

The *First* Word

Volume 27, Issue 3

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL — HELENA, MONTANA

December 2025/January 2026

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

Special December/January Dates

Dorcas Circle Quilters.....	Dec. 3
Joy Vibe Christmas service project.....	Dec. 5
First Edition Book Club.....	Dec. 6
Home of Bridget Michel	
Second Sunday in Advent.....	Dec. 7
Women's Christmas Event.....	Dec. 11
Third Sunday in Advent.....	Dec. 14
Deadline to return DD Christmas gifts	
Dorcas Circle Quilters.....	Dec. 17
OWLS.....	Dec. 18
DD Christmas Dinner	
FLS Christmas Program.....	Dec. 19
Joy Vibe Christmas Party	
Fourth Sunday in Advent.....	Dec. 21
Sunday School Children's Christmas Service (8:15 and 11)	
FLS Christmas Break...	Dec. 22-Jan. 2
Christmas Eve.....	Dec. 24
Christmas Day.....	Dec. 25
New Year's Day.....	Jan. 1
First Edition Book Club.....	Jan. 3
Home of Tammy Anderson	
Classes resume at FLS.....	Jan. 5
The Epiphany of Our Lord.....	Jan. 6
Dorcas Circle Quilters.....	Jan. 7
Baptism of Our Lord.....	Jan. 11
WOW Bible Study Resumes.....	Jan. 13
Dorcas Circle Quilters.....	Jan. 21
WOW Bible Study.....	Jan. 27

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Wrap our special friends in Jesus' love ...

... when you purchase blankets/throws, gift wrap them, and attach an ornament to each one as you help *Undecorate* the Christmas tree in the church narthex!

Everyone's participation will help us reach the goal of 250 blankets for our friends with developmental disabilities who live in our community.



Jesus is the Reason for the Season!



Please leave your gift(s) at the church by Sunday, December 14.

If you would like to help share the joy of our Savior's birth — not only by giving blanket gifts — but by helping serve dinner on December 18, please sign up in the Fellowship Hall.

The gifts will be distributed at the Christmas dinner and service that night at the Mount Helena Community Church, 1710 National Avenue.

If you have questions, please contact Lowell Bartels at (406) 437-1972 or Laurie Stelter at (406) 439-7075.



A time to remember our church staff

Happy Advent and Christmas!

We are blessed to have a local church with staff who daily honor God in faithful service to the congregation through their many talents! Advent is a great time to share a word of encouragement with Pastor Larry Miller; Organist, Choir Director, and Administrative Assistant Shari Miller; and School Staff Shannon Champagne, Sue Taylor, and Lori Radtke.

Please offer a note, card, or letter for these dedicated servants, through whom God has richly blessed us! And, of course, remember them regularly in your prayers.

God's blessing to each of you during this season of expectation!

— The Elders

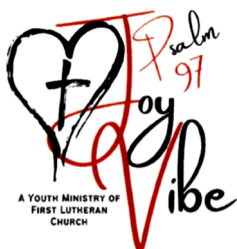
Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas from the Joy Vibe Youth!

After celebrating our one year anniversary with a Thanksgiving party, we definitely can look back and say we've had an amazing first year! We have an incredible group of young people and God truly has blessed the group with strong friendships and a heart for learning about their faith in Jesus.

On Friday, December 5, we will continue to grow by incorporating a cool Christmas service project, reinforcing the old adage: 'Tis greater to give than to receive.'

Our Christmas party is scheduled for December 19 and will include a candlelight devotion.

Joy Vibe is aimed for middle and



high school youth, but any younger (or older) adult is encouraged to attend, in a faith-in-action leadership role. What a blessing to all!

Joy Vibe evenings run from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Friday, twice a month, with some exceptions, and dinner is included!

If you would like more information or would like to be added to the email list for last minute updates, please Contact Joy Vibe Youth Leader Hanna Hollatz at (406) 461-7824.

The Joy Vibe Youth wish you a very Merry Christmas Season!

— Hanna Hollatz

Gifts for a King

Bring Him thy precious things
And lay them at His feet;
The gold of love, the hope that springs
The unknown ways to meet.

Bring Him thy lovely things;
The joy that conquers care,
The faith that trusts and sings,
The frankincense of prayer.

Bring Him thy bitter things;
The myrrh of grief and fears,
The aching heart that stings
With pain of unshed tears.

These for thy gifts to Him;
And for His gifts to thee,
The comfort of His steadfast love,
His tender sympathy.

— Annie Johnson Flint
The Newsletter Newsletter

A special gift from our children



The Sunday School children will be blessing us with "Christmas News," a special addition to both services on Sunday, December 21.

The children will begin practice on Sunday, December 7, in preparation for their part in each service.

Though they may be a smaller group than previous years, we are always excited for their seasonal gift.

On behalf of the Sunday School children and teachers,

A Merry Christmas to All!



A Christmas prayer: The true gift



Dear Lord,

You have brought us to Christmastime once more. Help us not to get lost in the glitter and the glow, but to see the true glory of the birth of Your only begotten Son. Keep our hearts from clinging too tightly to parties, presents and decorations, and turn our eyes instead to Christ — who bears Your very image and brings us Your message of love and hope.

In the glorious name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

— The Newsletter Newsletter

The First Word

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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 January 2026.
Deadline for the February issue of the First Word
is Wednesday, Jan. 21. Place articles in the
First Word box in the church office
or email to:
lindafromm@mac.com

"Blessed is she who believed
that there would be a fulfillment
of what was spoken to her
from the Lord." - Luke 1:45



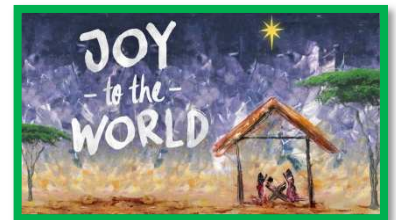
Elizabeth's greeting to Mary was a spontaneous expression of bursting joy and gratitude, for in her young cousin she saw the handiwork of God, and on her face she saw the unmistakable signs of trusting faith. Mary was God's favored one, a chosen instrument for His work of salvation. But Mary was also hardly more than a girl; one of countless Jewish girls whose simple lives were lived in the homes and villages of Palestine. Nothing unique. Nothing profound. Really quite ordinary. Just the sort of "earthen vessel" through which God often works out His most astonishing miracles.



Among the other wonders of Christmas, we remember that God does not bypass even the weakness of human frailty in order to work out His purposes. In fact, the message of the Incarnation is that **it is often precisely through finite and fragile human nature that God reveals the splendor of His eternal being.** Christmas is a day to rejoice, for no person is despised by God, no person is useless in His hands; no person is too sinful and flawed to be the "blessed of God."

Only one thing was required of Mary in order that she might bear the Son of God. Faith – the gift of faith in the love and power of God. No Super-human strength was necessary and no extraordinary level of belief. The angel Gabriel was sent to one who, in answer to God's call, would believe and utter a simple "Fiat" ("Let it be").

This Christmas let us greet with our own burst of joy and gratitude the God who came directly into our midst to save us, and may our hearts be lifted by the remembrance that He used one just like us in order to do so. **By God's grace in Jesus, how "blessed of God" are we!**



*Why lies He in such mean estate, Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here, The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through, The cross be borne for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, The Babe, the Son of Mary!*



Christmas blessings to you and yours
as you again welcome Jesus, The Babe, The Son of Mary
into your heart and home!

Pastor & Shari Miller

Worship Opportunities

First Lutheran Church ~ Helena, Montana

+ Advent and Christmas ~ 2025 *and* +

Our Dear Christ Enters In!



In any given year, approximately 131 million Americans travel home to visit family and friends. Unfortunately, many times in the hustle and bustle of the season, the spiritual blessings of Advent and Christmas get buried in all the trappings. What if our goal this year was to simply let our dear Christ enter into our homes and into our lives? How does His entry into the world speak into and even change our approach to this season? This Advent and Christmas let's look at what happens when Christ enters in and makes our hearts His home!

November 30

First Sunday in Advent

December 3

Advent Midweek Worship
"Family Tree"

The genealogy of Jesus recorded in Matthew 1 tells how God uses people of every stripe and background to achieve the ultimate goal of saving the world He loves!

December 7

Second Sunday in Advent

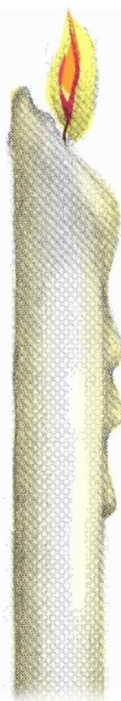
December 10

Advent Midweek Worship
"Home Hurts"

Our dear Christ enters in to relieve us of hurtful pain and comfort us with His presence so that we can know that no hurt lasts forever and that we will one day have peace at our home in heaven.

December 14

Third Sunday in Advent



December 17

Advent Midweek Worship
"Company Comes"

We welcome Jesus into our midst as our very special Guest, which can prompt us to show and share our love for Him and for one another!

December 21

Fourth Sunday in Advent

In Word and song the children help tell the Christmas Gospel!

Advent Midweeks 12:10 & 6:30 p.m.

Advent Sundays 8:15 & 11 a.m.



Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship

3:00, 5:00, & 7:00 p.m.

Christ Enters In with Great Joy!

11:00 p.m.

Carols & Communion

Christmas Day Communion

December 25 – 10:00 a.m.

Christ Enters in Our Hearts!

Repenting of “yours” and “mine” — From your Board of Stewardship



Retailers have had their Christmas displays up since before Reformation Sunday. The kids have made their list and checked it twice, or three times or more. It won't be long before the tree will start shedding its needles, the stockings emptied, the gifts unwrapped, toys broken, and the too small or out of style clothes returned. Before we know it, the annual celebration of Christmas will be over.

But for the children of God, we know that the gift of Christmas doesn't ever end. Week in and week out, the Lord continues to shower His gifts on us. Every time the Lord gathers us to His house, and we are led to kneel at His table, the gift of forgiveness is repeatedly granted to us. It is nothing

we deserve. It comes to us freely!

The fourth stanza of the stewardship hymn, “Forgive Us Lord for Shallow Thankfulness” (*LSB* 788) highlights both this gift and our response. *Teach us, O Lord, true thankfulness divine, that gives as Christ gave, never counting cost.*

To learn thankfulness is necessary. The parents of young children are well-versed in the fact that they must teach their children thankfulness. It does not come naturally. The spiritual genetics inherited from our parents allow us to think that the world revolves around us. When we receive something, there is an inward desire to think that we in some way deserve it.

Because Jesus gave us everything and more, there can be no ownership. The child at Christmas is quick to claim that the newly gifted toy is

“mine!” But as Psalm 24:1 asserts, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.” There isn’t anything in creation that is ours. When we cling to and claim ownership of anything in creation, we are losing out on the continual gifts with which the Lord desires to shower upon us. Closed hands cannot receive anything new. We cling to the old and dead and miss the new thing that the Lord desires to do in and for us.

We are led to repent of the “yours” and “mine” and remove the lie that we have any ownership. In this we have the promise that God will continue to give to us. Not just at Christmas, but every Sunday at the altar in the Lord’s house.

— LCMS Stewardship Ministry

Coming in February!



AND



Dessert Auction

Keep your eyes and ears open for details of the always anticipated Beat-the-Winter-Blahs Chili Cookoff and Dessert Auction!

Chefs, start perfecting your best chili recipe to enter in the cookoff, and for you bakers, it's never too early to start refining your fabulous desserts to be auctioned off.

The proceeds from this special event will go to charity. More details will be coming in January!

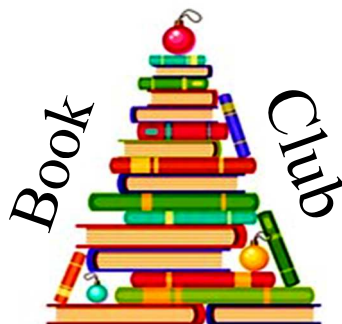
Scripture keys to a joyful new year

Hold fast to your faith (Hebrews 4:14)
Assemble with the saints (Hebrews 10:25)
Pray earnestly every day (1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18)
Pray for great blessings (Malachi 3:10)
Yield not to temptation (1 Thessalonians 5:22)

Neglect not your talents and opportunities (Gal. 6:10)
Examine yourself daily (2 Corinthians 13:5)
Work diligently for the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Yield your members to righteousness (Romans 6:11,16)
Exercise yourself in godliness (1 Timothy 4:7)
Aim at sinless perfection (Hebrews 6:1)
Redeem the time (Ephesians 5:15, 16)

— Gus Nichols
The Newsletter Newsletter



First Edition Book Club members will meet for lunch and discussion at **12:00 noon** on Saturday, December 6, at the home of Bridget Michel.

Members are currently reading — and will discuss — *Anxious People* by Swedish author Fredrik Backman.

Please RSVP to Bridget by Wednesday, December 3, by calling or texting to 406-438-6214.

The first meeting of the new year is set for **12:00 noon** on Saturday, January 3, at the home of Tammy Anderson.

For the January meeting, the group will read — and discuss — *The Hiding Place* by Corrie ten Boom.

Please RSVP to Tammy by Wednesday, December 31, by calling or texting to 406-459-8762.

Extra special Christmas cards

Christmas card packets of 15 cards are now available in Ziegler Hall for \$5. Each packet includes both religious and secular themed cards.

All proceeds go toward our youth programs for 2026, and to help defray costs for activities and trips.

If you have holiday themed cards that do not have writing on the picture side, I would gladly accept those to use for creating new cards.

Thank you for supporting this ministry!

—Janice Larison

CARDS 4 KIDS



Cards shown are for illustrative purposes only. They are not actual card designs.



All members and friends of First Lutheran congregation are cordially invited to attend First Lutheran School's Christmas Program on Friday morning, December 19, beginning at 11 a.m.

The students and staff would love to have you join us as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ! We promise you will be blessed!



December/January Birthdays

December 1
Rory Freeman
Jaylyn Gardipee
Lindsay McCarthy
Rob Pentecost
December 2
Gideon Goodson
Michelle Martin
Scotty Rucker
December 3
Marissa Lebahn
Jacob Sparks
December 4
Dan Malaski
Sharon Malaski
December 5
Tammi Gozelanski
December 6
Abigail Rose
December 7
Calvin Rucker
Jess Wareham
December 9
Patricia Jacobs
Megan Taylor
Thomas Taylor
December 10
Keith Newmeyer

December 11
Shannon Champagne
Dmitri Hindman
December 12
Ed Freiburg
December 14
Howard Davis
Benjamin McIntosh
December 15
Dawn Poirer
Robert Wagner
December 16
Marilynn Petek
December 17
Megan Davis
Sydney Elvbakken
Peni Jo Jones
December 18
Jocelyn Brown
December 19
Karen Giulio
Richard Tramp
December 20
Joan Nicholls
Clara Schmeltzer
December 21
Jeff Sparing
Bruce Seiler

December 22
Joyce Burgett
December 24
Paul Baumann
December 25
Carol Robertson
December 26
David Goodson
December 27
Chantel Duty
December 28
Sandra Meek
December 29
Levi Brown
Danielle Humphries
Raye Newmeyer
Jessie Antonick
Santee Riemann
December 30
Richard Bridegroom
Sabrina Brott
Donna Pare
Hutton Pasche
Malachi Rickman
December 31
Timothy Johnson
Cody Pate

January 1
Jennifer Charles
William Charles
Ben Gregory
Crystal Warsinski
January 2
Mark Miner
Savannah Morgan
January 4
Robert Veach III
January 7
Clarice Cook
Lauren Hoxie
Peter Jones
January 8
AJ Buhr
Landon Gilbert
Marlys Jarvis
Jason Mercer
January 9
Nick Jorgensen
Bob Summerer
Marge Ulmer
January 10
David Gunderson
Jana Spaulding
January 11
Sean Clinch

January 12
Stephanie Giulio
Augustus Hanson
January 14
Crew Warren
January 15
Jacob Malaski
David Saulsbury
January 16
Matthew Bridegroom
January 17
Carol Barker
Trent Stefanik
Kodi Thompson-Hargis
January 18
Andre' Poirer
January 19
Cooper Brilz
Haven Humble
Steven Leitzke
Bert Poor
January 20
Kylee Gardipee
January 21
Dan McGrane

January 22
Jaiden Elvbakken
Julia Hollatz
Audrey Mander
James McCormack
Jayden Nachtsheim
Lisa Peterson
January 23
Tara Mercer
January 24
Patricia Martin
January 26
Chas Gozelanski
Robin Saylor
January 28
Joni Veach
Ryan Veach
January 29
Susan Buhr
Lois Lebahn
January 30
Matthew Shields
January 31
Lauren Antonick
Brock Gardipee
Shilo Stefanik





Happenings at First Lutheran School



Director
Shannon Champagne

Assistant Director
Sue Taylor

Get Set Teacher
Shannon Champagne

Pre-Kindergarten Teacher
Lori Radtke

After Care Provider
Emily DuPre

Lunch Assistant
Jeannie Hubbard

Pastor
Larry A. Miller

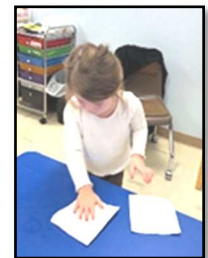
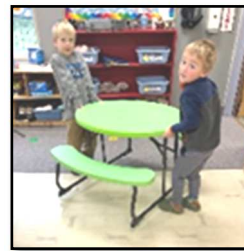
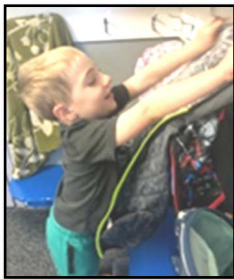
No Job too BIG, No Kid too Small

Because Thanksgiving is celebrated in November, during the month of November we focused on giving and being thankful. The students learned about the first Thanksgiving and about Native Americans and Pilgrims, but more about giving, sharing, and thanking. They learned that you can give “things” like a present, but you can also give the gift of your time. They learned how helping others is a wonderful gift.

In the spirit of giving help, the kids did jobs in our classrooms, the lunchroom, and outside. (Photos show the students helping with chores in the school rooms.)

Please check out the school’s bulletin board in Ziegler Hall to see larger versions of these photos of all our students **giving** their time and helping. We are **Thankful** for our helpers.

We hope all of you had a very Happy Thanksgiving!



Merry Christmas from the students and staff at First Lutheran School!



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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

Women's Christmas Event



First Lutheran Church
Thursday,
December 11, 2025
6:30 to 8:30 p.m.



- ★ Devotion
- ★ Carol Singing
- ★ Favors
- ★ Refreshments

Bring a sweet or savory snack to share.

Rides available upon request!
Leave contact information with the
church office, 442-5367.

Women of all ages are invited!

CHRISTMAS