

# First Evangelical Lutheran Newsletter

January 2026

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*"Proclaiming the Good News of Grace and Forgiveness in Jesus Christ to Our Community and World"*

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**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

Happy New Year!

Here we are at the start of a whole new year. Maybe you have made some new year's resolutions or maybe not. Personally, I always find it an exciting time - a fresh start of sorts. It's a new year, and a time for new beginnings. There are many passages in the Bible which tell us that God has a way of bringing about the new. Ephesians 4 encourages us to "put away your former way of life, your old self...and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." Part of the life of faith is that the "new" is always arriving. God in Christ, as Revelations reminds us, is always making all things new. And this is good news! Because God is in the business of making us new, we can take this verse from Ephesians to heart and trust in the Holy Spirit's work within and among us. New years is always a great time to start over, but I wonder what would happen if we treated each day as a new beginning, because the walk of faith is a daily thing, where Jesus daily asks us to leave our old unhealthy self behind and to be transformed into "the new self". Every day we are encouraged to grow more in our faith and in our relationship with Jesus and one another.

2 Corinthians 5:17 reminds us that *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."* This is a great reminder at the start of a new year, that we in Christ are a *new creation*. The call of faith is to let go of our own efforts of being that new creation and instead trusting in God's grace and love which transform us in our daily walk with Christ.

May we all have a blessed year this 2026 and may we trust in the Spirit's work to bring us from death to life, from sorrow to joy, from the old to the new.

Christ's peace be with you all,

*Pastor Ben Dyrhaug*



## January Birthdays

January 4 Larry Lahman  
January 4 Dale Plasek  
January 6 Nancy Noga  
January 6 Anna Simonson  
January 8 Pastor Ben Dyrhaug  
January 11 Parker Lind  
January 15 Mark Helgeson  
January 17 Deb Jahnke  
January 17 Judy Lahman  
January 17 Ethan Sukraw  
January 24 Kathee Carlson  
January 26 Gary Anderson  
January 26 Heidi Plasek



### In Our Prayers

Amanda Steinbeisser,  
Tim Andree – grandson of Phyllis Haugen,  
Barbara Syverson, Jody Lange, Andy Bowman,  
Donna Hegg -mother of Nancy Noga  
Pete Baugh -brother-in-law of Ken Bowman

### Extended Care

Lucille Trisko, Carol Hanson, Avis Larson

### May God Watch Over You During Your Service to Our Country:

Matthew Westad, Jordan Olson, Lukas Johnson, Jean Barbee- daughter of Bea Skoglund  
Mitchell Cooper, Patrick Rubner, Dr. Drew Long – grandson of Carol Hanson



# Children's Ministry

The Sunday School children told the story of Jesus' birth during church on Sunday December 7, and did a great job, thanks to all who joined us for the program and refreshments afterwards!

Thank you to those who were able to carol earlier this month. Due to the extreme cold caroling was shared indoors only at St. William's, Prairie Village and Willow Square. The smiles and singing along showed just how much the caroling meant to those the music was shared with.

**Sunday January 18** - Children will sing in church.

**Sunday February 15** - Children will sing in church.

**Sunday March 29** - Palm Sunday - Egg Hunt and Palm Sunday Breakfast before church, no Sunday School

**Sunday April 5** – Easter No Sunday School

**Sunday April 19** - Children will sing in church.

**Sunday May 17** - Last Day of Sunday School for the school year.

**Sunday July 12 - Thursday July 16** - Vacation Bible School will be held at church with Luther Crest Bible Camp counselors.



## Christmas At First Lutheran



Thank you to everyone who helped make our Christmas season special.

Our musicians, Dale, Julie, Leah, Lily and Brad. Altar Care and everyone who decorated the church.

Thanks to those working behind the scenes and to Pastor Ben for the inspiring messages.





**JAM (Jesus and Me)** will be held on Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>. If you would be willing to volunteer, help with food, or have questions, please reach out to Pastor Ben at 218-405-0362.



**Confirmation Classes** will be held Wednesdays January 7, 14, 21 and 28. Supper is served at 5:30 pm with class to follow. Class finishes at 7 pm.



The monthly meeting of the Church council will be held Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm.



**Winter Weather Announcement:** If the Parkers Prairie school dismisses early because of bad weather, all events are cancelled here at FELC.



**Early Bird Registration for Summer 2026 at Luther Crest Bible Camp** is open and will run until February 14, 2026. Visit [www.luthercrest.org](http://www.luthercrest.org) to view the programs offered at this camp and get your kiddos registered! FELC has funds available to help send our kids to camp! With any questions, please contact Pastor Ben.

## **Notification of Annual Meeting – First Evangelical Lutheran Church, ELCA**

Notice is given for the Annual Meeting of First Evangelical Lutheran Church, ELCA. The meeting will be held on Sunday, February 8, 2026. The meeting will take place at First Evangelical Lutheran Church at approximately 11 a.m. There will be Election of Council Members, approval of the 2026 Proposed Budget. Reports from 2025 will be presented, voting members to the Synod Assembly will be elected and any other items of business can be brought to this meeting. All confirmed members of First Evangelical Lutheran are voting members of the congregation.

We are looking for 1 candidate to run for council. Kelly Olson has served 2 terms and her position needs to be filled. Joe Bridges and Jen Glebe are eligible to run for another term.

Following the meeting, there will be chili for lunch. It will be served by the youth of the congregation.

### **Mission of the Month**

#### **Parkers Prairie Backpack Program**



- This program is funded by donations and helps send elementary students' home with backpacks full of food every week!
- Provide nutritious, non-perishable, easy-to-prepare food to children.
- Ensure kids get enough food when they can't depend on school meals.



Community Meal will be held at the Community Center in Miltona on Wednesday, January 21<sup>st</sup> from 4:30 -6:30 pm. The meal is free and everyone is invited to attend. On the menu: mac and cheese, ham, rolls, homemade bars



**Runestone Chorus** will be presenting a musical concert on Sunday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2 pm at Shalom Lutheran in Alexandria. Pastor Ben is a member of this choir.

### **2025 FELC Finances**

#### **December 2025**

<b>General Income</b>	<b>Bldg. Income</b>	<b>Expense</b>	<b>Month Profit/Loss</b>	<b>Yrly. Net Income</b>
\$28,879.61	\$3,107.00	\$14,385.97	\$17,600.64	(\$6,146.87)

## First Evangelical Lutheran Church - January Assistants

	01/04	01/11	01/18	01/25
Reader	Gary Olson	Kelly Olson	Sue Ellwanger	Sue Ellwanger
Usher	Kelly Olson Finn Olson	Olson Boys	Nathan & Stephanie Uecker family	
Communion Asst	Jen Glebe		Stephanie Uecker	
Music	Dale Plasek	Dale Plasek	Julie Lindgren	Brad Lambrecht
Acolyte	Wyatt Olson	Hattie Truax	Kaleb Uecker	Blakelynn Douma
Sound System	Caleb/Jim/Owen	Caleb/Jim/Owen	Caleb/Jim/Owen	Caleb/Jim/Owen

## December Financials

General Fund	12/07	12/14	12/21	12/24/12/25 Christmas Eve Christmas Day	12/28
Sunday Offering	\$900.00	\$11,400.00	\$1,975.00.	\$2,916.00	\$620.00
Electronic Giving General & Building	535.00 (1st)		835.00 (15 <sup>th</sup> )		
Elmo Contribution	\$1,333.05				
Vanco	\$118.77	\$19.18		\$243.77	\$1,008.00
Mission of the Month		\$25.00 Prairie Food Shelf	\$25.00 LSS		
General Fund Total	\$2,795.82	\$11,419.18	\$2,794.00	\$3,643.77	\$1,628.00
Building Fund	\$91.00	\$50.00	\$16.00	\$1,500.00	

## Prayer Ventures for January 2026

**1** *New Year's Day* What are your hopes, resolutions and visions for this year? Share them with God and ask for help in bringing them to fruition.

**2** Much of the world yearns for peace, unity and the healing of rifts that lead to violence, injustice, suffering and deep-rooted prejudice. Ask God for guidance and strength so we —individually and as communities of faith — can be persistent bearers of hope, grace, compassion and reconciliation in the world.

**3** Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry reminds us: “Our rootedness in Christ sustains us with his love. His love connects us to one another. We must stay connected to face the challenges of this moment.” Give thanks to God for the infectious nature of caring relationships and communities of faith grounded in the gospel and for the example of Jesus Christ’s life and teachings.

**4** Thank God for the opportunities we have through ELCA Global Mission to use our gifts, skills and life experiences to do God’s work. Pray that the Spirit will inspire and embolden siblings in Christ who are discerning their response to God’s invitation to serve alongside our companion churches and related organizations around the world.

**5** Pray that our lives bear witness to the life, light and grace that Jesus Christ, the son of God, brought into the world for all people.

**6** *Epiphany of Our Lord* Give thanks and praise to God for revealing to us daily God’s majesty and the new life we receive in Jesus Christ!

**7** Pray that we increase Mission Support — the portion of offerings that congregations share with synods and the churchwide organization that enables new ministries, supports development of new leaders, nurtures partnerships around the world, and strengthens our church’s efforts to alleviate poverty and work for justice and peace, here and around the world.

**8** Pray for the Spirit to continue to shed light on the mystery of our salvation and strengthen our faith in God’s promise of redemption fulfilled in Christ, a promise made to us with full awareness of our human quirks, flaws, questions and complexities.

**9** Thank God for the ELCA’s special relationship with the United Methodist Church, a full communion partner since 2009. Pray for the church, its members and its leaders, that together we will find strength and resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor, especially in these challenging times for the church and society.

**10** Pray for churchwide staff and volunteers from across the country who are planning the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis. Ask God to guide their preparations and stir their faith, creativity, wisdom and vision.

**11** The presence of Jesus Christ among us — God’s love expressed in human form — makes the unimagined real. Praise God for the amazing gift of salvation and the freedom to live in this world as children of God who follow Christ!

**12** Remember in prayer and give thanks for the ELCA’s Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment program, which provides leadership, resources and advocacy for our church and society that is shaped by the unique voices and experiences of people across race, ethnicity, ability, class, sexuality and age.

**13** “Jesus calls us in, sends us out bearing fruit in a world of doubt, gives us love to tell, bread to share: God (Immanuel) everywhere” (*WOV* 754)! Give thanks for the Spirit who creates and nurtures unique gifts in each of us that help us serve our neighbors and share the good news of Jesus Christ far and wide.

**14** Pray that we awaken each day with renewed wonder, awe and respect for the complexity and beauty of God’s creation, from microscopic organisms and human beings to towering mountains and vast oceans.

**15** Ask the Spirit to help us grow more resilient so that we can navigate change and situations that are stressful, discomfiting and overwhelming. Pray that our efforts to teach children and youth skills that lead to greater resiliency will be fruitful and effective.

**16** *National Religious Freedom Day* Give thanks that our nation supports the freedom to embrace religion, to worship and to share our faith according to our personal beliefs. Pray that we will respect the religious beliefs of our neighbors and support their right to practice their faith openly, without constraints, persecution or unfair advantage.

**17** “A life steeped in generosity pours out love unconsciously” (the Rev. Peter W. Marty, *Living Lutheran*, 2015). Pray that we exercise a generosity that is not defined by financial wealth but flows from us as a daily expression of faith, with a spirit of gratitude for God’s abundant grace and the belief that our gifts contribute to God’s work in the world.

**18** *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:4-6). Pray with our siblings in Christ around the world that we will find strength and joy in knowing that we are of one body in Christ that is not confined or divided by individual institutions or leaders, religious traditions, cultures or denominations.

**19** *Martin Luther King Jr. Day* Give praise and thanks to God for courageous saints of the past and present who help bring about change. Pray that we value one another as children of God and that we are bold and persistent in confronting racism, injustice and inequity.

**20** Remember in prayer ELCA campus ministries and the Lutheran Campus Ministry Network (LuMin), inclusive faith communities on college and university campuses across the United States that nurture the faith of young adults through worship, study, fellowship and service. Give thanks for congregations that support and partner with campus ministries.

**21** “I have not hidden your saving help within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness” (Psalm 40:10). How can we keep the good news to ourselves? Pray for enthusiasm and the courage to share the story of our salvation and faith — God’s story — through our words and actions. Let us give thanks for how the Spirit equips us for such work.

**22** Pray for nations at war that are on the verge of peace and for those for whom a vision of peace is not yet clear.

**23** Pray for partnerships that help spread the gospel and provide love and care for our neighbors and siblings in Christ, including companion churches, full communion partners, the Lutheran World Federation, ecumenical and interfaith organizations, Lutheran Services in America’s network, Global Refuge, the World Council of Churches and others.

**24** Remember in prayer Lutheran outdoor ministry leaders who are recruiting young adults to serve in summer camp programs and are planting seeds of invitation in those who are unsure of how their faith, gifts and passions can be used to serve children, youth and adults of diverse abilities and backgrounds.

**25** Pray that we respond with a resounding yes — or even an uncertain yes — as the first disciples did when Jesus beckoned, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.”

**26** *Conversion of Paul* Give thanks for God’s unfathomable power to change and redeem anybody, including us. Pray for those whom we feel are lost, unreachable and even undeserving of our mercy, trusting that all things are possible for God and that God will change our hearts and nudge us to be a loving and inspiring presence in their lives.

**27** We are a church that believes we accomplish more when we work together and collectively employ our diverse gifts for doing God’s work in the world. Ask God to help us bridge and mend divisions in our faith communities and society that get in the way of valuing one another and working together for the benefit of all, especially our neighbors in need.

**28** Praise God for theologians and teachers who help us study Scripture, develop a deeper understanding of God’s activity in the world, contribute to the maturing of our faith and explore how we live our faith in daily life.

**29** Pray for the ELCA Horizon International Internship program, which provides seminary students with intensive experiences here and with companion churches around the world, with the purpose of enriching their talents and leadership skills for ministry and the mission of the ELCA.

**30** Give thanks for stewardship and generosity resources and the assistance provided to congregations through the ELCA Mission Interpreters, Stewardship Key Leaders, stewardship coaching and Ventures Steward Leaders networks.

**31** Pray that we trust God’s enduring love, mercy and patience to renew and encourage us when we fall short of our promises, goals and good intentions.

## January 2025

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
<b>4</b> 9 am Sunday School 10 am Worship w/Communion	5	6	<b>7 Confirmation</b> 5:30 pm Meal – Class to follow	11:30 am Senior Dining	<b>9</b> <b>7 pm -7 am Youth Lock In</b>	10
<b>11</b> 9am Sunday School 10 am Worship	12	13	<b>14 Confirmation</b> 3-5:30 pm JAM 5:30 pm Meal -Class to follow 7 pm Council	<b>15</b> 11:30 am Senior Dining	16	17
<b>18</b> 9 am Sunday School 10 am Worship /Communion - S.S Children sing Henri from Luther Crest Bible Camp will be at FELC	19	<b>20</b> 3:30 - 6:30 pm Prairie Food Shelf	<b>21 Confirmation</b> 5:30 pm Meal -Class to follow	<b>22</b> 11:30 am Senior Dining	23	24
<b>25</b> 9 am Sunday School 10 am Worship	26	27	<b>28 Confirmation</b> 5 pm Meal -Class to follow	<b>29</b> 11:30 am Senior Dining	30	31

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