



THE MESSENGER

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,
that whoever believes in him should not perish
but have eternal life. John 3:16*

THE NEWSLETTER OF FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

January 2026

*Faith's Mission is to reach people, young and old, who need Christ
in their lives, and to help them know, love and serve Christ.*

In the name of the risen and living God, Jesus Christ, to those who are called to be saints of Faith Lutheran Church and who call on the name of our Lord: Grace and peace to you.

January always feels like a doorway. We step through it with one foot still in the year behind us and the other reaching into what we cannot yet see. As a pastor, I find myself reflecting on "time" this month. Not because new calendars magically make us new people, but because the turning of the year reminds us our lives are held in the steady faithfulness of God, even when our days feel uncertain.

In the church, we don't begin our year in January. We began the new church year in Advent (November 30), listening again to the promises of the coming of Jesus. We walked to the manger at Christmas, where the eternal Word took on flesh and entered our ordinary world. Now, as we settle into winter, we remember something important. The same Jesus who came to Bethlehem has come for us, here and now, in our real life, with our real sins, real fears, and real hopes.

Our hope doesn't rest in resolutions or self-improvement projects. It rests in the promise that Jesus came for sinners, not for the polished or the put-together. The cross and empty tomb stand at the center of our lives, not as decoration, but as the heart of our comfort. We belong to Christ because he has claimed us, and he holds us in mercy we cannot earn.

As I think about the months ahead, I picture our life together as a congregation. We worship, we sing, we gather at the table, we pray for one another, we have coffee and fellowship, and we learn again what it means to live by grace.

from the
PASTOR

A graphic featuring the text "from the PASTOR" in a mix of cursive and sans-serif fonts. A pen nib is positioned at the end of a decorative flourish that underlines the word "PASTOR".

Some seasons feel strong and full of energy. Others feel quiet and fragile. Yet every season rests on the same promise. Jesus meets us where we are and leads us forward.

My prayer for us this January is simple. Not that we would become busier or better, but that we would become more aware of the love we already live in. The Holy Spirit keeps working through the Word, through forgiveness, and through the fellowship we share. Even in winter, Christ is at work in us and among us. May we walk into this new year with steady hope and quiet joy in Jesus.

Happy New Year!

Your brother in the Gospel,

Pastor Scott

P.S.: Please invite one person to worship with you on Sunday. If you did, just think what would happen!

MEN'S BREAKFAST

The men's breakfast meets the first Saturday of the month. They serve at 8:30 AM but you can come earlier for coffee and fellowship. Join us Saturday morning, January 3rd, and invite your friends, dads, sons, and grandsons! There is a sign-up sheet on the information table.



Our annual meeting is Sunday, January 25th at 11 AM. To be a voting member, you must be a member who has communed & given an offering of record during 2025. For those who have reports due, please give them to the secretary by January 19th via email faithlutheran@tds.net or leaving a note in the box marked "secretary" outside her office door.

Prayerfully consider running for church council (two openings) nominating committee (four openings) or LCMC convention delegates (two openings). The current nominating committee will start recruiting for these church positions. Pray about it and if you have questions, discuss it with Pastor Scott or one of the council members.

Thank You!

THANK YOU!

Thanks everyone for the beautiful Christmas we had together! All the joy, Christmas well wishes, laughter, smiles, and gifts. It was all so thoughtful and fun as we celebrated the birth of Christ among us.

Blessings to all of you! ~Pastor Scott

A huge thank you to the congregation for their contributions to the mitten tree. We collected 123 items to keep children warm at the local schools.

A huge thank you for the bake sale donations and free will offering. We collected \$355, which was split equally between the Monticello and Clearwater food shelves.

Thank you to everyone who bought presents for the Monticello Community Sharing Tree! When Kevin and I took the gifts to St. Henry's Church it was amazing to see how the community came together to help these families in our community. Thank you again and God bless you all. ~Kevin & Connie Wischnack



Music Notes~ Many thanks for the faithfulness of our musicians, Dane, Kim, Lavon, Preston & Vickie!

I appreciate you for coming early, for practicing, for making our services so much better!

~Blessings from Sandy

LUTHERAN PRAYERS YOU CAN USE AT HOME

MORNING:

Lord Jesus, as morning light returns, awaken my heart to the mercy you have already given. Keep me from trusting my own strength, and anchor me in the righteousness you have promised through the cross and resurrection. Let your Word guide my thoughts and my work, so faith becomes active in love for my neighbor. Guard my tongue from harshness, my hands from harm, and my heart from pride. When weakness rises, draw me back to your forgiveness and renew my courage. Walk with me in this day, and keep me in your peace through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

EVENING:

Lord Jesus, as evening settles and the day grows quiet, I rest in the promise that my life is held in your mercy. What I have done well, receive with thanksgiving; what is broken, cover with your forgiveness. Free me from fear of my failures, and teach me to trust your finished work alone. Give rest to my body, calm to my mind, and hope to my heart. Watch over all who labor, weep, or wander this night, and gather your church under your care. Keep me in faith until morning, and grant me sleep in the comfort of your cross. Amen.

LUTHERAN TIDBITS

This month's topic from *The Book of Concord* comes from the Augsburg Confession, Article VII, "The Church." This brief but foundational article gives a clear and hopeful definition of what the Church truly is. Rather than centering the Church on human organization, traditions, or visible structures, the Reformers confessed the Church is the assembly of believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. In other words, the Church exists wherever Christ is at work through his Word and Sacraments.

This teaching brings both comfort and clarity. The Reformers wanted to remind Christians that the heart of the Church is not our buildings, programs, or achievements, but the living voice of the Gospel that delivers forgiveness and new life. The unity of the Church, therefore, does not rest on outward ceremonies or uniform practices, but on agreement in the Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments.

At the same time, this article resists the idea the Church is merely invisible. The Church takes real, gathered form around preaching, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Christ creates and sustains his people through these means, calling sinners into faith and shaping them into a community of forgiveness, prayer, and service.

Article VII gives us a steady way to think about the Church in every age. When we hear the Gospel and receive the Sacraments, we can trust that Christ is present, his Church is alive, and his promises are for us.

WRIGHT COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION -WCCA

If you, or someone you know, needs help with: understanding health insurance options, free tax preparation, food, WIC, Head Start, energy assistance to help pay a bill, or weatherization of your home, and more, talk to WCCA. There's some brochures & info on the table in the narthex. They also need volunteers so perhaps partnering with them may result in you doing some ministry!

CONTACT: WCCA, 130 W. Division Street, PO Box 787, Maple Lake, MN 55358.
For help or more info: Jay Brenny, 320-963-6500 ext 233 or jbrenny@wccaweb.com.

MOVING YOURSELF FORWARD...2026

Gloria Colbenson, council president

This week between Christmas and New Year's is a strange one. The rush is over. The calendar hasn't flipped yet. And everything feels....quieter. I have always loved this pocket of time, not because it's productive...but because it's *s p a c i o u s*. No need to be rushing. The mind isn't on overload.

It's one of the only times all year where you're not being pulled forward or backward. No holidays to prep for. No resolutions to keep. No urgency to "fix" anything. Just enough stillness to hear yourself think again.

Don't believe that means you need to overhaul your life or set lofty goals. But believe this is a beautiful moment for a ritual of reflection and intention. Not to judge the year. Not to optimize yourself. Just to gently close one chapter before opening the next.

Here's some ways to approach it:

First, look back with some honesty and compassion.

What worked this year?

What didn't?

What did you learn about yourself, your money, your energy?

Not in a "beat yourself up" or "live in the past" type of way. More like *what patterns showed up that you want to be aware of moving forward?*

Then, look ahead (without pressure). Not a 12-month master plan. Not a list of resolutions you're supposed to stick to perfectly. Just questions like:

What do I want more of next year?

What do I want less of?

What does "enough" look like for me now?

Sometimes that turns into a vision board. Sometimes it's a few notes in a journal. Sometimes it's just a conversation over coffee with a friend you trust. No hype. No hustle.

And if this week is still foggy for you? That's okay too. This isn't about doing it "right". It's about honoring the pause. Because when you give yourself a moment to reflect before racing into January, you tend to start the year calmer...clearer...and more aligned with what actually matters to you.

However you choose to spend this in-between week, we hope you let it be soft. You don't need to rush the beginning. You're allowed to arrive gently.

Lastly and most important, you don't have to do this alone. Ask God to guide you. Ask God to give you peace. Ask God to walk beside you. You can never pray too many times a day. Ask for what you need moving yourself forward in 2026.



BE STILL, AND
KNOW THAT
I am God.

PSALM 46:10

CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES

December 22, 2025

Members Present: Pastor Scott Block, Gloria Colbenson, Lynne Crandall (virtually), Emilie Greb, Pete Kissinger, Connie Wischnack, Preston Van Schepen, Patrick Zierden

President, Gloria Colbenson called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Pastor Scott opened with prayer and devotion related to the fourth week of Advent. As Mary leaned on her faith and trusted God, we as church leadership need to trust that God is at work through us as we yield control to His will.

Pastor's Report:

- There have been several pastoral calls and visits in the last month.
- Pastor is preparing for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services.
- There is a baptism on the Sunday, December 28th.
- Pastor Scott suggested purchasing a panel cart to help make moving tables around the church easier. Lynne made a motion and Connie seconded to spend up to \$250 to purchase a panel cart.

Treasurer's Report: Pat gave the treasurer's report. Preston made a motion and Connie seconded to approve as read.

Building and Grounds:

- Pete met with our insurance agent to do a review of the church's current policy and changes we could make to save money. Lynne made a motion and Preston seconded to approve the proposed changes.
- The claim for the roof is still ongoing and pending final resolution.

OLD BUSINESS:

Church Directory: This is still in progress and should be completed in the next month.

Gratitude Sunday: We received some pledge cards back, but not many. The stewardship committee will meet again in January.

Nominating Committee: Lynne Crandall and Gloria Colbenson will serve as council representatives along with Chuck Bray, Dane Hasbrouck, Lana Gilberts and Vern Garberich. They will begin calling eligible members in January.

Audit Report: Dave Dilley did an audit of the office checking account and credit account. We will need two auditors to do the annual book. Gloria will ask Dave and Preston has also volunteered to do this.

Sunday Offering Counting: Kim Garberich would like to have another person to count money, do paperwork and make Monday deposits so she is not committed every Sunday. Please contact Kim or a member of council if you or someone you know would be willing to help with this.

NEW BUSINESS:

Proposed Budget: Pat put together a proposed annual budget which was reviewed for presentation to the congregation at the annual meeting.

Emilie made a motion and Preston seconded to adjourn the meeting. We closed with the Lord’s Prayer. The next meeting will be Thursday, January 15th.

Respectfully Submitted, Emilie L. Greb, Secretary



- 5- Tami Foote
- 7- Brenda Olson
- 12- Gloria Triebwasser
- 19- Emilie Greb
- 21- Harlan Hamson
- 26- Mike & Linda Bregenzer

God bless you on your special day!

If you see a mistake or an omission, please contact the secretary so she can update the records:
763.878.2092 or faithlutheran@tds.net.

Thanks!