands have not been raised in the church, so please support them each Sunday. Thank them, tell them they did a good job, or let them know they are appreciated. It will make a world of difference!
3. **Pledging** - First Lutheran was founded in 1873. We have faithfully ministered to our community for **153 years**. With 2026 just around the corner, we will be sharing HOPE this Christmas Season as we receive the greatest gift EVER from God.

Commitment forms for the 2026 estimate of giving will be available in early December (both in the office and on Sundays). Let's continue our steadfast Journey into 2026.



Estimate of giving card on page 14



**Northwestern Minnesota Synod**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



**For everything there is a time and a season, as the writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us. For me the shift from fall to winter feels like both an ending and a beginning. We gather in the last of the harvest and assess the now past season of growing. Was it a good harvest or not? Was the weather against us or for us? Will it be enough to sustain us for another year? Either way we then enter a new season of preparing. While the earth sleeps and takes its rest we begin making ready for the next season.**

**The church is also in a season of change. Many congregations are experiencing a decline in attendance. Budgets are stretched thin. Leadership transitions, political polarization, and shifting demographics have left many churches wondering how much longer they can hold on.**

**And yet, even now, the Spirit is moving us forward into a new season. Young leaders are emerging. Congregations are finding new ways to live out their baptismal promises. People are hungry for community, connection, healing, and hope — the very things that the church offers best.**

**We believe the church is not in a season of decline — it is in a season of discernment in preparation for what comes next. This moment calls not for despair, but for devotion. Not retreat, but renewal. What's more, we do not do this work alone. God still calls us to be people of faith who face each new season together. We are calling this new season "Rooted and Rising." Deeply rooted in our faith we are also rising to the challenges of a new season.**

**Sincerely in Christ,**

**BP. Bill Tesch**

**Bishop of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA**



# UPCOMING EVENTS



**Saturday, November 29<sup>th</sup>** there will be a Community Tree Lighting event beginning at 4:30p. Pre-Lighting Festivities will be held at Railroad Park including: music, bonfires, cocoa and special guests. Tree lighting will be at 5:30p. Visit [lakesconnect.org](http://lakesconnect.org) for a full list of activities.



**Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup>** the Battle Lake School will be holding their annual Craft Fair from 9a-2p. There will be a wide variety of vendors, a kid's crafting area and lunch will be available for purchase.



**Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup>** we will have a Grinch themed youth event for any students in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and up from 6p-12a. We will watch two Grinch movies, have Grinch themed snacks, play games and have some crafts available. Wear your best Grinch apparel!



**Wednesday, December 17<sup>th</sup>** the WAFL students will be performing their Christmas program, A Christmas Light Show. The program will start at 5:30p following WAFL with a soup supper to follow. If you are unable to make the Wednesday program they will perform their program again on **Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>**.



There will be a 3p and 5p Christmas Eve worship service on **Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>**. There will be a hot chocolate bar, with Christmas themed crafts and family photos available in the fellowship hall from 3p-5p. Join us after the 3p service or before the 5p service for some quality family time.

# UPCOMING EVENTS CONTINUED...



We will have our Christmas themed lock in event for youth from **Friday, January 9<sup>th</sup>** starting at 6pm until **Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup>** at 7am. Students in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade are invited to attend until 11p on Friday. Students in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and up are welcome to stay the entire lock in.

**Friday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>** Art of the Lakes will be holding a pasta making class located at First Lutheran Church from 4p-6:30p. Join Sandy Thimgan to learn how to make fettuccini, lasagna sheets, maybe a few shapes, if time allows.

\$45/\$50 Member/Non-Member

\$40/\$45 Member/Non-Member Early Bird (By January 9)



Plus \$5 materials payable to instructor at class.

Visit [artofthelakes.org/classes](http://artofthelakes.org/classes) to register



**Saturday, February 21<sup>st</sup>** we will be having a casual game day for anyone that is interested from 9a-3p. Bring your favorite card, dice or board game and a potluck item to share.





# Holy Faith

During the month of October our noisy offering collection was designated to go the Humane Society of Otter Tail County. Along with the noisy offering, we collected donations of goods and held a pie in the face competition to raise additional funds. On Wednesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, Chris Cannon, Executive Director of the Humane Society, joined us at WAFL to speak with the students about the great things happening at the Humane Society and to receive the donations. Chris also announced that the Humane Society had just received all of the funding to complete their building expansion!

Chris was also nominated to be the one to pie Missi in the face. After Missi received her pie in the face she challenged the WAFL students to also take a pie in the face. For every WAFL student that took a pie in the face an additional \$3 donation was made to the Humane Society. In total Chris left with a van load of donated products and \$532! This was a great congregational effort to support a great organization.

Thank you to everyone that donated and participated!





# MERRY Christmas

Update on James

Freedom, Faith and a Future

Dear Friends,

Last Christmas, we introduced you to James—a man rebuilding his life after years of addiction, incarceration, and loss. At that time, he was working hard to stay sober, employed, and reconnecting with his young daughter, Olivia.

One year later, we are overjoyed to share how far James has come. He is three years sober and officially off probation—**by the grace of God!** He continues to work full-time, has maintained his own apartment, and feels healthier than ever after losing more than 50 pounds. Most importantly, James is now an active, loving presence in his daughter's life.

"Matthew House was God's blessing in my life. It gave me safety, stability, and people who believed in me. They didn't see my mistakes—they saw who I could become. They'll always be family to me."—James

James' story reminds us that **hope, faith, and love can rebuild lives**. The Matthew House isn't just a place to stay—it's where men find healing, dignity, and the foundation to start again. Each resident's success is made possible because of caring friends like you who believe in second chances.

This Christmas, as we celebrate stories like James', we invite you to **help more men find freedom, faith, and a future**. Your gift—no matter the size—makes it possible for Matthew House to continue providing a home where grace meets growth.

Thank you for your generosity and prayers. Together, we are changing lives, one man at a time.

With gratitude,

*Todd Hylden*

Pastor Todd Hylden

matthewhouseff@gmail.com

PO Box 91, Fergus Falls, MN 56538



## Matthew House

Facing the Giants One Pebble at a Time

P.S. Secure online donations can be made at [MatthewHouseff.org](http://MatthewHouseff.org)



# Worship and Music



## Christmas music, carols and songs

Christmas without music would be unthinkable, and as carols and seasonal songs have evolved over hundreds of years, their melodies have come to evoke tranquillity and peace. In medieval times, the word 'carol' referred to a round dance with musical accompaniment ('carole' in French). It later developed into a song form of verses and a refrain.

Not all the original texts had Christmassy words but many were associated with Mary, Advent and Christmas. The term has since come to be applied to all Christmas songs, whether or not in carol form. Christmas Carols were introduced to formal church services by St. Francis of Assisi.

'One of the oldest printed English Christmas carols is the Boar's Head Carol, sung as the traditional dish is carried in on Christmas Day at Queen's College, Oxford; it was printed in 1521.' (Oxford Dictionary of Music)

Christmas carol fans will be pleased that they were not alive between 1649 and 1660, when Christmas carols were banned by Oliver Cromwell. He thought that worship should be solemn, and so Christmas was only celebrated in England by a simple service at that time.

'Silent Night' was written in 1818 by Austrian priest Joseph Mohr. He was told the day before Christmas Eve that the church organ was broken and would not be repaired in time for the Christmas Eve service, so he wrote a carol that could be sung by the choir and guitar. The result - 'Stille Nacht'. English church musician W.H. Cummings adapted a theme from Mendelssohn's choral work Festgesang for the Christmas carol Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.

In a carol symphony, four movements are held together by one main carol and other carols are used for secondary themes. The first composer to write a carol symphony was Victor Hely-Hutchinson (1901-47), who was born in South Africa but lived in England for most of his life. His carol symphony begins with 'Adeste Fideles' followed by 'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen', the 'Coventry Carol' and a touch of 'The First Nowell'. Finally, the symphony finishes with 'Here We Come A Wassailing' and 'Adeste Fideles'.

Found on "Classicfm.com"



## SHARE AND CARE GROUPS:

Group One, December, January, February

### December

Missi Abfalter, Jess  
Granby, Remi Alto  
Myron Dahle  
Meg O'Kane  
Chrys Kirschbaum  
Jane Dixon  
Wayne & Marilyn Horgen  
Doreen & Doug Stave  
Nancy Senyk  
Linda & Gary Morical  
Scot & Cathy Englin  
Jack & Betsy Everts  
Inez Flores  
Doug & DeeAnn Trosdahl

### January

Missi Abfalter, Jess  
Granby, Remi Alto  
Myron Dahle  
Meg O'Kane  
Chrys Kirschbaum  
Allison & Aaron Buehler  
Jim & Carol Sagerhorn  
Shelly & Jeff Sagerhorn  
Arlene Pieske  
Jon Tamke  
Beth & Lou Davis  
Cindy & Jeff Harms  
Tom & Ann Rasmussen  
Mike Youngblood  
Dennis & Nancy Quam  
Doug & DeeAnn Trosdahl

### February

Jane Dixon  
Jim & Carol Sagerhorn  
Shelly & Jeff Sagerhorn  
Arlene Pieske  
Jon Tamke  
Beth & Lou Davis  
Cindy & Jeff Harms  
Bonnie Pfeffer  
Luke & Haley Himmelspace  
Norm Stolle  
Warren & Carol Boese  
Jenna Kavanagh  
Roberta Skibness  
Larry & Kim Charest

## MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

First Lutheran Men's Fellowship met Thursday, November 6, 2025 at the Shoreline with 16 members in attendance. Co-chairs, Jim A. and Scot E., are working on the Christmas Basket project. Endowment is donating \$500 toward Christmas baskets. The food shelf project has received donations of 222 pounds of food and \$24 in cash so far this season. Last season, we collected 249 pounds of food and \$153 in cash donations. We will disperse funds to the food shelf and WAFL (barnyard). Our next meeting will be Thursday, December 4, 2025.



**WELCA Board – December 1st @ 1 pm**  
**Naomi Circle – December 9<sup>th</sup> @ 11:30 am**  
**Lydia Circle – December 9<sup>th</sup> @ 11:00 am**  
**Mary Circle – December 10<sup>th</sup> @ 10:00 am**  
**Evening Circle – December 14<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30 pm**








Greetings from your Parish Nurse.

Here we are into the season of giving. As I ponder what to give my family, I remember past Christmases of my youth. I don't ever remember a Christmas that I didn't receive the one thing I wished for. I wonder what it is like for others who don't have those memories and maybe there are no gifts under the tree. It leads me to remember the real gift of Christmas. Jesus! I pray that those who don't know him, will hear about his birth and the gift he will give us on Easter. I vow to continue to spread the good news of Jesus Christ and those that don't have gifts under the tree will have the gift of knowing him, which is the greatest gift on earth, I pray for peace on earth and good will for all men. If we were to be granted those two gifts, what a wonderful world it would be! SO, I hope all of you have peace on earth and share good will with all.

God bless and Merry Christmas.

Jeri Wilmore, ParishNurse, FCN





Our Men's Fellowship Christmas Food Ministry will be assisting families experiencing hardship again this year. We are starting this a little earlier this year with the possibility of being able to help more families in need. In our outreach, we are partnering with the Battle Lake and Ashby schools and providing grocery gift cards for their local grocery store. We hope to assist 50 or more families.

To support this project please mail your check to  
First Lutheran Church  
505 W. Holdt St.  
Battle Lake MN 56515  
Please add in the memo line "Christmas Food Basket"



## **Summary Church Council Meeting November 11, 2025 (unapproved)**

Approval of the Minutes: October 14, 2025 minutes. Motion carried and approved.

Financial Report and Recommendations: \$23,967 in revenue with expenditures of \$26,000. The average of Jan – Oct amounts extrapolated to end of year would end in a positive note. Motion carried and approved. No line of credit needed to be used this month.

Pastor Report: Concerns/Thoughts- \*Jamaica trip cancelled. Monies will be held for next year's trip. \*Coffee and conversations with Pastor Lynn are very informative.

### **COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHT REPORTS: FAITH FORMATION**

Faith Formation: \*2 or more on hold for now, low attendance. Thrivent forum in November on new retirement laws? \*Discussed fewer/no forums. \*Discussed how to develop mentoring relationships from 7<sup>th</sup> grade and up to keep the younger generation involved and coming to church. \*Our WAFL children discussed the knowledge of God versus knowing God.

### Endowment Meeting: Partial meeting summary below:

\$1000 from the Seminary Fund for future needs in those members involved in the Lay Ministries Program, and other Seminary needs.

\$200 to Jan Smith for Seminary Training in the Lay Ministry Program.

\$5700.00 taken out of the general fund for the following donations:

\*\$500 to Love, Inc., \*\$500 to Men's Fellowship for Christmas Ministry, \*\$250 Christmas Giving Tree needs, \*\$500 Churches United, \*\$250 BL Childcare Center  
\*\$3700 to assist our Congregation's Pledge to Synod

\$3000 out of Early Childhood Fund for Donating to Faith Haven Camperships, upcoming playground needs, possible aid to Missi's salary, WAFL healthy snacks etc. Missi brought up that we need signs for legal purposes for the playground.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS: \*Sunday 11/16 congregation voices – are we ready to make a commitment to pledge monies? \*Snap – 7 letters were sent out. Our program will be put on hold as SNAP-funded. \*Paid Leave effective Jan 1, 2026, discussed. Tabled until Dec.

\*Snowplowing: quote was given by Olson's Lawn Care. Pricing is the same as last year, with a \$250.00 charge during November through March if no snow removal is needed. Motion carried and approved to accept the quote.

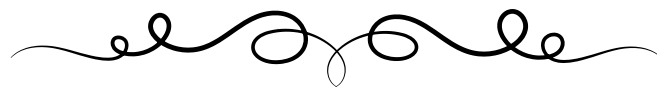
**Dates to Remember: Next meeting will be 12/9/2025**



I am excited to host our newest get-together. I am hoping this will be an opportunity for us to get to know each other better. I ask that you bring a treat to share, but if that is a problem, then just bring yourself. If you have any ideas of how this group could spend the time, please let me know. We will do this on the first Friday of each month at 11 am. I look forward to visiting with you.

**December meeting will be on December 12<sup>th</sup>, as I am not available on the 5th.**

**Jeri Wilmore**



## Financial Updates

October 2025 Finances: YTD Budget Tracking:

Income \$ 23,888                      Budget \$377,225/ 82.04%

Credit Line

Expenses \$ 26,548                      Budget \$377,225/77.23%

Net \$ -2,660

### **153<sup>rd</sup> Year of Faithful Ministry**      Estimate of Giving Card

*"This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."* Joshua 1:9

I/We support First Lutheran's Pastor, Staff, Building, and Ministries and intend to give: \$\_\_\_\_\_per      Week              Month              Year

I/We understand that this is a faith commitment and the amount above can be changed due to changing circumstances many change the amount.

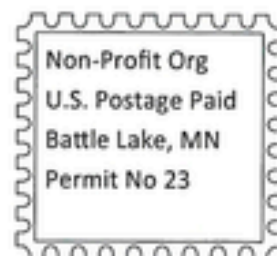
Name\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_



# DECEMBER 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> 9 am Quilters 11 am Norm Edwards 12 pm OE 1 pm WELCA Bd 4:00 pm Bells	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> 3:15 pm WAFL 5:30 pm Confirmation <b>6:30 pm Blue Christmas</b> 7-9 Youth Group	<b>4</b> 8 am TOPS 8:30 am Men's Fellowship	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Cathey/Mtweve Wedding
<b>7</b> 10 am Worship/Communion 11 am Fellowship	<b>8</b> 9 am Quilters 12 pm OE 2:30 pm finance	<b>9</b> 11:00 am Lydia Circle 11:30 am Naomi Circle 5:15 pm Bell Choir 5:30 pm Faith Formation 6:30 pm Council	<b>10</b> 10 am Mary Circle 3:15 pm WAFL 5:30 pm Confirmation <b>6:30 pm Advent Ser.</b> 7-9 Youth Group	<b>11</b> 8 am TOPS	<b>12</b> <b>11 am Meet &amp; Eat</b> School out @ noon 6 pm FLY Merry Grinchmas party	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b> 9 am Sunday School 10 am Worship 11 am Fellowship 6:30 pm Evening circle	<b>15</b> 9 am Quilters 10:30 am Staff 12 pm OE Newsletter articles due	<b>16</b> 5:15 pm Bell Choir	<b>17</b> 3:15 pm WAFL 5:30 pm Confirmation <b>5:30 pm WAFL Program with Meal</b> 7-9 pm Youth Group	<b>18</b> 8 am TOPS 12 pm Epiphany Meeting @Boathouse	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> 10 am Lake Ave apts communion
<b>21</b> 10 am Worship <b>Christmas program</b> 11 am Fellowship	<b>22</b> 9 am Quilters 10:30 am Staff 12 pm OE Newsletter articles due	<b>23</b> 5:15 pm Bell Choir	<b>24 Christmas Eve</b> 10 am Good Sam 3 and 5 pm Services	<b>25 Christmas Day</b> Office Closed	<b>26</b> Office Closed	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> 10 am Worship/Communion 11 am Potluck/fellowship	<b>29</b> 9 am Quilters 12 pm OE	<b>30</b> 5:15 pm bell choir	<b>31 New Year's Eve</b>	<b>1 New Year's Day</b> Office Closed	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	Notes	7:30 pm Wednesdays NA @ Sr. Ctr. 8 pm Fridays AA @ Sr. Ctr.			

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505 Holdt St. West  
Battle Lake MN 56515  
218-864-5686  
[www.blfirstlutheran.org](http://www.blfirstlutheran.org)



Address Service Requested  
Newsletter

**Sunday Worship 10 AM**

**Communion 1st & 4th Sundays**

**Coffee/Fellowship 11 AM following service**

**Online worship @ Youtube-First Lutheran Church Battle Lake and Facebook**



First Lutheran Church Staff

Pastor: Pastor Lynn Melchior : [pastorlynn@blfirstlutheran.org](mailto:pastorlynn@blfirstlutheran.org)

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