



SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2026 NEWSLETTER FOR FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

142 North Date Street Mesa, Arizona 85201

Serving our neighbors is our FIRST priority!

Grace & Peace: Fall 2026 Newsletter

Dear First Evangelical Community,

As we step into a new school year, we also transition into a new narrative season for our church family. Looking back, this summer brought its share of unique challenges—most notably our ongoing struggles with the church AC. Yet, true to who we are, we found lighthearted and practical ways to adapt together.

I am deeply thankful for every one of you who stepped up to make this summer easier to navigate. While the air conditioning situation isn't completely resolved, we are meeting this adversity with faith rather than anxiety. Instead of pulling us apart, these sticky summer days have brought us even closer. As we look ahead, we are in conversation with the team at **Love of Christ**, who are giving us expert guidance and analysis on how to improve our situation.

In the midst of building updates, our operations remain strong. **Bob** has been doing a fantastic job cleaning up our finances and streamlining our budget, ensuring we steward our resources responsibly.

Most importantly, business as usual means **doing God's work without missing a beat**. Our fall calendar is packed with ministry, fellowship, and celebration that reflect the heart of First Evangelical:

Upcoming Fall Highlights & Ministries

Spiritual Growth & Worship

- **Narrative Lectionary Begins (September):** We kick off a new season of scripture readings designed to walk us chronologically through the sweeping story of God's people.
- **Morning Bible Study:** Resumes immediately after Labor Day. Join us mid-week as we dive deeper into scripture, conversation, and prayer.

Faith Milestones & Youth

- **First Communion Classes (September):** Preparing our young members to gather at the Lord's Table with understanding and joy.
- **Mia Orozco's Confirmation (October):** Mark your calendars to celebrate and support Mia as she affirms her baptismal covenant before the congregation!
- **Confirmation Classe :** We will begin confirmation classes starting in September on the third Sunday of every month more details to come.
- **Jr. High & High School Youth:** First Evangelical, Holy Trinity & King of Glory Lutheran Churches will also continue to meet the third Sundays of the month for youth fellowship.

Community & Outreach

- **"God's Work. Our Hands." Sunday (September):** Our annual day of service where we put our faith into action throughout the local neighborhood.
- **Annual Trunk-or-Treat (October):** A safe, fun tradition for community families! We have a few extra surprises up our sleeves this year—stay tuned for details on how to decorate a trunk or donate candy.

Fellowship & Fun

- **First Place: Manna Nights:** Returning this fall to bring youth and families together for food, faith, and fellowship.
- **Monthly Bingo:** Join us on the **last Friday of every month** for friendly competition, prizes, and great company!

Thank you for your continued dedication, your warm fellowship, and your steadfast spirit. Let us enter this autumn season with joyful hearts, eager to serve and grow together.

Blessings,
Pastor Luis Ochoa



In Response to the Good News of Jesus Christ:

Our Purpose... Gathered to worship! Sent to witness and serve!

Our Vision... To become more diverse, creative, nurturing, and welcoming within our congregation and in the wider community.

Our Guiding Principles... We will follow Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. We will read, teach, and preach God's Word faithfully. We commit to prayer and worship as a way of life.

We invite people to know Jesus Christ.

Reconciling in Christ Welcoming Statement

First Evangelical Lutheran Church commits to being a loving and welcoming community of faith, centered in the Good News of Jesus Christ. We continue to proclaim this is a safe and inclusive place for all types of people. This includes all races, ethnicities, creeds, income levels, ages, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, educational levels, family structures, political affiliations, marital statuses, physical or mental abilities. Equally important, we advocate for racial equality. All are welcome here - come as you are!



Staff

Luis Ochoa, Pastor
Joy Petroff, Admin. Asst.
Bob Stagger, Finance
Rui Xi, Pianist

Congregational Officers

Traci Laasch, President
Sharon Shields, VP
Rhonda Schmidt,
Treasurer
Ellen Riske, Secretary

Congregational Council

Diane Johnson
Traci Laasch
Ellie Orozco
Louie Orozco
Ellen Riske
Rhonda Schmidt
Sharon Shields

Contact

felc@firstevlutheran.com
www.firstevlutheran.com
480-969-7221



We worship Sunday mornings at 9:30 AM
(EXCEPT September 13 when we will worship at **2** AM)

Due to issues with air conditioning,
the worship location on campus varies.

Friendly folks will direct you to the current location!

You can find our worship online on our Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064896961975>

or follow the link from the website:

<https://firstevlutheran.com/worship>

where you can also download a worship bulletin.



A big thanks to all who sang with First Family Singers!
It's always nice to have a summer break from all we do at FELC.
But it's awesome when we step up to help make our
summer services enriched with special music.
Thanks again for lending your voices to God's work!

Message from Church Council President

Hello!

As summer winds down and the school year ramps up with Sunday school and youth activities, my heart is full of anticipation for one of my favorite traditions of the year: *God's Work, Our Hands* Sunday.

This has always been a special day for our church as we gather together as a community and work on projects near and dear to our hearts. Giving back is very important, and this day gives us a direct way to encourage and care for people both within our church family and throughout the surrounding neighborhood. It is a powerful reminder that simple, tangible acts of kindness carry deep meaning.

This year, we will write notes of prayer and/or appreciation to our neighborhood firefighters and police, send cards to our members who can't make it to church, decorate cookies, and color pictures to send along with all our care packages.

When we lift up those who protect us and wrap our arms around those who can't be with us in the pews, we live out our faith together in the most beautiful way.

As Hebrews 10:24–25 reminds us, “*And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together... but encouraging one another.*” Doing this work side-by-side is such a meaningful way to live out that calling. Hope to see you on September 13th—and don't forget to bring a dish to share for our potluck!

Serving alongside you,
Traci Laasch
Council President



Sunday School kicks off for the year on
September 13

Children grades K-5 are welcome.

They will be dismissed during the church service
for a special time just for kids!

God's work. Our hands.



September 13, 2026

God's Work, Our Hands Sunday

Sunday, September 13:

WORSHIP AT 9 AM

followed by projects

Join us for a day of hands-on service and fellowship as we put our faith into action to support our church family and local community! We have meaningful projects for all ages, followed by a community meal.

Service Projects

- **Cookie Decorating:** Decorate sweet treats to bless guests at the Men's Shelter.
- **Member Care Cards:** Write encouraging notes to church members who are homebound or unable to attend service regularly.
- **First Responder Thanks:** Craft notes of appreciation and prayer for our local police officers and firefighters.
- **Youth Coloring Station:** Kids & kids at heart can color pictures that will be sent along with our care cards and treats.



Potluck Fellowship

- **Bring a Dish to Share:** Don't forget that we'll be gathering for a potluck! Please bring your favorite main, side, or salad to share.



Lunch Bunch meets monthly on the second Tuesday of each month at 11:30 AM.

Join the bunch as we explore dining in our area!

Join the Lunch Bunch
Tuesday, September 8
11:30 AM
at
CRUST SIMPLY ITALIAN
 233 E Main St, Mesa AZ 85201



Chef Javi opened The Bread and Honey House in 2019 with fifteen years of kitchen experience and one clear goal: a neighborhood restaurant where the food does the talking.

Tuesday, October 13
11:30 AM
at
The Honey & Bread House
 144 S. Mesa Drive, Mesa AZ 85210

Adult Morning Bible Study

Tuesdays at 9:30 AM beginning September 8

Theme: *Breath, Blade, & Bedrock: Living the Unshakable Word*

Scripture is not a static museum piece or a passive collection of ancient wisdom. It is divine breath breathed into human history, a sharp blade that cuts through culture to align our hearts with truth, and the rock-solid foundation upon which an unshakable life is built. Over the next four weeks, this study will take you beyond mere head knowledge to help you encounter God's Word as an active, transformational force in your daily walk—guiding your decisions, refining your motives, and anchoring your soul.





First Place Community Center

is a vital partner to First Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Events are held, some weekly, some monthly to bring the community together.

Manna Nights have resumed every Tuesday night at 6 PM in the Concordia Charter School cafeteria.

The meal is followed by games and activities for children and adults alike.

Bingo Nights

take place on the final Friday of each month at 6 PM in the Concordia Charter School cafeteria.

Snacks are provided and a good time is had by all!!



Mark your calendars!

TRUNK OR TREAT
will be on Halloween,
Saturday, October 31
6-8 PM
in the parking lot.

There will be a sign-up sheet on the church office door to either (or both), provide a trunk full of fun 😊 or candy which can be dropped off at the church office or at worship.



Church Council

meets the final Sunday of the month,
following worship in the
Conference Room.

September 27
October 25

First Evangelical Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes for June 21, 2026

Present: Traci Laasch, Diane Johnson, Pastor Luis, Sharon Shields, Ellen Riske, Elizabeth Orozco. Richard Schmidt, Sarah Shaw and Robert Stager attended as guests.

Absent: Louie Orozco

A. Devotional Pastor offered devotional. Traci opened meeting at 10:49 AM.

B. Review of Council Minutes for May 31, 2026. Diane moved and Traci seconded motion to accept. Motion passed.

C. Review of Reports

- Treasurer's report.

D. Old Business

- Liability- The repayment of the mortgage loan to the Endowment fund was paused starting in April.
- Membership - Inactive members. Traci and Sharon will continue to try and contact to call and send letter if no contact is made.
- Grant writing committee – Request for Youth Initiates, Nursery and Youth Sunday has been granted. Quarterly report has been submitted.
- LSS sent two emails regarding update on air conditioning. Should be resolved with the soon-to-be-installed wall unit in their office.
- There is \$127 in the dedicated fund – Change for Change, Hunger. Council authorized Pastor to use these funds for people seeking help with groceries.
- Next Town Hall is August 2nd with ice cream sundaes. (continued on next page)

- Change for Change for July-September will go to Rancho del Arte for art supplies and snacks.
- DEM and Bishop know of our current financial condition and are sending a team to meet with us.

E. New Business

- Sarah advised that the Sound Board Grant and I-Help Hidden Treasures grant of \$3000 are available for use.
- God's Work Our Hands Sunday is September 13. Discussed possible projects. Worship will start early, then projects and end with potluck at 11 AM.
- Team from Love of Christ will meet with us to determine what could be the long-term status for our congregation if we opt to take out a large long-term loan to pay for air conditioning repair.
- Discussed possibility of moving worship to school cafeteria starting in July. We will see how the evaporative coolers handle the next few weeks, then determine future move.
- Audit Committee – We will look for a replacement for Diane who is termed out.
- Discussed ideas to better track granted grants and proposals for new grants.

F. Adjournment and Closing with Lord's prayer.

Ellen motioned and Diane seconded. Motion passed. Meeting ended at 12:15 PM

as of 7/31/26	Actual2026	Budget 2026	Actual 2025	Budget 2025
Offerings	55,436	65,331	66,767	69,081
Other Income	65,060	64,841	88,282	81,831
Total Income	120,496	130,172	155,049	150,912
Expenses	128,885	160,607	161,257	147,164
Inc.Less Exp.	-8,389	-30,435	-6,208	3,748



Change for Change through September

This quarter, we are collecting change for Rancho del Arte.

Items Needed: Thick & thin markers, mechanical pencils, acrylic paint, small canvases, peanut-free snacks, and juice boxes.

How to Help: Drop your loose change in the Change for Change jar, or place donated items in the collection box located in the Narthex. Thank you for your generosity!