

The *First* Word

Volume 26, Issue 8

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL — HELENA, MONTANA

June/July 2025

Seek FIRST His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33

Special June—July Dates

Junior Confirmation.....	June 1
First Edition Book Club.....	June 7
Home of DeeDee Spellman	
Last day of FLS classes.....	June 6
Pentecost.....	June 8
Last day for FLS staff.....	June 13
Flag Day.....	June 14
Trinity Sunday.....	June 15
Father's Day	
Cards 4 Kids go on sale	
OWLS.....	June 19
Second Sunday after Pentecost.....	June 22
Presentation of The Augsburg.....	June 25
Confession	
Third Sunday after Pentecost.....	June 29
Independence Day.....	July 4
OWLS.....	July 17
Deadline for August <i>First Word</i>	July 23

Full agenda for Annual Voters' Assembly meeting on Sunday, June 8



Please mark your calendar and plan now to attend the Annual Voters' meeting set to convene at 1 p.m. on Sunday,

June 8. A light lunch will be served prior to the convening of the meeting.

Agenda items include the presentation of the proposed Spending Plan for Fiscal Year 2025-2026, the election of MMC members, and election of members of the Board of Elders.

The nominees for MMC positions are: Secretary (2-year term) - Linda Fromm; Treasurer (2-year term) - John Champagne; MMC at-large members (both for 2-year terms) - Roger Schultz and Seth Siefken.

President Jason Mercer has one year

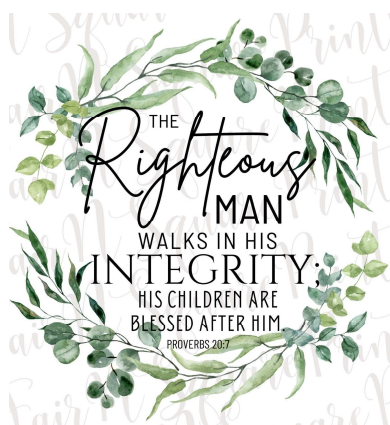
remaining on his second 2-year term. There are no nominees for the position of Vice President, so that position will remain unfilled.

MMC at-large members David Goodson, Steven Johnson, and Randy Middlebrook have one year remaining on their 2-year terms.

The nominees for the Board of Elders (all 2-year terms) are: Brian Buhr, Allen Keim, and Rick Northrup.

Per Article 9 of the Bylaws, the list of nominees is closed at the time the meeting agenda and slate of candidates is distributed (which was done in the Sunday Announcements beginning on Sunday, May 25, and also by way of this article). No nominations will be accepted from the floor during the meeting.

Voting members are all confirmed members who have reached the age of 18.



Amazing way the deaf “hear”

On May 22, First's OWLS were treated to a presentation on a subject not normally explored: sign language to the deaf.

First's own Janice Larison, whose brother was born deaf, taught deaf children for 18 years. She earned her bachelor's degree in elementary education, and at that time decided to go on to become a teacher of the deaf. She was employed by the Los Angeles Office of Education teaching young deaf children, who normally came to her at age three, but a few as young as 18 months. Those children stayed with her until about age eight.

In her early years, the style was not to teach sign language, but to teach deaf people to speak. At that time, her sign language training was to sign “exact English,” which meant she would sign using English grammatically structured sentences completely, using past tenses and plurals, etc. Because deaf people

would eventually have to read and write English, it was deemed best to teach them sign language using an English grammatical structure. She did not learn ASL (American Sign Language) until later in her career. ASL uses signs for various words and phrases.

Janice provided a packet of information comparing how a simple sentence written in English would be signed, and also included signs for religious entities, among them: Jesus, Lord, priest (minister/pastor), pray, soul, and worship. In addition, the information included an illustration of how to form every individual letter of the alphabet. The alphabet is used mainly if there is no sign for an object

Please see ASL, Pg. 2



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Happenings at First Lutheran School



Director	Get Set Teacher	Pre-Kindergarten Teacher	After Care Providers	Lunch Assistant	Pastor
Sue Taylor	Shannon Champagne	Lori Radtke	Melanie Middlebrook/Emily DuPre Lillian Buhr	Jeannie Hubbard	Larry A. Miller

Our First Lutheran School students shared their "May Bee" plans for this coming summer.

When asked about their plans for summer, the PreK kids said:
This summer “May Bee” I will . . .

AINSLEY: Play with butterflies. And try to catch them.

DAISY: I want to go to Grandma Lolly's 100 times.

ISAAC: Play soccer. I like to score goals!

JACIE: Go to Flying Giant and also jump on the trampoline. And pet the kittens.

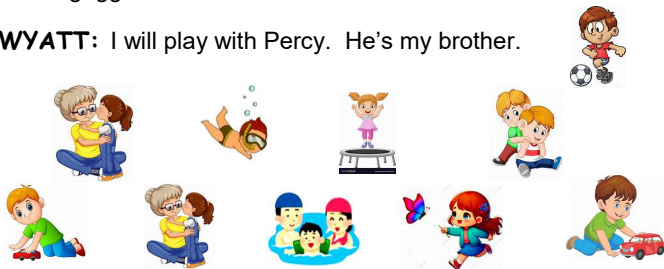
LOCHLAN: PLAY! Paly on my trampoline. I jump! BOING!
BOING!

RAIDEN: Eat breakfast. Brush my teeth and then go to the pool with mom and dad and my brothers.

RYKER: Snuggle with Mom. Play with my toys. Cars. I have a carpet that is a racetrack.

TITUS: Go in a swimming pool. I will sit on a floatie. I will wear scuba goggles.

WYATT: I will play with Percy. He's my brother.



When asked about their plans for summer, the Get Set kids said: This summer “May Bee” I will . . .

AVRAM: Go to parks with my mom.

COLTEN: Go golfing with my dad.

COLTER: Make bluebird cookies.

DEAN: Bake donuts!

ELI: Go get chocolate donuts.

EASTON: Play with snow — up in the mountains.

ISLA: Go to the beach.

LILY: Have water gun fights.

MAELYNN: Visit my cousins in Missoula.



ASL

From Pg. 1

Janice offered several tips about communicating with deaf or hearing-impaired people, especially to look directly at them and not to raise your voice. They are going to lip read to some degree, and your voice is stronger if it is coming from straight on.

Many deaf children are born of deaf parents, but that is probably best because they are all communicating from day one.

Pastor Miller provided information on the Lutheran Deaf Mission Society, which has been active since 1894, and whose vision is to partner with LCMS Districts and congregations to give them the training, tools, and other resources they need to bring God's Word to the deaf. Spiritually, more than 95% of the deaf in the U. S. are without Christ.

To make the OWLS' day even more special, Get Set and PreK students from our school signed the entire *Jesus Loves Me* hymn without uttering a sound!

The *First* Word

Published monthly by:

First Lutheran Church
2231 Broadway
Helena, MT 59601
(406)442-5367



Rev. Larry A. Miller.....*Pastor*
Linda Fromm.....*Editor*
Shari Miller.....*Calendar/Servant Schedule*
Volunteer Staff.....*Printing/Collation*

There will be NO *First Word* in July.
Deadline for the August issue is
Wednesday, July 23. Place articles in The *First*
Word box in the church office or email them to:
lindafromm@mac.com



I came across this wonderful passage, titled "the eye of a needle" (again) the other day (Mark 10:24-27). **I love what it has to say to you and me and us all!**

*The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." The disciples were even more astonished. They said to each other, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God. **All things are possible with God.**"*

It's a passage that has been misunderstood over the centuries. The best way to understand it is to read it all the way to verse 27 and let Jesus and the disciples show how they understood what he meant. Jesus uses two key words: **hard and impossible**. He says that it is hard to enter the kingdom of God. Very hard! It's so hard, it would be like a very large animal, the camel, to go through a very small opening, like the eye of a sewing needle. That's impossible!



This sank in with the disciples. Their amazement turned into something deeper. They were struck by his words. They worked it out in their heads, and



finally they began saying to one another, "Then who can be saved?" There was a standard that no man could live up to. It's still there today. What appears difficult at first, like a child's puzzle, hits us hard: This applies to me. I can't do it.

I can't possibly succeed because of my sinful condition, because I keep on sinning. "Then who can be saved?"

Here is where God shows his love. **What's impossible for man is not impossible for God.** This is the God who made the sun go back ten steps for King Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:8), who made the sun stop for a whole day after the hailstorm at Gibeon (Joshua 10:12-13), and who made the sun in the first place (Genesis 1:16).

The image of the camel isn't supposed to make us think of a big animal unpacking its load and crawling through a low doorway on its knees as if in repentance.



Nor is the image of the camel supposed to make us think of a ship's anchor cable (rather than a camel) passing through a tiny opening. Jesus wants me to picture an animal as tall as I am that weighs half a ton walking through the tiny hole at the end of a sewing needle. **Jesus wants me to understand how only God can accomplish our salvation.**

Later in this chapter Jesus will provide the theme for this whole Second Gospel: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). This is how God does the impossible for us. He supplies us with faith in Jesus Christ, who covered our errors and who supplies everything we don't have that God demands.



The salvation of the sinner is founded on the merciful love of God. In this love, God wants the salvation of fallen humanity. "Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Lord of Armies. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?" (Ezekiel 18:23).

In His love, God is moved to bring about our deliverance and to offer the means through which the lost can receive this deliverance.

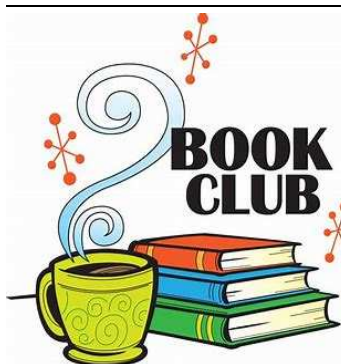
These are the means of grace, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. The Gospel is the medicine for our sickly and dying souls, and the means of grace bring this Gospel medicine to us through faith in Christ. The medicine is offered to everyone, but those who reject it, or are blocked from receiving it, do not receive its benefits. The



medicine contains the key ingredient: Christ's blood shed on the cross for our sins. This is only possible through God's gracious love. **With God, everything is possible. Nothing is impossible, not even that God would forgive a sinner like you and me!**

Next time you see a needle, or a camel, or something impossible **thank God for His impossible forgiveness, salvation. and love!**

Pastor Miller



First Edition Book Club members will meet at 12 noon on Saturday, June 7, at the home of DeeDee Spellman.

Members are reading — and will discuss — *The Women* by Kristin Hannah.

There will be no meeting in July, but ladies and their spouses or guests will meet on Saturday, August 23, at the home of Tammy Anderson for

the annual potluck. At that time, ladies will have voted on the books to be read during the 2025-2026 year, and will need only decide meeting dates, the order in which the books will be read, and the hostess for each meeting.

For the June 7 meeting, please RSVP to DeeDee by Wednesday, June 4, by call or text to (307) 631- 9669.

Quilters “wrap” for year

The women of First’s Dorcas Circle, also known as The Quilters, thank the members and friends of First Lutheran Church for the opportunity to quilt and store materials in the Fellowship Hall. We received a generous amount of beautiful fabric, sheets, crochet thread, and school supplies for our quilts and school kits.

We also thank Thrivent Financial for awarding us an Action Grant of \$250 to purchase batting.

In addition to the Wednesday morning crew, we have women who cut squares, sew quilt tops and drawstring school bags, hem the quilts, and weight boxes after they are packed for shipping.

The quilts and school kits were blessed on May 4, packed on May 7, and pickup up on May 9. We sent 43 quilts and 25 school kits to Lutheran World Relief. During the year, we also donated four quilts to individuals in need.

To see where items were distributed in 2024, please check out the map posted on the quilting closet door in Ziegler Hall. This is the first year that Lutheran World Relief has also distributed quilts to people in the United States. For more information about Lutheran World Relief, speak with a quilter or read about the organization online at lwr.org.

We thank God for your support in this ministry of the church, and we pray the items will be used to God’s glory and be an aid in sharing God’s love and the Gospel message to people in need.

We have fabric ready to be sewn into tops when we start quilting again this fall. If you would like to sew a packet of pre-cut squares into tops during the summer, please speak with Bridget Michel.



We Give Thanks to God
for our **Choir Members**
HIS Kids! | **Chancel Choir**

Celebrate the 4th and summer ... and support our youth

Celebrate our national holiday and the summer season with some special “FOURTH OF JULY/SUMMER GREETING” cards. Last year they were a “hit” with the congregation and I hope you will take a look at the new ones this year.

These are perfect for a veteran, family members, homebound friends, and those people who live far away.

Cards are sold individually and are priced at 50 cents apiece. All proceeds go toward our youth activities here at the church.

THANK YOU for your support of this ministry with donations of cards, envelopes, and stickers!

Cards will be available for sale beginning on Sunday, June 15, in Ziegler Hall.

— Janice Larison
CARDS 4 KIDS



Images shown are for illustrative purposes only; they are not actual cards.

IN MY FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS

Make this keepsake to express love for your dad or another special man this Father's Day.

What you need:

- White construction paper (11" x 13" sheet)
- Pencil
- Black permanent marker
- Crayons or paint

What you do:

1. In the center of the paper, trace your foot in pencil. Darken the outline with marker.
2. Color or paint the footprint. Let it dry.
3. Trace your father's foot (same side) on top of your footprint (with yours in the middle of his).
4. Color or paint his footprint. Let it dry.
5. Sign your names and the date at the bottom.



Just for KIDS!



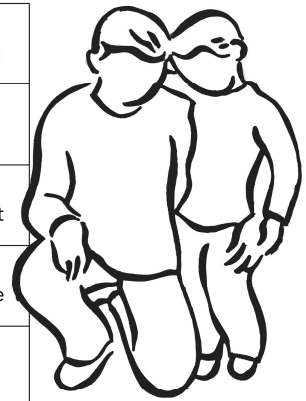
FATHERS OF FAITH

Fathers do amazing things for their families, but the greatest gift our dads can share with us is their faith in God.

Complete this puzzle to read Isaiah's advice to fathers.

Directions: Working left to right, first write down all the 1's in the word blanks. Continue with the 2's and finally the 3's.

1 The	2 as	3 tell	1 living
2 I	3 their	1 the	2 am
3 children	1 living	2 doing	3 about
1 they	2 today	3 your	1 praise
2 parents	3 faithfulness	1 you	



_____, _____, _____, _____,
 _____; _____
 _____.

Isaiah 38:19, NIV

Answers: The living, the living—they praise you, as I am doing today; parents tell their children about your faithfulness. Isaiah 38:19, NIV

School Bikeathon “fun”draiser a “wheel” success!



First Lutheran School held its second annual bikeathon “fun”draiser on Friday, May 23. After having been rained out the previous week, the kids were all ready to ride! They took quite a few turns around the parking lot and made sure to do as many laps as possible.

After lots of pedaling, the kids took a well-deserved break for a treat and then were back at it.

Thank you for your support through prayers, gifts, and cards. The kids were all thrilled to receive their cards from the Star Sponsors. Thank you for helping to make their day special.

Start planning now for Vacation Bible School



First Lutheran Church will be holding our Vacation Bible School (VBS) program, an "Epic Australian Adventure: An Unforgettable Journey with Jesus," beginning on Monday, August 11, and running through Friday, August 15, from 9 a.m. to noon each day. Our VBS is open to all children between the ages of 3 and 18. (Young children must be potty-trained.)

The week will include crafts, snacks, Bible exploration,

music, Bible storytelling, and other FUN activities.

During the week, the kids will explore five exciting Bible stories and learn about Jesus leading the way. In the first part of the week, we will begin by learning about God calling Moses, and God leading His people to the Promised Land.

Later in the week, we will learn the Parable of the Good Samaritan, hear about why Peter and John race to the tomb, and finally witness Jesus ascend to the Father.

The week will be filled with adventure, excitement, and, best of all, Jesus!



June 1
Aaron Hollatz
June 3
Pam Dye
June 4
Kelli Maxwell
June 5
Thomas Basinger
Nancy Westerbuhr
June 6
DeeDee Spellman
June 7
Camille Botteron
Dan O'Malley
June 8
Seth Brott
Randy Middlebrook
Elly Schmeltzer
Cliff Ulmer
June 10
Bill Ingebritson
Bill McIntosh III
June 11
Abbey Barnhart
Nathan Nachtsheim
Randy Williams
June 13
Jayce Volpe
June 14
John Adair
Shirley Clearman
Melanie Maier
Skip Nicholls
June 15
Isabelle McIntosh
June 17
Wanda Person
Daniel Warsinski

June 19
Ezekiel Hollatz
June 20
Michael Bridegroom
Jeannie Glenn
June 21
Mark Bartels
Rick Northrup
June 22
Ava Ellwein
Nora Keim
Jessie Pate
Dale Wagner
June 23
Jenna Blair
June 24
Jim Talley
June 25
Louisa LaForge
June 26
Ela Shields
June 27
Pat Hartman
Oakley Morrow
June 29
Vickie Stefanik
June 30
Mykel O'Malley
Alexander Rose



July 1
Duane Westerbuhr
July 4
Asher Hollatz
Nancy Jenkins
July 5
Crystal Nachtsheim
Kelley Shields
Susan Taylor
July 6
Sam Schmeltzer
July 7
CoraLee Kuehne
Samuel Yager
July 8
Robert Johnson
July 9
Garett Bacon
Spirit Hartford
July 10
Joleigh Mandera
July 11
Marge Bouldin
July 12
LeAnn Ferron
July 13
Lorrie Bridegroom
July 14
Dorothy Goodson
Jon Spranget
July 15
Dean Belcourt
Traeton Duty
July 16
Betty Brewer
Elainah Veach
Emma Veach

July 18
Bryon Elvbakken
Laurie Hanson
July 19
Brigitte Johnson
Samantha Taylor
July 21
Lowell Bartels
Dagny Cannon
Elliott Cole
Dennis Giulio
Beatrice Johnson
Cheryl Summerer
July 22
Tiffani Eccleston
July 23
Jerry Michel
July 24
Dez Brown
Bruce Nachtsheim
July 26
Laurie Stelter
Debbie Sternberg
July 27
Robert Mohs
Pam Worthy
July 28
Thomas Leitzke
July 31
Joseph Warsinski





Kenzie Criswell

Kenzie will graduate as a class valedictorian/National Honor Society student during the 2025 Helena High graduation exercises on June 7. She has been an active member of her class, participating in many activities throughout her school experience. In addition to school activities, Kenzie has been a volunteer at St. Peter's Hospital. In the fall of 2024, Kenzie received her CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant), and since then has worked at the Helena Masonic Home while completing studies and activities at Helena High. Because of Kenzie's interest in healthcare, she will be attending Montana State University in the fall to study human biology in order to pursue a career in medicine.

Kenzie is the daughter of Greg and Young Criswell.

Christopher Shields

Christopher graduated Cum Laude from the University of Montana on May 10 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Media Arts (Digital Filmmaking), and the first-awarded Documentary Film Certificate. He will also be graduating Cum Laude from the University of Montana in December 2025 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism.

Christopher is the son of Kelly and Kelley Shields.

Class of 2025



Charles Joseph Olson

Charles graduated from East Helena High School on May 30. He has been attending classes in the morning, and working full-time in the afternoon and all day on Saturdays as a supervised mechanic at the Ford dealership. He enjoys working on vehicles and is continuing his education to earn certificates to become a

Master Mechanic.

Charles is the son of Ken and Lisa Olson.

Matthew Shields

Matthew graduated as a salutatorian (Summa Cum Laude) from East Helena High School on May 30. He plans to attend Helena College — University of Montana to obtain an Associate of Applied Science degree in Diesel Technology, an Associate of Applied Science degree in Automotive Technology, and a Hybrid Vehicle Service Technician Certificate.

Matthew is the son of Kelly and Kelley Shields.



Go with God, graduates, as you begin a new chapter in your lives!

First Lutheran Church & School
2231 Broadway
Helena, MT 59601

Phone: (406) 442-5367
Fax: (406) 442-5285
School Phone: (406) 442-6913
Website: www.firstlutheranhelena.org
Email: churchoffice@firstlutheranhelena.org

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FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH is a Congregation of
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

THE MISSION of First Lutheran Church is
“Sharing God’s Word with Everyone, Everywhere!”

Tune in to **“The Lutheran Hour”**—Sundays at 8 a.m. on the Christian Satellite Network 91.1-FM
or listen on **“Family Talk”** on Sirius XM 131
“Woman to Woman”—Sundays at 9:30 p.m. on KMTX 105.3-FM

Stand firm therefore . . . — from your Board of Stewardship

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1).



“FOR YOU, BRETHREN, HAVE BEEN CALLED TO LIBERTY. ONLY DO NOT USE LIBERTY AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FLESH, BUT THROUGH LOVE SERVE ONE ANOTHER.” — GALATIANS 5:13

We celebrate Independence Day in July because of the freedoms and liberties our country has afforded us.

We are right to do this. We should be thankful for these liberties – the freedom to gather together to worship and to live out what we believe in our daily lives.

But freedom and liberty in our age have devolved. It has become a freedom from duty instead of a freedom for it. Indeed, freedom and liberty in our age has turned into licentiousness – a license to do what we want, when we want. This license is a submission again to a yoke of

slavery. For freedom as license to do what we desire when we desire it means we are slaves to our desires and slaves to our passions.

Christ died to set us free from our desires. In Holy Baptism, our Old Adam is drowned and put to death along with all sin and evil desires so that a new man may arise and live before God in righteousness and purity. In Christ, we are a new creation. We are set free from the passions of the flesh so that we are free to do our duty and bear fruits of the Spirit.

Our duty is what God calls us to do as members of a family, society, and the Church. God calls us to believe in His Word and gladly hear and learn it. He calls us to pray for all people. He calls us to live in faith toward Him and in fervent love for our neighbor. He calls us to put the gifts He gives to us in His service. God calls parents to provide for their children and raise

them in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

And God calls children to honor their parents and provide and care for them when they are no longer able to do so themselves. God calls the government to punish those who do evil and to reward those who do good. He calls citizens to pay their taxes and honor the governing officials as God’s servants. He calls pastors to preach and teach the Gospel, repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And He calls hearers to support those who teach them with every good thing.

Christ died to set us free from the works of our selfish flesh, giving us the freedom and liberty to do our duty. Stand firm, then, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

— lcms.org
Stewardship Ministry