



THE “FIRST” EDITION

February 2026

In my morning devotions, I have been slowly reading through John’s Gospel. One of the things that I have noticed is that Jesus doesn’t wait for people to have it all together. In his encounters with Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, the man born blind, and so many others, Jesus meets people exactly where they are.

That feels especially hopeful to me right now.

Right now, the world feels loud and unsettled. There is so much happening and so much finger-pointing. Many people have shared with me their worry, anger, exhaustion, questions, and grief. At times, I’ve even found myself overwhelmed by my own emotions. Yet John’s Gospel reminds me that Jesus meets us there, not with easy answers, but with a steady, faithful presence. Again and again, Jesus shows up right where people are.

Jesus shows us what real love looks like. It isn’t candy hearts and flowers, though those can be sweet. It is love that is patient and kind. Love that stays present through the ups and the downs. Love that listens, tells the truth, and refuses to walk away. It is love willing to go all the way to the cross for the very people Jesus loves.

This month, we begin the season of Lent, a time often misunderstood as gloomy or heavy. But in John’s Gospel, Lent is not about getting ourselves together. It is about walking honestly with Jesus. Walking with the One who meets us in our thirst and grief, in our brokenness and doubt, in our fear and failure, and who continues to choose love.

On Ash Wednesday, we will be marked with ashes, an honest reminder of our mortality and our need. But those ashes are not a mark of failure. They are a sign that we belong to Jesus, who knows us by name and meets us with mercy.

This is the promise John gives us: Jesus meets us where we are, and love is already present. As we move through Lent, I invite you to join us for midweek and Sunday worship—to pause, to listen, and to walk together with the One who meets us with mercy.

With you on the journey,
Pastor Rebekah



FEBRUARY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:00am Sunday School 9:15am Coffee & Fellowship 10:30am Worship Cupcake Sunday! 	2 12:30pm Worship Committee 1:30pm Bible Study 6:30pm Stampin	3 6:30pm Endowment	4 10am Choir 11am Archive 6:30pm Confirmation	5 5pm Finance	6 Food Pantry 9-10:30am Stampin! 1-3pm Food Pantry 3-4:30pm	7 Bingo! 12pm-3pm @ Grace
8 9:00am Sunday School 9:15am Coffee & Fellowship 10:30am Worship	9 1:30pm Bible Study 2:45pm M-Team	10 6:30pm Council	11 10am Choir 6:30pm Confirmation	12	13	14 8:00am Men's Breakfast at Grace 9am-4pm Craft Day at First!
15 9:00am Sunday School 9:15am Coffee & Fellowship 10:30am Worship 6:30pm Mutual Ministry	16 1:30pm Bible Study 6:30pm Parish Council	17 5pm Lay Preaching Class @ Grace	18 10am Choir 12:30pm Soup Lunch 1:30pm Worship	19	20 	21
22 9:00am Sunday School 9:15am Coffee & Fellowship 10:30am Worship	23 1:30pm Bible Study 	24	25 10am Choir 12:30pm Soup Lunch 1:30pm Worship	26 Berlin Ministerial 1:30pm @ Grace	27	28

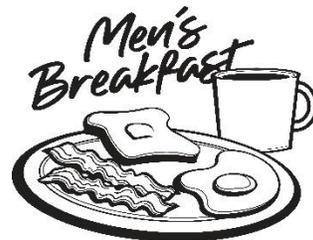
Men's Breakfast & Devotion!

Start your day with good food, great company, and a little inspiration!

When: Saturday, February 14th at 8:00am

Where: Grace Lutheran

Sign up! All men are welcome! Come hungry, leave blessed!



CRAFT DAY @ FIRST!

February 14th, 9am-4pm All Crafters Welcome!

Bring your art/craft, enjoy fellowship and a light lunch! Feel free to bring your favorite snack(s) and a beverage. The crafting fun begins at 9am at First Lutheran and ends at 4pm. Please sign up so we know how many crafting stations to have prepared! Come for as long as you like – stay the whole time or drop in for a bit! See you there!

Interested in Learning to Preach? Join Our Lay Preaching Class!

Our lay preaching class is up and running, and we'd love to welcome a few new faces. If you have a heart for Scripture, enjoy encouraging others, or are simply curious about what goes into preparing a sermon, we invite you to join the next class on Tuesday, February 17 at 5:00 pm. If you're interested (or even just *maybe* interested), please let Pastor Rebekah know.

Cupcakes & Celebrations!

You are joyfully invited to join us after worship on the **first Sunday of each month** as we celebrate birthdays and anniversaries with sweet cupcakes and warm fellowship! May this time of celebration remind us of God's love and the blessings He shares through our church family.

For those who are unable to attend, we hold you in prayer, asking God to fill your hearts with joy, peace, and a sense of belonging, knowing that you are cherished and remembered in our community!

**If we missed a special day or have a date wrong, please contact the office!



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

2 Harold Nigbor	17 Paul Jorgenson
6 Linda Gruett	20 Charles Goehring
8 Kelsi Cravillion	20 Gary Monroe
12 Susan Wendt	24 Genevieve Everson
14 Emily Goehring	25 Debbie Sattler

14 Steve & Joanne Andersen



Put Your Thrivent Dollars to Work (Without Opening Your Wallet!)

If you're a Thrivent member, you've got something powerful sitting there unused, and no, it's not that mystery drawer in your kitchen. It's **Choice Dollars®** and Thrivent Action Teams, and both are simple ways to support the ministry of First Lutheran without spending a dime of your own money.

Choice Dollars®: Easy Yes, Big Impact

If you're eligible, Thrivent allocates Choice Dollars to you each year. You decide where they go. When you direct them to First Lutheran, those dollars support our ministry. No bake sales. No awkward asks. Just a few clicks.

And Choice Dollars expire, which is basically money waving goodbye if we don't act. So, take a moment today and designate your Choice Dollars. This is one of those rare moments where generosity is easy and faith-filled at the same time.

Thrivent Action Teams: \$250 + Your Idea = Ministry in Motion

Action Teams are another gift Thrivent offers—and they're fantastic. Thrivent provides **\$250** seed money on a debit card to be used for projects or events.

- Sunshine bags
- Bingo prizes or raffle baskets
- Items for Layettes, School kits, Care Kits, and Quilts
- Soup Lunches, Palm Sunday Brunch
- Worship in the Park meal
- Outreach events like Party on the Pond
- Help a family after a house fire

If you've ever thought, "*Someone should do something about that,*" congratulations! You're someone! And this is how you start. You come up with an idea, find a few helpers, and Thrivent provides the funding.

This is one of those beautiful moments where faith, generosity, and community line up. Let's not leave good gifts sitting on the table. Thanks for being part of what God is doing through First Lutheran!





If you are unable to attend in person, join us online on our Facebook page or listen to worship via radio station 93.1 FM or 1600 AM at 9:45 am.

Date	Theme and Text	Serving
February 1 4 th Sunday after Epiphany 10:30 am	John 4:1-42 Birthdays & Anniversaries Communion at the Rail	Greeter: Colleen Hein Reader: Karin Macijeski Usher: Mark Henn/Joel Beine
February 8 5 th Sunday after Epiphany 10:30 am	John 4:46-54, 5:1-18	Greeter: Mark Henn Reader: Gary Boening Ushers: Tom Jewell
February 15 Transfiguration 10:30 am	John 9:1-41	Greeter: Jim & Georgie Lee Lair Reader: Mali Beine Usher: Joel Beine
February 18 Ash Wednesday 1:30 pm	John 10:1-18	Reader: Gen Everson Usher: George Huerth
February 22 1 st Sunday in Lent 10:30 am	John 11:1-44 No Communion	Greeter: Chris Monroe Reader: Tom Wochenske Usher: Tom Jewell
February 25 1:30 pm	John 12:1-8	Reader: Diane Warning Usher: Harold Nigbor
March 1 Second Sunday of Lent 10:30 am	John 13:1-17	Greeter: Jerry Strehlow Reader: Joan Everson Usher: Mark Henn/Joel Beine

Lent Begins February 18 and you are invited to join us as we begin this season together.

We will gather for worship at two times each week:

* **1:30 p.m. at First Lutheran Church**

* **6:30 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church**

Lent is not about having it all figured out. It is a season for honesty, prayer, and remembering that we are met by God's mercy again and again. Whether you come carrying questions, weariness, hope, or all of the above, you are welcome.

Midweek and Sunday worship throughout Lent will continue to walk with John's Gospel, reminding us that Jesus meets us where we are with love that does not let us go.

Soup Lunches & Suppers

During Lent, join us for simple meals and shared fellowship before worship.

- **12:30 p.m. at First Lutheran** – Soup Lunch
- **5:45 p.m. at Grace Lutheran** – Soup Supper

If you are able, please sign up to provide a pot of soup, dessert, crackers, butter, or milk. Whether you bring food, come to eat, or both... you are welcome! These meals are a simple way to pause, connect, and care for one another during the Lenten season.



Church COUNCIL



Attendance:

Bill Deppe (Pres.)	X	Judy Schierland	X
Dar Cravillion (V.Pres.)	X	Jim Laird	X
Joan Everson (Treas.)	X	Lenny Langkau	X
Mali Beine (Sec.)	X	Pastor Rebekah Tarras	X

Call to Order: Pres Bill Deppe called meeting to order at 6:30pm

Devotions: John 1 – Make Christ's light known.

Visitor(s): Steve

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION: Accept with (1) correction Pastor Tarras was present at the November meeting. Seconded. Carried.

Approval of Monthly Financial Reports:

Joan Presented: Summary Trial Balance through November, General Operating Revenue/Expenses for Accounts with Activity, General Operating 13-moth Fiscal Year, and Balance by fund

MOTION: Accept financial reports as presented. Seconded. Carried.

New Business:

- Proposed 2026 budget presented and discussed.

MOTION: Accept budget as proposed. Seconded. Carried

- Pastor Salary calculation presented. This was reviewed by the Parish council and was used in the proposed 2026 budget.

MOTION: Accept Pastor's compensation package as presented. Seconded. Carried.

- Mission Unspecified \$577.16

MOTION: Move Lord's Acre \$1,466.45 to Missions Unspecified Pass Through Account to be distributed. Seconded. Carried.

ACTION: Next month committee should bring ideas/proposals to distribute Unspecified Funds.

- All documents to Carolynn/Myndi by 12/30/25
- Food Pantry "thank you" – propose using travel expense line item as a thank-you

MOTION: Purchase a gas gift card for Jody and Roger Surprise as a thank you for their 7 years of service to the food pantry and their past donations of unreimbursed milage. This should come from the Travel Expense account. Seconded. Carried.

Unfinished Business

- Food Pantry Coordinator still seeking a coordinator. Discussion of Saxeville pantry and their service area/plan
- Update on All Policies
Discussed format, clarified building access policy intent, clarified obsolescence of the memorial policy
- Lord's Acre money
- Window Project

Reports:

- Pastor's Report submitted
- Parish Council (Bill Deppe) – Dec 17th 6:30 at Grace
- Worship Committee (Pastor)
- M-Team
 - Sunshine bags distributed
- Endowment Committee – Est \$5,000 dispersed, next meeting in February. Seeking to fill 1 year seat on this committee.
- Property Committee -
- Archive Committee –
- Children's Ministry – Feed the Pig collected \$525!! Kids will be able to spend over \$600 on ELCA Good Gifts.
- Staff –



Other Business:

- None

Closing Prayer:

Adjourn:

MOTION: Adjourn the meeting 7:54 pm. Seconded. Carried.

Next Meeting Date: January 13, 2025 @ 6:30pm



Winter Bingo Food Pantry Fundraiser!

Join us for Winter Bingo on Saturday, February 7, from noon–3:00 pm at Grace for an afternoon of fellowship, fun, and giving back. Enjoy Bingo, a 50/50 raffle, silent auction, and basket raffles, all while supporting a meaningful mission.

All proceeds from the day will benefit the Berlin and Poy Sippi Food Pantries, helping care for our neighbors in need. As Scripture reminds us, *“Whatever you did for one of the least of these... you did for me”* (Matthew 25:40).

A \$5 lunch will be available and includes your choice of a hamburger or hot dog, plus chips, dessert, and a drink... a great way to enjoy fellowship while supporting the cause!

Come enjoy good food, good company, and a joyful opportunity to share God’s love in our community!



Summer Bible Camp Registration is Open

Crossways Bible Camp offers programs for all ages and families.

Online registration is live at CrosswaysCamps.org.

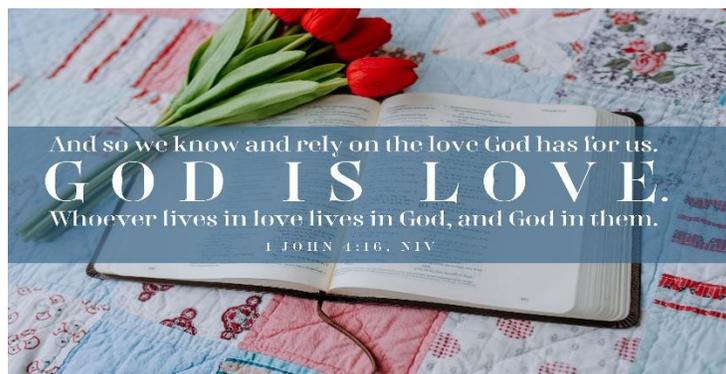
Sign up today!

For the month of February, our Noisy Bucket offering will support the King Veterans Home!

The King Veterans Home is a long-term skilled nursing and rehabilitative care facility dedicated to serving veterans, their spouses, widows, and Gold Star parents. Nestled on the shores of Rainbow Lake, it offers healthcare services, recreation, community, and compassionate support to those who have served our country. Please give generously to help honor and care for our nation’s heroes. Thank you for your continued support... every gift makes a difference!

Our December Noisy Bucket Mission, ELCA Good Gifts, raised \$844.47!

The children’s Sunday School Pigs collected an additional \$621.67!



First Lutheran Church – Funeral Lunch Policy

First Lutheran is grateful to offer hospitality following funerals. Because our volunteers are limited, we provide space, coordination, and hospitality, while all meals are catered. This allows us to care well for families without overburdening our volunteers.

What First Lutheran *Will* Provide

- **Use of Fellowship Hall** (when available)
- **Coordination with a Caterer** selected by the family/funeral home
- **Kitchen access for catered food** (no on-site cooking by volunteers)
- **Coffee, water, and basic table service** (plates, napkins, silverware if needed)
- **Set-up and light clean-up assistance**, as volunteers are able

What First Lutheran *Will Not* Provide

- We do **not prepare or serve full meals**
- We do **not cook on-site**
- We do **not shop for food**
- We do **not guarantee volunteer staffing**
- We do **not provide servers** for plated meals

All meals must be **fully catered**, including main dishes and sides. If any food items are brought in by the family, they must be ready to serve and in the kitchen prior to the funeral service.

Catering Responsibilities

- The **family is responsible** for selecting, ordering, and paying the caterer
- Caterers must deliver **ready-to-serve food**
- Any special dietary needs should be handled through the caterer

Desserts for church members

- Church volunteers may provide desserts for a church member, if desired by the family
- Availability depends on volunteer capacity at the time of the funeral ● Dessert coordination is handled by the M-team

Cleanup

- The caterer is responsible for removing any equipment
- Volunteers will assist with packaging up leftover food for the family to take
- Volunteers will assist with basic cleanup of tables and the fellowship space
- Families are **not expected** to clean
- Family members should bring containers to take home leftovers or arrange with the caterer to provide these.

Scheduling & Availability

- Funeral lunches are subject to **facility and volunteer availability**
- The pastor or church office will confirm what is possible **before plans are finalized** ● Not all funerals will be able to include a luncheon

Communication

- This policy will be shared with funeral homes
- Families will receive this information early in the planning process
- Questions should be directed to the pastor

Updated 1/12/2026

First Lutheran Church

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Wednesday 9am to noon

Carolynn Rynish, Office Admin.

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firstluthbook@gmail.com

Mon and Thurs. 9:30am - 2:30pm

Bulletin Deadline:

Wednesday 9 am

Newsletter Deadline:

20th each month

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