

# The *First* Word

Volume 26, Issue 9

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL — HELENA, MONTANA

August 2025

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

## Special August Dates

Vacation Bible School.....Aug. 11-15

O.W.L.S. ....Aug. 21

Book Club potluck.....Aug. 23  
Home of Tammy Anderson

## Mission & Ministry Council 2025-2026

### Officers

President.....Jason Mercer  
Secretary.....Linda Fromm  
Treasurer.....John Champagne

### At-Large Members

David Goodson  
Steven Johnson  
Randy Middlebrook  
Roger Schultz  
Seth Siefken

### Advisor

Pastor Larry Miller

*The MMC is looking to appoint a vice president to serve an 11-month term to expire on June 30, 2026.*

*The vice president does not automatically move into the president's position.*

*Please prayerfully consider serving the congregation in this position. If you would like further information, please see MMC President Jason Mercer or email him at: jmercer@m-m.net*



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## Voters handle full business slate in record time at annual voters' meeting

Twenty-eight eligible voting members signed the voter registration sheet for this meeting, and after enjoying a light lunch, and an opening prayer offered by Pastor Larry Miller, approved the minutes of the June 9, 2024, voters' meeting, which had also been approved by the MMC at its July 6, 2024, meeting and posted to the bulletin board in Ziegler Hall for perusal by interested members.

Voters received a written *Report of Finances Through April 2025*, which President Jason Mercer reviewed. Voters also received a copy of the proposed spending plan for July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. The spending plan, as presented, estimates a total income of \$541,000, with estimated total expenses of \$545,080 (both for church and school combined), for an estimated net loss of \$4,030. (For just the school's portion, income and expenses will be a net positive of about \$3,000. The school is

self-supporting.) President Jason Mercer explained that all of this is dependent on gifts of income to the church. If we do not have money, we will not spend it.

The spending plan, as presented, was approved by the voters

Voters elected John Champagne as treasurer; Linda Fromm as secretary; and Roger Schultz and Seth Siefken as MMC at-large members. All terms are for 2 years, and will begin on July 1, 2025.

Also elected to the Board of Elders were Brian Buhr, Allen Keim, and Rick Northrup, all for 2-year terms to begin on July 1, 2025.

President Jason Mercer has one year remaining on his second 2-year term, and David Goodson, Steven Johnson, and Randy Middlebrook all have one year remaining on their 2-year terms as at-large members of the MMC.

See MEETING, Pg. 2

## EPIC Australian adventure coming to First Lutheran on August 11!

First Lutheran Church will hold its 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!

Please go to the link on the church's website to register your child(ren) or to volunteer to help during this FUN week!



## Meeting

Continued from Pg. 1

Randy Middlebrook, who with his wife, Melanie, is organizing the plan for the September 6, 2025, *Prayer in the Family Fall Retreat* at Cane Ridge West east of Lincoln, reported that this will be a day of fellowship, food, and prayer, and there will be plenty of activities for the kids.

He and Melanie invited everyone to the retreat, and noted that there will be sign-up sheets in Ziegler Hall, both for those planning to attend, and those who wish to volunteer to help.

The retreat will be just for the day, to begin at 10 a.m. and finish up at 4 p.m. Lunch will be provided, but there will be no dinner.

He encouraged everyone to watch for more information as the time for the retreat draws near.

## Things are hoppin' at FLS Summer Camp

Summer camp at FLS is rolling right along from Tuesday through Thursday with Lori Radtke teaching and Jeannie Hubbard helping two hours each day.

We have from 10 to 13 campers, ranging in age from 4 to 8. Our daily activities include PE, Bible, workbooks, science, art, free time, and reading ... LOTS of reading!

Here's what a few of the experts want you to know about their camp:



**William:** It is very fun. Having others to help. I like workbooks. We get to learn new things and do challenges.

**Avram:** It's super fun. I like to go outside and play tag.



**Dean:** I like to play in the red station with trains and Avram.

**Averie:** RECESS! I chase Brayden sometimes. I also love catching Daddy Long Legs.



**Ryker:** We hang out with Miss Lori and friends.



Can you hear the choir singing? We are starting up Chancel Choir beginning in September after summer break. What does this mean? It means we will meet on Wednesdays following our church services (about 7:15 p.m.) and sing for our church services during the months of September through May. Wednesday schedules will be flexible as the music is learned and practice times will be discussed at our first rehearsal.

Are you a "shower singer"? Are you interested in joining us this year? Our choir just might appeal to you. We'll have exciting music and really hope that you will join us. Please contact Shari Miller if you are interested. Please share your musical gifts with us!



Due to scheduling conflicts, there will not be a First Lutheran Church Women's Event in August this year.

But ... the annual First Lutheran Church Women's Christmas Event *will* take place, and ladies should make a note on their calendar NOW to **save Thursday, December 11, 2025**, as the date for this highly-anticipated event!



## Like a cookie with your coffee?

Back to school means sales on cookies! You can help stock up our kitchen pantry with store-bought cookies for our Sunday morning coffee hour! Lisa Tullis does a wonderful job providing us with delicious snacks, but sometimes we don't have enough "sweets" and it is helpful to have some in reserve. We appreciate all those who choose to donate this summer!

### The First Word

Published monthly by:

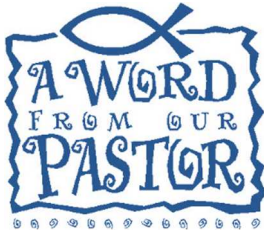
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Rev. Larry A. Miller.....Pastor  
Linda Fromm.....Editor  
Shari Miller.....Calendar/Servant Schedule  
Volunteer Staff.....Printing/Collation

**Deadline for the September First Word is Wednesday, August 20.**

**Place articles in the First Word box in the church office or email them to: [lindafromm@mac.com](mailto:lindafromm@mac.com)**



Do you ever wonder if any of those Lutherans who gathered in the 1880's for the first-ever Lutheran worship service in Helena, Montana had any idea what they were starting? By God's grace and goodness, and through the hard work and faithfulness of so many people, First Lutheran Church has blossomed and grown into a thriving congregation of hundreds of souls. Many words could be used to describe this group of God's people: "warm, welcoming, loving, caring, vibrant, one big happy family."

I believe that the word that best describes it, more than any other, is "BLESSED." By the grace and mercy of God we are and always have been a BLESSED congregation:

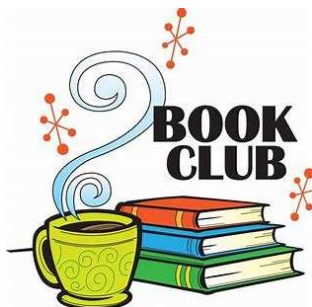
- BLESSED with faithful pastors and leaders.
- BLESSED with a warm family atmosphere.
- BLESSED with excellent music and worship.
- BLESSED with a desire to grow.
- BLESSED with a willingness to try new things.
- BLESSED with dedicated, hard-working officers, staff, and lay volunteers.
- BLESSED with younger people who represent the future of our church ("catapillars"), and older people ("pillars") who help us stand firm in God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions.
- BLESSED with God's life-giving Word and faith-strengthening Sacraments.
- BLESSED with a Savior who would rather die for us than spend eternity without us.
- BLESSED with the Holy Spirit's power and presence as we carry out the Lord's work.
- BLESSED with ... so much more, because of the love of our God in Jesus Christ, our Lord!
- Can you add even more blessings to the list? I would love to hear your additions!



This month, would you please send up some thank-you prayers and praises to our great God for His innumerable blessings? We are BLESSED!

*Pastor Miller*





Members of the First Edition Book Club will meet at the home of Tammy Anderson at 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, August 23, for the annual potluck. Husbands and/or friends are invited to join the fun!

Meat and beverages will be provided by the hostess, and ladies should bring a side dish, salad, or dessert.

**Please RSVP to Tammy by Saturday, August 16, by texting or calling her at (406) 459-8762. Be sure to let her know if you will be bringing your hubby or a friend.**

In addition to great food and fellowship, members will decide on meeting dates and hostesses for the 2025-2026 year. Linda Fromm has emailed Bridget Michel's list of the books recommended by members, which Bridget has thoroughly researched so that members have all the information they need about the books. With the list of books, Linda has also included a ballot and instructions on how to proceed with the ballot. *Please follow all instructions carefully.*

Club members will NOT meet in September, due to church events being held on both the first and second Saturdays, so the kickoff meeting will be held on Saturday, **October 4**. The hostess for that meeting will be decided at the potluck meeting, as will which book will be read for — and discussed at — the October meeting.

## A path of persistence

Some Christian converts in an overseas village were diligent about daily prayer. In the thicket outside town, they each had a place where they prayed in solitude. Over time, these believers wore pathways through the brush to their special prayer areas. If someone neglected his or her prayer life, it was evident because fresh grass started growing on that footpath. Out of concern, fellow Christians offered this loving reminder: "Friend, there's grass growing on your path."

How worn is your own path to prayer? Are you persistent when answers don't seem to come? Do you trust that God will answer your prayers, according to His good and gracious will?

When you grow weary, remember this promise in Galatians 6:9 (NIV): *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

— The Newsletter Newsletter

## Prayer and the Family retreat will be a blessing for young and old alike!



On Saturday, September 6, 2025 (the Saturday *after* Labor Day), all members and friends of First Lutheran Church and School are cordially invited to join together at Cane Ridge West, just east of Lincoln, Montana, to enjoy good fellowship and good food, and learn more about the power of prayer and its impact on the family.

We'll begin at 10 a.m. with a welcome and the opening prayer, and then the kids will break off and adjourn to the Fellowship House for activities geared to their ages.

Bible study and fellowship time will include opportunities to learn what God has to say about prayer and how prayer has impacted our families and lives.

Everyone (kids and adults) will then break for lunch, which will be provided (you do not need to bring *anything*).

*Organizers Melanie and Randy Middlebrook are seeking ideas for how to fill the time slot right after lunch, so if you have ideas, please see them at church, or email Randy at: [rmgrizzly@gmail.com](mailto:rmgrizzly@gmail.com).*

A craft activity for the day will be creating a prayer jar to take home. If you come with family, the entire family will get to help with this special creation.

We'll wrap up at 4 p.m. and adjourn for home, blessed to have been a part of God's natural world and in fellowship with His beloved people!



## “Craft lady” job one of my best ... ever!

Remember that assignment from school? *First Word* Editor Linda Fromm requested that I write two or three paragraphs about my days at summer camp. Here are my musings on one of my best jobs ever.

Trinity Lutheran Camp, located about two miles south of Bigfork, Montana, belongs to Trinity Lutheran Church in Kalispell. It provides a variety of opportunities: summer church services, retreats and meetings, family reunions, cabin rentals, at least five weeks of organized camps open to fourth grade through high school, and a week for LCMS pastors and their families.

For many years, I have been privileged to teach crafts for the 5th/6th and 7th/8th grade weeks of camp. This year's theme focused around Psalm 19:1, *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork*. Each day, the campers spent the morning with a Bible study leader and their counselors learning more about God's Word and memorizing the Bible verse of the day. They also played games, sang Christian and camp songs, swam in Flathead Lake (with an optional 7 a.m. polar plunge), ate lots of kid-friendly nutritious food, enjoyed campfire and devotions at the beach, entertained themselves with a talent show, and **made crafts**.

As craft lady, I cleaned pitch off the tables when we worked outdoors or set up projects inside. Prior to camp, I perused Pinterest and prayed about planning crafts to fit the theme and the interests of the campers. I applied for a Thrivent Action Grant and bought supplies.

One project this year was using string art to create a constellation a camper would like to see in the night sky, e.g. a cross, a heart, a slice of pepperoni pizza.

The second project was a rotating, seven-piece origami star. I facilitated two sessions each day, helping campers with ideas or projects and getting acquainted or reacquainted with campers and counselors. When I wasn't prepping, teaching, or cleaning up, I enjoyed the ebb and flow of camp life.

— *Bridget Michel*

Trinity Camp will also be the site of one of the LWML District Fall Retreats scheduled for September 19-21, 2025, so First Lutheran ladies will have a chance to enjoy our gracious God's natural world for a few days. Watch for registration information in the Summer issue of the *Montana Missive* when it becomes available at the church.



On Sunday, June 1, 2025, after much preparation and study, seven young people from our congregation were confirmed by Reverend Larry A. Miller. Kodi Thompson-Hargis was confirmed on May 5, 2025, (same class, just early).

We thank our gracious God for those who have served faithfully this year as Confirmation teachers: Bridget Michel, Shari Miller, Pastor Miller, Kathy Winslow (Pre-Confirmation teacher), and Sue Taylor (Youth Class leader).

**Tom Cook**

**John 15:5**

*I am the vine; you are the branches.  
Whoever abides in Me and I in him,  
he it is that bears much fruit,  
for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

**Teaghan Gozelanski**

**John 1:29b**

*Behold, the Lamb of God,  
Who takes away the sin of the world!*

**Robert Johnson**

**John 3:16**

*For God so loved the world that He gave  
His only Son, that whoever believes in Him  
should not perish but have eternal life.*

**Olivia Mercer**

**Psalm 23:1**

*The Lord is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.*

**Karlynn Miner**

**Joshua 1:9**

*Be strong and courageous. Do not be  
frightened, and do not be dismayed,  
for the Lord your God is with you  
wherever you go.*

**Leighanna Miner**

**Matthew 28:20**

*Behold, I am with you always,  
to the end of the age.*

**Kodi Thompson-Hargis**

**Proverbs 10:12b**

*Love covers all offenses.*

**Abby Wood**

**Psalm 94:19**

*When the cares of my heart are many,  
your consolations cheer my soul.*

# Jesus' transforming presence

— from your Board of Stewardship

*"But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.' Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost'" (Luke 19:8-10 NIV).*

Who knew, all those kids sitting in Sunday school were getting a lesson in stewardship! Generations of children have very often heard lessons based on the familiar account of Zacchaeus. The diminutive tax collector's curiosity surrounding the person and ministry of Jesus is what the Holy Spirit used to set him on a collision course for a total stewardship transformation. This transformation, according to the text of Luke 19, is not just about this life; it is about eternity as well!

Remember the story: Zacchaeus was a tax collector. Do not think of friendly neighborhood IRS agents. This was more like a toll booth operator, but the governing authorities did not set the toll. They would contract men to staff roadside booths and tax the commerce that was passing along the road. This was an enterprise full of greed and graft. The tax collectors would take as much as they could and only pass on a portion to the government. The rest did not go into the community chest either! It went into the pocket of the tax collector.

This is why the people had such disdain for Jewish tax collectors. They were seen as both crooks and traitors. They were crooks in that they extorted their compatriots and others in the toll process. But worse, they were seen as traitors because their efforts supported the occupying Roman authorities. That is the real reason that the people would not make way so that short Zacchaeus could see Jesus.

For this reason, he runs ahead and climbs a tree. He had heard all the stories. He wanted to see this Jesus with his own eyes. Mercy is on display. This hated crook and traitor gets a direct audience with Jesus — at Jesus' own request! Jesus invites Himself to Zacchaeus' house. This is where the transformation is about to take place!

Notice how Jesus does it. He does not preach a three-week sermon series, nor does He ask Zacchaeus to make a pledge. There is nothing programmatic about Jesus' approach. But Zacchaeus is completely transformed! The transforming force is the very presence of Jesus! Direct time with Jesus takes a crooked, selfish, criminal and makes him the most faithful steward.

This new life of stewardship is marked by the promises made. First, he gives half of his ill-gotten gains to the poor. These are people whom he would not have defrauded at all! Yet, after spending time with Jesus, they are his first concern. Only after this does he double the requirement of the Levitical law on fraud. And what does Jesus say is the

result? Salvation!

Doing the acts of stewardship does not save. Rather, the faith in Jesus that is created by the Holy Spirit is what saves! This is critical for us to confess. Failed stewardship can and will cut you off from God. The only antidote for failed stewardship is the presence of Jesus.

We do not need to run ahead and climb a tree for this presence of Jesus. He makes Himself available to us every week in the Divine Service. He speaks His Word of invitation to us in the pages of Holy Scripture. This, and this alone, transforms us from sinner to saint, from owner to steward of all that belongs to the Lord.

Do you want to become a more faithful steward? Spend more time with Jesus. Make the Divine Service a weekly priority. Feast on Christ's body and blood weekly! This is the great gift that brings salvation from God's House to yours!

— LCMS.org  
Stewardship Ministry



## August Birthdays at First

### August 1

Gloria Mayer  
Stan Sternberg

### August 2

Cole Koenig

### August 3

Susan McCormack

### August 4

Curtis Mohs

### August 7

Camden Ballard

### August 8

Tammy Anderson  
Brad Kraft

### August 9

Matt Elvbakken  
Rosalyn Freeman

### August 11

Darcy Goodson  
Jan Leitzke

### August 13

Danyell Wagner

### August 15

Andrew Carson  
Todd Jones  
Alice Lawson  
Maggie Pentecost

### August 16

Greg Criswell  
Jeannie Hubbard  
Trish Pentecost  
Tami Ross

### August 17

Carla Adair

### August 19

Felix Klapmeier

### August 21

Andrew Berg  
Leah Ellwein  
Leighanna Miner

### August 22

Mary Ann Gregory  
Theo Woehl

### August 24

Teaghan Gozelanski

### August 26

Nicole Sparks

### August 27

Isaiah LaForge  
Jill McIntosh

### August 28

Susan Bartels

### August 30

Briella Ballard  
Linda Greaves  
Joyce Nachtsheim

Happy Birthday!



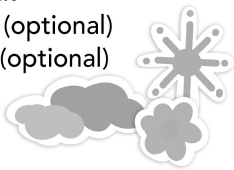
# SHINE FOR Jesus



This easy and colorful craft helps kids remember that Jesus is their light—no matter where they go!

## What you need:

- Clear plastic cup
- Battery tea lights
- Tissue paper squares (pre-cut)
- Glue stick
- Markers (optional)
- Stickers (optional)



## What you do:

1. Use the glue stick to press colorful tissue paper squares around the outside of the cup.
2. Add a simple phrase like "Jesus is my Light" or use fun stickers to decorate.
3. Turn on the tea light and place it inside the cup.
4. Turn off the lights and let your lantern glow!

The Lord is my light  
and my salvation—  
whom shall I fear?

— Psalm 27:1, NIV



# Just for KIDS!



## WHO AM I?

Did you know that some Old Testament books are named after prophets? Use the clues to figure out each prophet's name and write it on the lines. Then unscramble, use the circled letters to complete the sentence at the bottom.

1. I was called to preach to Nineveh, but I ran from God instead. My book is number 32 in the Bible.  
I am \_\_\_\_\_. C \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I spoke God's message when the temple was being built. My book is number 37.  
I am \_\_\_\_\_. S \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Israel's unfaithfulness to God is compared to my unfaithful wife. My book is number 28.  
I am \_\_\_\_\_. E \_\_\_\_\_.
4. My book predicts punishment for wickedness and promises of comfort. It is book 23.  
I am \_\_\_\_\_. I \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I had dreams and visions. My book is number 27.  
I am \_\_\_\_\_. D \_\_\_\_\_.
6. I was often in danger because of my prophecies. I angered officials. My book is number 24.  
I am \_\_\_\_\_. J \_\_\_\_\_.
7. I was a shepherd from Judah who called people to turn to God and leave their selfish lives. My book is number 30.  
I am \_\_\_\_\_. J \_\_\_\_\_.
8. My book contains descriptions of strange visions. My book is number 26.  
I am \_\_\_\_\_. E \_\_\_\_\_.

Prophets are \_\_\_\_\_.

Answers: Jonah; Haggai; Hosea; Isaiah; Daniel; Jeremiah; Amos; Ezekiel. Messengers.

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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

**Glorify**  
**And**  
**Rejoice**  
**Always!**  
**God’s**  
**Eternal**  
**Salvation**  
**Awaits!**  
**Love**  
**Everlasting!**

This is the MOST IMPORTANT meaning for ‘GARAGE SALE’...  
but keep Saturday, September 13, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. in mind and  
remember *your trash* will be *someone’s treasure* as you help First’s Human  
Care Ministry present a full inventory of merchandise for customers.

***How can you help in addition to donating items you no longer need or use?***

- Help set up and organize donations on Wednesday, September 10 (after midweek service); Thursday, September 11; or Friday, September 12. Watch for the sign-up sheet in the Fellowship Hall on August 17. Join in the fellowship with your First Lutheran Family — it’s really a lot of fun!
- Pray for many shoppers on Saturday, September 13, and that the *purpose of our PRICELESS SALE* — “to support benevolent community agencies and to help those in our church family” — *will encourage shoppers to GIVE GENEROUSLY.*
- Volunteer to help pack up remaining items at 1 p.m. and bring your pickup to help transport the leftover goods to Good Samaritan.
- Help move tables and chairs to their Bible class positions for Sunday morning.

**Many Hands Make Light Work!**

*Thank you for the continued support you give to First Lutheran’s Human Care Ministry.*