



THE "FIRST" EDITION

December 2025
The Season of Advent



Every year, Advent invites us to pause and prepare, not just for Christmas morning, but for Christ who comes to us again and again with grace, mercy, and sometimes a holy disruption or two. This season isn't only about counting down the days. It's about opening our hearts to the One who already dwells among us.

This year, our worship together will follow a journey shaped around four themes: **hope, peace, joy, and love**. These aren't just candles on a wreath. They are gifts God grows within us as we wait, watch, and welcome Christ.

We begin the season with Hope. Isaiah cries out, "*Oh, that you would burst from the heavens and come down!*" (Isaiah 64:1). If you've ever prayed, "Lord, could you please hurry up?" you're in good company. Hope isn't pretending everything is fine. Hope is trusting that God is working, even when we can't yet see the ending. It's anticipation rooted in gratitude, not because life is perfect, but because God is faithful.

On the second Sunday of Advent, we turn to one of the most powerful declarations in Scripture: "*The Word became human and made His home among us.*" (John 1:14). God doesn't stay distant. God moves into the neighborhood, into our ordinary, our messy, our real life. This is the heart of Peace, not quiet circumstances, but God's presence.

The third Sunday of Advent brings Joy. Joy doesn't depend on everything going smoothly. Joy comes from knowing that God is with us. The angels said, "*I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.*" (Luke 2:10, NLT). That "all people" includes us—whether we're feeling merry or a little messy this season.

This Sunday we will also share our Christmas program, *Sounding Joy*, where we hear and tell the story together through scripture, song, and the voices of storytellers young and old.

The fourth Sunday of Advent focuses on Love. Not sentimental, greeting-card love, but real, self-giving love. "*God showed God's great love for us by sending Christ...*" (Romans 5:8, NLT). Jesus is love made visible.

This week, the choir leads us with the Cantata, offering music that proclaims the gospel straight into our bones.

Finally, we gather on Christmas Eve to celebrate the hope, peace, joy, and love fulfilled in the birth of Christ, Immanuel, God with us, then and now.

Blessings on your Advent and Christmas,
Pastor Rebeka

A CHRIST-CENTERED
CHRISTMAS 



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
December 7 2 nd Sunday of Advent 10:30 am	Psalm 98 John 1:1-18 Birthdays & Anniversaries Communion at the Rail	Greeter: Jim Laird Reader: Mali Beine Communion Assistant: Mali Beine Bread Maker: Katie Nitzke
December 14 3 rd Sunday of Advent 10:30 am	Christmas Program Sounding Joy	Greeter: Patti Langkau Reader: Joan Everson
December 21 4 th Sunday of Advent 10:30 am	Cantata: A Weary World Rejoices	Greeter: Joan Everson Reader: Patti Langkau
December 24 Christmas Eve 6:30 pm	Luke 2:1-20	Greeter: Mark Henn Reader: Lenny Langkau Communion Assistant: Joan Everson Bread Maker: Pastor Tarras
December 28 1 st Sunday after Christmas 10:30 am	John 1:19-34	Greeter: Jim Laird Reader: Gary Boening

Mark your calendars! You won't want to miss these special events.

🎁 December 14 – Paper Bag Christmas Program

We the congregation will participate in a creative, joy-filled retelling of the Christmas story.

🎵 December 21 – Choir Cantata

Experience the message of Christmas through the powerful gift of song.

💙 December 21 – Blue Christmas, 6:30 p.m. at Grace

A quiet, reflective service for anyone carrying grief or needing space for peace this season.

🕯️ December 24 – Christmas Eve Worship, 6:30 p.m. at First

Candlelight, carols, and the *“good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born ...a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”*

[Qualified Charitable Distributions \(QCD\)](#)

What is a QCD? It is a tax-free donation directly from your IRA to a qualified organization such as First Lutheran Church.

Do I qualify? You must be 70 ½ or older and own an IRA such as a Traditional or Inherited IRA. There are a select few other accounts that qualify as well. Talk to your financial adviser to see if you have a qualifying account.

How much can I donate? Have no fear...the maximum you may use for an QCD for 2025 is \$108,000!

Why is this a benefit to me? QCDs can reduce your adjusted gross income and lower your tax bracket on the amount of taxes you pay.

Example: You choose to donate \$5,000 to First Lutheran (whether monthly, quarterly or as a one-time donation). This money is taken from your qualifying account and directly sent to First Lutheran. You do not have to report this withdrawal as income on your tax return. Also, if you make these distributions from your IRA prior to turning 73 or 75 depending on when you were born, it reduces your IRA, which in turn can reduce your required minimum distributions (RMD).

To get started on this Win-Win method of donating to First Lutheran Church contact the financial institution where your IRA is housed.

DECEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 9:00 Sunday School 9:15 Coffee Fellowship 10:30 Worship 11:30 Deck the Halls <i>Advent Begins!</i>	1 12:30 Worship Committee 1:30 Bible Study 6:30 Stampin!	2 7pm Book Discussion @ Grace	3 10:00 Choir 11:00 Archive 6:30 Confirmation	4 5:30 Finance	5 9-10:30 Food Pantry 1-3 Stampin 3-4:30 Food Pantry	6
7 Bring your Pigs! 9:00 Sunday School 9:15 Coffee Fellowship 10:30am Worship Cupcake Sunday! 	8 1:30 Bible Study 2:45 M-Team	9 6:30pm Council	10 10am Choir	11	12	13 8:00 Men's Breakfast at Grace 9am-4pm Craft Day at First!
14 9:00 Sunday School 9:15 Coffee Fellowship 10:30 Worship + Paper Bag Christmas Program	15 1:30 Bible Study	16	17 10am Choir 6:30pm Cantata @ Grace	18	19	20
21 9:00 Sunday School 9:15 Coffee Fellowship 10:30 Worship + Christmas Cantata 6:30pm Blue Christmas @ Grace	22 1:30 Bible Study	23	24 6:30pm Christmas Eve Service	25  CHRISTMAS DAY	26	27
28 9:15 Coffee Fellowship 10:30 Worship	29 Pastor Off	30	31 Pastor Off	1  hello 2026	2 9-10:30 Food Pantry 1-3 Stampin 3-4:30 Food Pantry	3
4 9:00 Sunday School 9:15 Coffee Fellowship 10:30 Worship	5 12:30 Worship Committee 1:30 Bible Study	6	7 10am Choir 11am Archive 6:30pm Confirmation	8	9	10 8:00 Men's Breakfast at First 9am-4pm Craft Day at Grace!



Keep fattening your pigs! Every coin helps support ELCA World Hunger/Good Gifts. Pigs are due back to church by December 7th!

Poinsettias for Christmas Eve

Help us fill the sanctuary with beauty this Christmas! Poinsettias are a wonderful way to honor loved ones and celebrate the birth of Christ. There is a sign-up for anyone wishing to bring a plant for Christmas Eve worship. Thank you for helping make our worship space glow with color, life, and joy this holy season! Your Christmas Poinsettias and/or Plants can be brought to church December 21st & after.





Cupcakes & Celebrations!



You're warmly invited to join us after worship on the 1st Sunday of each month as we celebrate birthdays and anniversaries with delicious cupcakes and joyful fellowship! It's a sweet way to connect and honor special moments in our church family. We'd love to celebrate with you! **If we missed a special day or have a date wrong, please contact the office!

4 Joni Bahr	15 Todd Chase
4 Bradley Nitzke	19 Jeff Tarras
7 Sandy Anderson	20 Skylar Dexter
9 Brittany Diesterhaft	20 Kayla Nelson
10 Bill Meier	22 Bill Deppe
14 Charlotte Fenner	22 Ron Hein

DECEMBER Birthdays & Anniversaries

10 Dan & Judy Button
15 Gary & Chris Monroe

Food Pantry: OPEN: December 5 | January 2 9-10:30am & 3-4:30pm
Always accepting: Canned Soups, Pasta, Oatmeal, Peanut Butter, Boxed Cereals, Baby Food

Food Pantry Coordinator Needed

After many faithful years of service, Roger and Jody Surprise will be stepping down from their role as Food Pantry Coordinators. We are deeply grateful for the time, care, and compassion they have poured into this ministry—ensuring that our neighbors are fed and welcomed with dignity.

We are now looking for someone (or a small team) to take on this important role of coordinating donations, organizing volunteers, and helping distribute food to those in need. If you have a heart for serving others and would like to learn more, please contact the church office.

Your hands and heart can make a real difference!

CRAFT DAY @ FIRST!

December 13th, 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!

Sunshine Bag Collection



Help Spread Joy This Holiday Season! The M-team is preparing Sunshine Bags to bring a little extra cheer to our older members and those in need this December. These bags will be filled with treats and gift items then delivered to members of our community as a gesture of love and support.

The M-team will be assembling the bags at their meeting on December 8. If you would like to bring any items for the bags, please bring them to church by December 7. We anticipate packing 2 dozen bags this year. Items may be placed on the table in the pastor's office. If there is someone you think we should add to our list of recipients, talk to Georgia Lee or Jim Laird. Your generosity will help brighten someone's day during the holiday season!

Council Meeting Minutes: October 14, 2025

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	Absent

Call to Order: Pres Bill Deppe called meeting to order at 6:36 PM.

Devotions: John 3:13-17

Visitor(s): None

Approval of Minutes: Correct "Men to Men's" in Other business, Correct next date of Endowment Committee to November.

MOTION: Accept with (2) noted corrections. Seconded. Carried.

Approval of Monthly Financial Reports:

Presented: Summary Trial Balance through September, General Operating Revenue/Expenses for Accounts, General Operating 13-month Fiscal Year, and Balance by fund

Discussion: Verify check is sent to Food Pantry for pass through donations (from Party on the Pond)

MOTION: \$30 from shirt sold after 150th to return to the Money Market account when all bills are finalized. Seconded. Carried.

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

New Business:

1. Submit Budget Requests to Myndi by November 4, 2025
2. Joint Council at Grace November 17 at 6:30pm
3. Food Pantry Coordinator needed
4. Church Ministry (insurance provider) requested sensors be installed to detect potential water leaks. Please take care to keep these sensors dry and to leave them undisturbed. Connected to an app, monitors for moisture by kitchen sinks and by water heater. Lenny will pass app to Steve.

Unfinished Business

1. Discussed lay ministry class arranging their preaching schedule when they next meet in November.
2. Windows Project – wrapping up. Steve will follow up for final costs.
3. Bingo – planning meeting this week TBD.
4. Policies – Resetting project to define existing policies, create a table of contents, and revise/review. Goal to create consistent format, and simple documents that are scaled to the size of our church organization.
5. Lord's Acre

Reports:

- Pastor's Report submitted
- Parish Council (Bill Deppe)
- Worship Committee (Pastor)
 - Joint service October 12
 - October 19 – Service of the Word Eric Beine
 - October 26 – Polka Sunday
 - November Theme "Hope, Honor, and Thanksgiving"
 - November 2 – Hope Honor, and Thanksgiving: All Saints (white) Baptism of Charlotte Fenner
 - November 9 – Hope, Honor, and Thanksgiving (green) speaker: Gary Lawrence
 - November 16 – Hope, Honor, and Thanksgiving: Gratitude Music by Joyce Josie
 - November 23 – Hope, Honor, and Thanksgiving: Thankoffering
 - November 26- 7PM Community Service
 - November 30 (Advent) – Grateful Anticipation (Waiting in Hope) we will again "Deck the Halls" after worship
 - December 7 – begin the Narrative Lectionary with John 1
 - December 14 – Paper Bag Program "Sounding Joy"
 - December 21 – Choir Cantata presentation
 - December 24 – Christmas Eve at 6:30 pm
- Children's Ministry

- M-Team
 - Party on the Pond – very successful with 120-150 people in circulation for the full event
 - Pack the Pews, Pack the Pantry & Pancake Palooza
 - Polka Sunday Potluck
 - Veteran's Service BBQ or Pulled Pork sandwiches
 - Consider expanding sunshine bags to other churches
 - Sweetest Day outing to Rio Lobo at 2:00

MOTION: Re-allocate the \$1,000 budgeted for Outreach Ministry to the M-Team for outreach activities the M-Team is supporting. Seconded. Carried.

- Endowment Committee – Next meeting November 18th
- Property Committee
- Archive Committee-
- Outreach Committee - Inactive
- Staff – Carolyn hours have changed to Monday & Wednesday

Other Business:

- Heat for Heros speaker will join us next Sunday.
 - 129 Veterans in Waushara County receive assistance from this program.
 - First \$500 in noisy bucket will be matched.

Closing Prayer:

Adjourn:

MOTION: Adjourn the meeting 8:31 pm. Seconded. Carried.
 Next Meeting Date: November 11, 2025 @ 6:30pm



On November 2, we joyfully welcomed **Charlotte Fenner** into the family of God through the sacrament of **Holy Baptism!** We celebrated this special day with Charlotte, her family, and our congregation as she begins her journey of faith. Through baptism, we are reminded of God's promise: to love, guide, and strengthen us every day. May Charlotte grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord, surrounded by the prayers and support of her church family.



"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." – Galatians 3:27

December Noisy Bucket Mission: ELCA Good Gifts

Give a Gift That Matters This Advent

Advent is a season of waiting, watching, and preparing for the One who comes to bring hope to the world. As we get ready for Christmas, we're invited not just to give gifts — but to *give in ways that reflect Jesus' love*.

This year, our congregation will be supporting ELCA Good Gifts, a ministry that strengthens communities around the world with sustainable, life-changing support. Instead of another sweater, mug, or holiday knick-knack, you can give something that changes lives like clean water, fruit trees, school supplies, farm animals, or even a whole garden.

Here's how it works:

1. **Visit the display** in the fellowship hall.
2. **Choose an ornament** representing a Good Gift — like honeybees (\$20), fruit tree seedlings, a goat, or classroom supplies.
3. **Take the ornament home** and give it to a loved one as their Christmas gift.
4. **Place the matching dollar amount** in the provided envelope and return it to the church anytime before January 1.

Simple. Meaningful. Joy-filled.

Every gift points back to Christ — the One who reminds us that love shared, food offered, and hope restored are some of the most holy acts we can give.

As Paul writes, *“You will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.”* (2 Corinthians 9:11 NLT)

Let's make this a season where generosity shines brighter than tinsel — a celebration of God's love made visible.

Give hope. Give joy. Give in Jesus' name.



Through education, relief, and sustainable development, ELCA World Hunger shares Christ's love by helping communities gain access to food, clean water, and opportunity. Your generous gifts this month will help bring hope and nourishment to our neighbors in need - living out God's call to feed the hungry and care for all creation.

**Our October Noisy Bucket Mission, Heat for Heroes, raised an amazing \$1,403.66
– which includes a generous, anonymous \$500 match!**



With grateful hearts, we thank our veterans for their courage, sacrifice, and unwavering service to our nation. Your dedication reflects Jesus' words in John 15:13: ***‘Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.’*** We honor you, we appreciate you, and we pray God's continued blessing and protection over you.

We also extend a heartfelt thank you to our wonderful M-Team for preparing a delicious meal for our Veterans Day Recognition Sunday Service. Your joyful service and loving hospitality nourished both body and spirit, and we are deeply grateful. May God bless each of you for the ways you share His love with our church family.

Called. Equipped. Needed. (Yes... you.)

Every year as we approach our annual meeting, something holy (and sometimes a little awkward) happens: the Nominating Committee starts making phone calls.

If your first instinct is to hide behind the communion table or pretend your phone is suddenly allergic to ringing, take a breath. You're not being recruited into the Navy SEALs of church life. You're simply being invited to consider using the gifts God has already planted in you.

Scripture reminds us: *"God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another."* (1 Peter 4:10, NLT)

Serving isn't about being perfect, available 24/7, or knowing the entire ELCA constitution by heart (although if you do... wow... we should definitely talk). Serving is about showing up with grace, curiosity, and a willingness to help our congregation continue its mission: As God's forgiven people, we strive to make his grace known to all.

Here are the roles we will need to fill. As you read them, ask: **"Is this something I could learn? Is this a way I could serve? Is God nudging me here?"**

Church Council — 2–3 people (3-year term)

- Works with officers and at-large members (7–9 total)
- Meets monthly and supports the ministry of our congregation
- Looking for people who are prayerful, collaborative, and willing to think big and care well.

Nominating Committee — 3 people (1-year term)

- Helps discern and recruit future leaders
- Cannot serve consecutive terms
- Bonus: You get to make the calls instead of receiving them!

Audit Committee — 1 person (3-year term)

- Reviews financial records with a small team
- No Council members allowed (checks and balances matter!)

Endowment Committee — 2 people (3-year term) and 1 person (1-year term)

- Helps steward and promote gifts from our Endowment to support mission and outreach
- Meets quarterly to disburse funds
- May serve up to 2 consecutive terms

Synod Assembly Voting Members — 1 female & 1 male

- June 4–6, 2026, Oshkosh Convention Center
- Includes worship, workshops, resolutions, and the election of a Bishop!

Oshkosh Conference Voting Members — 2 people

- Represents our congregation at the fall conference gathering

Crossways Bible Camp Delegate — 2 people

- Supports our church's partnership with the camping ministry
- Usually, one annual meeting

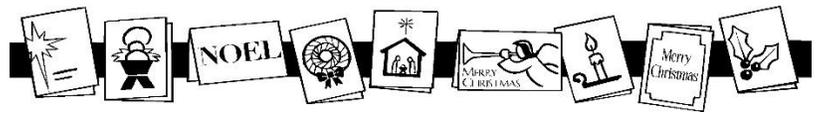
Bethany Home Delegate — 2 people

- Attends annual meeting and shares updates about this ministry to the congregation

Pray. Listen. Be Open.

If someone from the Nominating Committee reaches out, try responding with: "Let me pray about that," instead of "Absolutely not, goodbye." Who knows? This may be the year God invites you to step into leadership, grow in faith, and help shape our shared ministry. God equips the called—not the other way around. And don't worry... we promise there's no hazing ritual. Just prayer, purpose, and a whole lot of grace.





Reverse Advent Calendar

What is a reverse advent calendar?

Traditionally, Advent calendars are used to count down the days of Advent in anticipation of Christmas. In church, we celebrate weekly the themes of Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy as we anticipate God's gift of Jesus. Traditional Advent calendars consist of a series of doors revealing a little gift for each day.

But the Reverse Advent Calendar is different! Instead of receiving a daily gift, those taking part in a reverse calendar DONATE an item each day, thus giving instead of receiving. This year I'd like to encourage you to participate by following this list of food items to donate to our Food Pantry.

You can also do this in a different way. It doesn't have to be food that you are donating. Maybe put \$1 in an envelope each day for your reverse advent calendar and then donate the money to our Food Pantry. It is also completely fine to add an item every few days or weekly instead of daily. No matter how you choose to participate, consider doing something small for those in need this Advent season. We are blessed to be a blessing to others as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

You can bring the food items to church weekly or wait until Christmas Eve whichever works best for you. We will have a table in the fellowship room for donations. Thank you!

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX

- December 1 - box of cereal
- December 2 - jar of peanut butter
- December 3 - jar of jelly
- December 4 - boxed potatoes
- December 5 - macaroni and cheese
- December 6 - canned fruit cocktail
- December 7 - box of Jell-O
- December 8 - canned tuna
- December 9 - jar of applesauce
- December 10 - canned vegetable
- December 11 - canned pork and beans
- December 12 - granola or granola bars

- December 13 - complete pancake mix
- December 14 - box of crackers
- December 15 - package of rice
- December 16 - package of oatmeal packets
- December 17 - package of pasta
- December 18 - spaghetti sauce
- December 19 - canned soup
- December 20 - box of pudding mix
- December 21 - box of tissue (Kleenex)
- December 22 - bottle of dish soap
- December 23 - toilet paper
- December 24 - paper towels
- December 25 - cake mix or frosting



Camp Registration Opens Dec 1

Summer 2026 is calling!

Registration opens December 1, and it's shaping up to be a season of new friends, campfire songs, lake days, and all the memories waiting between pine trees.

A few helpful notes:

- **Secure your spot with a deposit** and divide the balance into easy monthly payments.
- **Gift certificates are available**, perfect for grandparents, godparents, and anyone who loves giving experiences over stuff.

Giving Tuesday Dec 2

One day of generosity. One shared goal: **fill the Scholarship Fund** so every camper has access to camp, no matter what life looks like at home.

Our community shows up with generosity that ripples outward into real lives, real cabins, real moments of joy. Let's make that happen together on Giving Tuesday!



First Lutheran Church

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Pastor Rebekah Tarras

(715) 897-5393
pastortarras@gmail.com

Office hours at First:

Monday 9am to noon

Wednesday 9am to noon

Carolynn Rynish, Office Admin.

firstluthpoysippi@gmail.com

Mon & Wed 7:30am to 12:30pm

Myndi Margan, Bookkeeper

firstluthbook@gmail.com

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

Bulletin Deadline:

Wednesday 9 am

Newsletter Deadline:

20th each month

Church Council	
President: Bill Deppe	920-229-5547 sbdeppe@live.com
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December

