



FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

MONMOUTH, IL

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JANUARY

**Gathered by God, We Live Our Faith With:
Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy.**

Our Church—This Week :: January 5, 2026

Our Staff

Pastor Jamie Gallagher

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Congregation Council

President: Pam Van Kirk

Vice President: Chip Algren

Secretary: Diane Carlson

Pam Best

Adam Sanberg

Kurt Volz

Dee Dee Yez

Dear Friends and Family,

Welcome to 2026! It is a new year, a new opportunity to discover the joy of being a part of the ministries at First Lutheran Church in Monmouth. I am looking forward to this year as we continue to discern our future ministry goals with our Pathways Discernment Team, as we explore new Bible study topics, and as we make new friends in the community through our outreach ministries. What are you looking for this year as you are a part of First Lutheran Church?

I hope the time between Christmas and New Year's was a quiet and restful time for you. I had a busy stretch of family, friends, and scout camping. Yes, the scouts went camping in the very cold. But fear not, we did not stay in tents, but we used a cabin instead. This cabin was heated by a wood stove that kept the cabin around 60 degrees, which was very comfortable for our activities. The scouts did go on a couple brief hikes in the cold, as learning how to be in the outdoors in all weather conditions is a part of scouting. And the scouts experimented with a new twist on an old scout favorite — we deep fried s'mores. Yes, where there's a good food, it can be fried. And we think we found a way that was really very tasty.

January will be a fairly quiet month at First. We do have the two congregation meetings on Jan 4 and Jan 25. Read about our Liturgical Arts Workshop on the next page. But before we know it, the season of Lent will be here as it begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18th. Watch for a Lent Bible study series to be announced soon.

Sunday Schedule

9:30 AM Coffee

10:00 AM Worship

Sunday School

January 11 and 25

9:45 AM

**Future Bible Study
Opportunities will be
announced soon**

2025 Vision and Purpose Giving Recap

Each month, we designate a purpose to give funds to, we call this Vision and Purpose. A couple years ago, the Endowment Committee agreed to use a portion of their allotted funds to help this monthly giving. Each month begins with \$100 seed money from the Endowment Fund, plus the Endowment Fund matches up to \$150 of giving monthly donations.

**In 2025 our grand total of Vision and Purpose Giving to 12 organizations was:
\$7400!**

That is \$1200 to begin from the Endowment Fund; \$4609.50 in donations from you; and \$1590.50 in matching funds from the Endowment Fund. We reached the maximum matching potential from the Endowment Fund in 9 months last year.

Thank you for making generosity a value for our congregation.

Sunday School

Our Sunday school days will be the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month.

January dates will be: January 11 and January 25.

We will begin at 9:45. Sunday school students will join worship in time to share communion with their families.

Two Congregation Meetings in January

A special congregation meeting will be held on Sunday, January 4th for the purpose of adopting our newly revised constitution.

This constitution is available online at our church website, or a print copy may be sent to you if you call the church office to request it. Notable changes include eliminating the semi-annual meeting in May; reducing the number of council members; and adjusting the way committees are formed. If you have any questions, you are welcome to call any council member.

Our regular annual meeting on January 25th will feature the ratification vote for the revised constitution, the vote on our 2026 annual budget, and election of the new council members according to the revised constitution.

If there is any winter weather delays for either meeting, the rescheduled date will be the following Sunday of that planned meeting.

Revised Congregation Constitution

The revised Constitution is now available on our website for review. Or by contacting the church office for a copy to be mailed to you.

Sunday, January 4th, after worship, we are having a special congregation meeting to vote to approve this new constitution

Sunday, January 25th, we will hold our annual meeting and during the annual meeting vote to ratify our new constitution.

If there are any weather related cancellations, the meeting will be postponed to the following Sunday.

Liturgical Arts Workshop

The congregation council invites you to a Liturgical Arts Workshop on Wednesday, January 14th at 6 PM.

During this Workshop, which will be held in the sanctuary, we are going to begin an evaluation of our current paraments/banners and other liturgical arts. We are considering if we want to renew our liturgical paraments and banners and how we display the banners. This conversation will be a beginning of a process, and no final decisions will be made. But input will be appreciated.

Also, during this workshop, we will be reviewing sacristy tasks such as setting up communion and candle care. Right now these tasks are handled by Chip, and we are wanting others to know how to do these tasks as well.

And then, we are looking for volunteers who would like to take on the role of scheduling lectors, communion assistants, and ushers. This role would also be responsible for recruiting others to volunteer in these roles. This role would need to coordinate with Pastor Jamie when worship assistants are scheduled for listing in the bulletin and newsletters.

These three tasks seem like a lot for a workshop, but we should be able to accomplish these tasks within a hour. Please let Pastor Jamie or Pam Van Kirk know if you are interested in attending this Liturgical Arts Workshop.

Weather Cancellations

With two Sundays cancelled already in Advent, and another Sunday with questionable weather, we continue to wonder what the rest of winter will bring us.

Considerations for weather cancellation are discussed by the pastor, council president, and council vice-president. When a decision is made, an automated phone call will be recorded and issued. An email will be sent. And also, we will post on Facebook.

If the weather is just too uncomfortable for you, and we do not cancel, please trust your own instincts and needs for safety. A worship video is made and sent with our Monday newsletter email, so you can always catch the service through video on YouTube.



Epiphany

January 6 to February 15

The season after Epiphany is a season of discovery. Who is this Jesus that the wise men traveled from afar to visit as a toddler? Why does his baptism matter? Who were his first followers and why did they follow him? What teachings were so critical to the beginning of his ministry that we still proclaim them today? And what is up with the mystical mountaintop vision of Jesus that only three of his disciples got to experience?

These are but a few of the questions that are asked during Epiphany. This is a season that starts with that moment of arrival of travelers bringing gifts. Then we have the time jump to when Jesus was about 30 years old and was baptized by John. The season ends by preparing us for Lent with the Transfiguration of Jesus.

Maybe you are wondering why you follow Jesus. Maybe you are wondering why this voice of Jesus still calls in the middle of a chaotic world. Maybe you are wondering if there is a reason we still gather on Sundays and give to all these charities and support ministries all around the world.

Epiphany won't answer everything, but it is a place of discovery for your faith and our community mission.



Epiphany

Worship Guild Members

January 11— Baptism of Our Lord

Usher:	Pam Van Kirk
Reader:	Julie Blaesing
Com Asst:	Kurt Volz
Narthex Host:	Linda McGuire
Musician:	Janice Algren

January 18— Epiphany

Usher:	Mark Shrader
Reader:	Trace Gallagher
Com Asst:	Diane Carlson
Narthex Host:	Linda McGuire
Musician:	Drew Carlson

January 25— Epiphany

Usher:	Adam Sanberg
Reader:	Steve Erlandson
Com Asst:	Robin Johnson
Narthex Host:	Linda McGuire
Musician:	Janice Algren

February 1— Epiphany

Usher:	Pam Best
Reader:	Pam Van Kirk
Com Asst:	Steve Erlandson
Narthex Host:	Linda McGuire
Musician:	Janice Algren



Want to Add Your Name to our Worship Helper List?

You can — join us at our Jan 14th Liturgical Arts Workshop and learn more about the roles of reader, communion assistant, and usher. We are looking for help scheduling these roles, as well.

You can — email or call Pastor Jamie and ask to have your name added to the list.

Right now the schedule is made using a rotating list. When someone is scheduled and they cannot make, they are simply asked to notify Pastor Jamie and a replacement can be found. And folks in worship are always ready to step up if someone cannot attend that day.

Share your talents in worship .. Volunteer today!



Every Sunday

9:30 AM Fellowship Gathering
10:00 AM Worship

Sunday, January 4th — Christmas 2
 Sun, Jan 4 — 11:00 AM Congregation Special Meeting for Constitution Revision
 Mon, Jan 5 — 6:30 PM Pathways Meeting
 7 PM Building/Grounds Meeting
 Sat, Jan 10 — Joint Pathways and Council Workshop

Sunday, January 11th — Baptism of Jesus
 Sun, Jan 11 — 9:45 AM Family Sunday School
 Tue, Jan 13 — 6 PM Council Meeting
 Wed, Jan 14 — 6 PM Liturgical Arts Workshop

Sun, January 18th — 2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Sun, January 25th — 3rd Sunday after Epiphany
 Sun, Jan 25th — Annual meeting following worship
 Mon, Jan 26th — Wed, Jan 28th
 Pastor Jamie attends Continuing Education event

Sun, February 1st — 3rd Sunday after Epiphany
 Mon, Feb 2nd — 7 PM Building and Grounds



Jan 4 Kay Bailey
 Jan 5 Neal Heerwagen
 Jan 5 Mike Jurgens
 Jan 5 Dennis Terpening
 Jan 7 Nancy Hanson
 Jan 8 Steve Erlandson
 Jan 9 Sue Hanson
 Jan 11 Kathy Tate
 Jan 12 Evan Shrader
 Jan 14 Kathi Cruce
 Jan 30 Kay Lovdahl
 Feb 11 Becky Terpening
 Feb 15 Ross Beedle
 Feb 17 Kierstyn Johnson
 Feb 17 Gary Martin
 Feb 18 Mary Jane Olson
 Feb 19 Janet Lowe
 Feb 26 Teresa Miller
 Feb 27 Heidi Niemann
 Feb 28 Connie Larimer
 Mar 2 Dana Jensen
 Mar 7 Dawn Johnson
 Mar 7 Pam Van Kirk
 Mar 9 Helen Babcock
 Mar 13 Joey Slater
 Mar 20 Dee Dee Yez
 Mar 25 Heather Ide



Feb 22 Kenny & Nancy Reynolds
 Mar 1 Phil & Trudy Bergren
 Mar 11 Cecil & Kay Lovdahl
 Mar 14 Jim & Tammy Slater
 Apr 2 Don & Kathy Fillman
 Apr 25 Todd & Kris Champion
 Apr 28 Ron & Deb Manuel
 May 5 Craig & Brenda Jones
 May 6 Chuck & Connie Larimer
 May 21 Ted & Sue Hanson
 Jun 4 Gary & Judy Sanberg
 Jun 7 Angela & Kathleen Bradley Volz
 Jun 7 Dennis & Becky Terpening
 Jun 8 Ben & Jenny Sanberg
 Jun 12 Neal & Jackie Heerwagen
 Jun 13 Michael & Barb Pearson
 Jun 14 Doug & Kathi Cruce
 Jun 14 Rich & Nancy Hanson
 Jun 15 Rob & Tammy Ravel
 June 19 Stan & Diane Carlson
 Jun 23 Mike & Susie Jurgens
 Jun 23 John & Pam VanKirk

Notice something missing from the calendar? Please contact the church office, and we will add it to next week's newsletter.

Prayer Requests

Ila Roseberry, Kathi Cruce, Dean Sandstrom, Janet Lowe, Wes Lovdahl, Doug Moulden, Marlene Moulden, Teresa Eyler, Pat Clark

Please let the church office know any updates that are needed to our prayer list.

Vision

2025

PURPOSE

Vision and Purpose Giving

December is our month to support Jamieson Community Center. We have the grocery cart in the Narthex for non-perishable goods. All financial donations may be given through the Vision and Purpose jar.

During the holiday season, times are already tough. With uncertainty surrounding government social safety programs, the times are even tougher and Jamieson Community Center has seen an increase in the number of clients in recent months.

Thank you for all the ways we support the Jamieson Center and all our Vision and Purpose causes throughout the year.

January, Strom Center == \$250.00

February, Lutheran Disaster Response == \$515.00

March, ELCA World Hunger == \$2,609.00

April, Special Olympics == \$410.00

May, Recharge Center == \$407.00

June, St. Jude Run (Wendy Anderson) == \$772.00

July, LWR School Kits == \$270.00

August, Kiwanis Club == \$460.00

September, Out of Darkness Walk == \$412.00

October, Mosaic == \$261.00

November, Lutheran Day Care and Pre-School, \$468.00

December, Jamieson Center == \$566.00



When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. — Matthew 2:9

The story of the wise men visiting Jesus is recorded in Matthew. And there are a couple things we need to remember about this story. Matthew is not telling us history. Matthew is writing a birth narrative for Jesus that fits with what Matthew felt would complete prophecy from his scriptures. The messiah would be born in Bethlehem, according to Micah; the Messiah had to come out of Egypt, according to a mysterious prophet that isn't actually found in scripture; the weeping in Ramah had to be fulfilled, so Matthew places a tragic event here; and then again, the author then has the Messiah settling in Nazareth, again to fulfill a prophecy that is not found in scripture.

There are a lot of problems with Matthew's story. Which is why we can say this is not history. And yet, this story matters. This story was told at a time when people were beginning to wonder why they should pay attention to a man who had lived 40, 50 or even in some cases 60 years before they would first read the words of Matthew's gospel. And Matthew wants us to know that following Jesus matters because he is the fulfillment of what had come before him. So Matthew carefully crafts this story. Matthew has Mary and Joseph living in Bethlehem to begin with, leaving Bethlehem and ultimately settling in Nazareth. The least of the tribes of Israel would be honored just as God foretold. Today, this origin is not so much about Jesus as it is about us. When we feel like we are a part of the least important people among the world, God is with us, God honors us with the holy presence. This tragic event where Herod's soldiers kill all the baby boys, and there is wailing by heartbroken parents — this tragic event is today, all the tragedy around us and yet God is still here, not as the magic solution to the world's problems, but as the hope that sustains us in the midst of the tragedies. We need hope. Hope survives tragedy. Hope perseveres even as we wail from our losses.

No, Matthew's story of the arrival of the wise men with its mystical star, political intrigue, prophecy fulfilled, and a new born surviving incredible tragedy, none of this is history. It is God being among us right now, where we are, overwhelmed by the politics of our day, the tragedies that hit our families and communities. It is God giving us the hope we need for today, to lead us into the fullness of God's Kingdom come through Jesus. This is why this story matters. This is why this story is Gospel Good News.

Peace, Pastor Jamie