

The *First* Word

Volume 27, Issue 4

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL — HELENA, MONTANA

February 2026

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

Special February Dates

Dorcas Circle Quilters.....	Feb. 4
First Edition Book Club.....	Feb. 7
Home of Lisa Tullis	
W.O.W. Bible Study.....	Feb. 10
Chili Cook-off/Dessert Auction..	Feb. 13
Valentine's Day.....	Feb. 14
Transfiguration of Our Lord.....	Feb. 15
Presidents Day.....	Feb. 16
NO CLASSES AT FLS	
Ash Wednesday.....	Feb. 18
Dorcas Circle Quilters	
First Sunday in Lent.....	Feb. 22
W.O.W. Bible Study.....	Feb. 24



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Trustees to replace 'pit' area fencing



First Lutheran's Trustees have voted to replace the fencing around the pit area in the parking lot with a new, more aesthetic cedar fence line.

The new fence will include a container behind the trash cans for the aluminum cans, and the entry gate will be moved to the west side of the fencing for easier access. The new fence will also include a double gate to afford greater accessibility

for maintenance of the pit area.

The cost is currently estimated at \$7,545, per the estimate received from Helena Fencing. Thus far, \$2,500 has been donated to this effort, and we would like to determine if there would be more congregational involvement in the funding of this venture.

If you would like to donate, please make a donation through your offering, and place it in a *separate* envelope marked for *Fencing*. If the financial goal is not achieved, it will be covered by other contributions.

We are looking to have the project completed by Easter (April 6, 2026), and hope to have the contract to replace by the first of March. A copy of the contract may be reviewed in the Fellowship Center or in the Trustees box in the church office.

Larry Laposky
Trustees Chairman

Spring cleaning for the soul

Ash Wednesday is February 18, 2026, and it marks the beginning of the 40 days of Lent. Lent hints of spring, a time when the earth begins to awaken from a winter's nap, and new growth bursts forth all about us.

More personally, it is an opportunity to enter into a springtime for our spirit. For centuries Christians have used the 40 days of Lent to seek spiritual growth. Sincere repentance, a changing of heart, casting off old sinful practices and seeking to commune with our creator help us go in the right direction. Spending serious time in silence and prayer focuses our attention. Reading spiritual literature, becoming more knowledgeable about the New Testament, meeting in small groups with other Christians to share personal

stories of faith can all be immensely stimulating. Joining with others to serve the helpless and hopeless can strengthen our spiritual life.

Lent is a time to let God do "spring cleaning" within us. It's our opportunity to allow God to help us toss out the "stuff" that hinders us and then freshen up the "new creature" we are meant to be as followers of Christ.

— The Newsletter Newsletter



CCODA ...

Because we use acronyms so frequently in our society today, you need to become familiar with ...

C_{HILI} C_{OOK}-O_{FF} ... D_{ESSERT} A_{UCTION}!

When: Friday, February 13 (the day before Valentine's Day!)

Time: 6 p.m.

Where: First Lutheran's Fellowship Hall

Why: To enjoy time with your Faith Family and support LCMS World Relief

Opportunities:

- Share your culinary skills by entering your chili. You could WIN the contest! A prize will be awarded! (Enter by February 1, 2026.)
- \$15 gift card available for Chili Cook-Off entrants.
- Take home a luscious dessert for your Valentine!
- Support LCMS World Relief with your successful bidding, and by attending the CCODA.
- \$10/person entitles you to sample each chili entry; \$5/person for homemade macaroni and cheese. Salad, cornbread, chips, chili toppings, and drinks included.
- Enjoy *Line Dancing* and *Team Trivia*!
- We want YOU to be a part of this activity, so sign up in the Fellowship Hall if you plan to attend. We need to know how many for set-up.

This special event is sponsored by Thrivent Financial
and First Lutheran's Human Care Ministry.



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

Stop, look, and listen

Why should we observe Lent?

We observe Lent because it causes us to STOP. Lent says, "Stop and rest awhile." Lent says, "Stop doing wrong."

We observe Lent because it tells us to LOOK. Look inward for an honest self-examination. Look upward to see the cross of Christ with healing and love. Look forward to the hope of the Resurrection.

We observe Lent because it tells us to LISTEN. Listen to the words of Christ. Listen to the voice of God. Listen to the winds of the Spirit of God.

Stop, look and listen. These three words are important for our safety in travel, but they may also be helpful for our journey through the days of Lent.

— The Newsletter Newsletter

The *First Word*

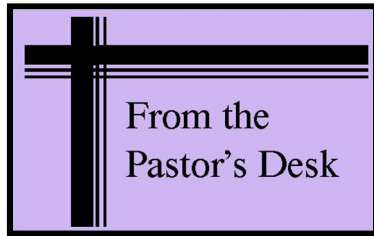
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Shari Miller.....Calendar/Servant Schedule
Volunteer Staff.....Printing/Collation

**Deadline for the March issue of the *First Word* is
Wednesday, Feb. 18. Place articles in the *First
Word* box in the church office or email to:
lindafromm@mac.com**



Dear Saints of First Lutheran,

"It's the most wonder-full time of the year!" I'm not talking about Christmas (again). No, for believers in Jesus and all He has done for us and our salvation and for all people, Lent, the season of Christ's passion, death, burial, resurrection, and more is a wondrous, wonderful time of the year, because we journey with Him to the Cross of Calvary, where He paid the price for our sins and to the Open Tomb where He rose again to life, so that we, too, believing in Him, will live! Lent is when we walk with Him, and watch and listen, as He takes on our sins, and guilt, and death, (not to mention the devil, our enemy), and Jesus wins and awards His victory to us, through our Holy Baptism!

In our Midweek Lenten and Holy Week services this year, beginning on Ash Wednesday (February 18) let's consider the words of Ephesians 3:17-21: ***So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.***



We'll journey through the history and text of the hymn ***"O Love, How Deep"***



(LSB 544) to experience the depth, breadth, and height of God's love *for us*, His creation. "For us" encompasses how God is beyond our comprehension yet took on the most accessible form to walk with us. Throughout the "passion" season and into Easter we'll meditate on this historical hymn to see how God's love for each of us is steady, deep, and endless!

Rev. Dr. Todd A. Peperkorn, an LCMS pastor wrote that "Some hymns tell a story, others teach, and still others create pictures in our minds of the great works of God. Some hymns do all three, weaving together a tapestry that is beautiful yet simple, wondrous yet easy to understand. 'O Love, How Deep' is that kind of hymn."

I hope you will plan to join us for our Midweek (and, of course, Sunday) services of worship throughout this *"most wonderful time of the year"* for the broad, long, high, and deep blessings God has planned to impart to us through His powerful Word and Sacraments!

Reveling in God's great love for us in Christ,

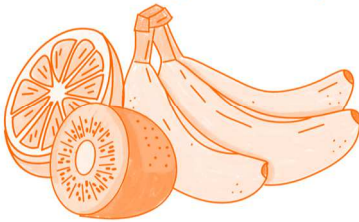
Pastor Miller



These cheerful “palm trees” make a bright reminder of the celebration that greeted Jesus as he entered Jerusalem.

What you need:

- Bananas (for the tree trunks)
- Kiwis or green grapes (for the palm leaves)
- Mandarin oranges (for the ground)



What you do:

1. Slice bananas in half lengthwise and place vertically on a plate.
2. Arrange kiwi slices or grapes at the top to form palm fronds.
3. Add oranges at the base.
4. Serve immediately or chill until ready to serve.

Scripture Tie-In:

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

—Matthew 21:9 (NIV)

Just for KIDS!



LOVE CODE BREAKER

Change some of the letters below to reveal this verse!

Change:

C's to L	Z's to H	P's to R
J's to A	Q's to T	X's to E
K's to O		

(The other letters stay the same.)

" L _ _ _ _ _
 C K V X Q Z X C K P D Y K U P
 _ _ _ _ _
 G K D W I Q Z J C C Y K U P
 _ _ _ _ _
 Z X J P Q J N D W I Q Z J C C
 _ _ _ _ _
 Y K U P S K U C J N D W I Q Z
 _ _ _ _ _
 J C C Y K U P M T N D J N D
 _ _ _ _ _
 W I Q Z J C C Y K U P
 _ _ _ _ _
 S Q P X N G Q Z "

Mark 12:30

Answer: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

Reflections on Ash Wednesday

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

With these ancient words from Genesis 3:19 and the swipe of a dirty thumb across our foreheads, Ash Wednesday propels us into the season of Lent with the proper context to understand our lives as stewards of all that God entrusts to us.

The essential teaching of Ash Wednesday – that we are just mortals, after all – crushes our ego, dispels our pretensions and drives us deep into God’s mysteries. Why are we here? What are our lives all about? What’s really important? Pray over these questions and profound insights emerge.

We are dust. Yes, but we are God’s dust. Our body consists of trillions of atoms, each one a speck of “dust” created by our God. God put us together from the very stuff of the universe.

Therefore, we are quite literally “earthy” beings, made of the same material as air, water, soil and stone. Part of creation, we work to preserve and sustain the health of God’s creation.

Therefore, we have reverence for our bodies, expressed through healthy living.

We are breath. We are “dust,” but not only dust. We are “dust” into which God has “breathed the Holy breath of life” (Genesis 2:7).

Therefore, every breath we take is holy. Every breath is a prayer that reminds us of God’s life force in us.

Therefore, we look to God to align our lives and ourselves with God’s holy reality that arcs towards peace, love, joy, justice and truth.

Our time is brief. Because our “dust” will return to the earth, we live a finite number of minutes on earth.

Therefore, every hour, every second is sacred. We spend our time wisely, carefully, prayerfully.

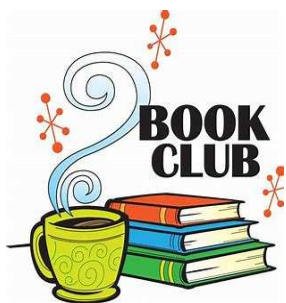
Therefore, we do not cling to our possessions, knowing that we only hold onto them for a little while.

Therefore, we nourish our lives with world treasures of real value – friendships, trust, love, joy, service, generosity and harmony.

This Lent, spend time in prayer, with openness and honesty. See how God will turn your heart and mind, transforming you into the person you were created to be. Reflect each day on Ash Wednesday. “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

— Rev. Rob Blezard

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First Edition Book Club members will meet for breakfast and discussion at **9:30 a.m.** on Saturday, February 7, at the home of Lisa Tullis. (*Note that the meeting time has changed from the original schedule.*)

Members are currently reading — and will discuss —

A Gentleman in Moscow, by Amor Towles.

Please RSVP to Lisa by Wednesday, February 4, by

phone or text to 650-759-5558, and watch for information to come from Linda Fromm about carpooling.

In March, members will meet on Saturday, March 7, at **9:30 a.m.** at the home of Margaret Bowles for breakfast and discussion.

For that meeting, the group will read *A Fever in the Heartland: The Ku Klux Klan’s Plot to Take Over America*, and *the Woman Who Stopped Them*, by Timothy Egan.

Please RSVP to Margaret by Wednesday, March 4, by phone or text to 406-459-0454, and watch for information to come from Linda about carpooling.

Send Valentine's Day love to family and friends and support First's youth

Valentine cards are available now in Ziegler Hall. This year, they will be sold individually for 50 cents each.

These cards are suitable for friends and family members, and I hope you will take a look at them and consider purchasing some to support our youth programs at First this year.

Last year's proceeds totaled approximately \$240, and that money will be used for out-of-area events and activities at the church.

Let's all help our youth spread the Gospel with JOY!

— Janice Larison
CARDS 4 KIDS



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



Looking for opportunities to help Options Clinic this winter? You can do so by making baby bibs during February and March. This project will go hand-in-hand with the annual baby bottle fundraiser for the clinic.

Be creative and make as many bibs as you like, perhaps involving your grandchildren or friends.

Please deliver your bibs to Ziegler Hall, beginning on April 1.

Baby bottles for the Options Clinic fundraiser are currently available in Ziegler Hall, and we encourage you to take this opportunity to support the clinic's mission to save lives and train new parents.

Please pick up a bottle, follow the instructions included, and return your bottle to the church by mid-February.

If you have questions about bibs, please contact Janice Larison. Questions about bottles should be directed to Ruth Stelter.

Ruth Stelter & Janice Larison

February Birthdays

February 1
Doris Sparks

February 2
Jason Ovens
Bill Spellman
Elise Stelter

February 3
Sam Morgenroth
Michael Ross

February 6
Caleb Hoxie
Kate Johnson

February 7
Jakob Criswell
Miles McCarthy

February 8
Kim Hoxie
Ken Olson

February 10
Jacque Heida
Ruth Stelter

February 11
Brian Buhr

February 12
Derek Nygaard
Dylan Veach

February 13
Loretta Schultz

February 15
Larry Laposky

February 16
Tucker Deppmeier
Benjamin LaForge
Dave Tudor

February 17
Dureen Lanter

February 20
Sophie Stockburger

February 22
Eric Leitzke
Charlette Morgan
Marie Ringle

February 23
Bob Antonick

February 25
Christopher Shields

February 26
Tami Cook
Beth Schmeltzer
Pam Tudor

February 28
Angela Ewing-Hyyppa
Aleksa Hyyppa
Lori Northrup
Carla Staffedlt

February 29
Abbie Ebert



Happy Birthday!



Happenings at First Lutheran School



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

FLS Pre-K and Get Set Goals for 2026!

Miss Shannon and Miss Lori discussed with students what it means to set goals.

They talked about learning something new and increasing skills.

Here are the student goals for the "NEW YEAR 2026!"



Clyde: I want to learn to crawl down the stairs faster.
I'll try and try again and burn more speed.

Colter: I want to get better at finding animals.
All the animals in the world. I want to hug them. I love them so much.



Ember: I want to do the flips that my cousin can do.
You curl up like a ball and leave your feet out. My cousin flips almost all the way up to the sky.

Kasen: Digging sand with a shovel. I like sand.



Lily: I want to get better at diving into the pool.
Right now, I'm not very good at it, and I don't like going underwater.

Dean: How to do somersaults! You put your head down and turn over.
I tried it, but it hurt.



Charli: I want to get better at fixing things and playing with unicorns.

Beau: To get better at driving remote controls, like cars and trucks.



Eli: I want to learn how to call my friends (Colter) on a real phone.

Lola: I want to learn to drive a jet ski.



Jane: I want to drive a dinosaur, a toy car dinosaur.
(She is steering an imaginary steering wheel and smiling).



*I'm sorry, Jane. I couldn't find any
toy car dinosaur clipart! — Ms. Fromm*

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FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH is a Congregation of
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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

Lincoln as humorist



Because Americans celebrate Presidents Day in February each year, here are a few samples of the wit and wisdom of President Abraham Lincoln, taken from the book titled Holy Humor: Inspirational Wit & Cartoons by Cal and Rose Samra.

“Laughter is the joyous universal evergreen of life.”

“Were it not for my little jokes, I could not bear the burdens of this

office ... With the fearful strain that is on me night and day, if I did not laugh I should die.”

“I believe it is the inalienable right of a man to be happy or miserable, and I, for one, choose the former.”

“They say I tell a great many stories. I reckon I do, but I have learned from long experience that *plain* people are more easily influenced through the medium of a broad and humorous illustration than in any other way.”

“In regard to this great book, the Bible, I have but to say it is the best gift God has given. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man’s welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it.”

“Men are not flattered by being shown that there has been a difference of purpose between the Almighty and them.”

Col. Alexander K. McClure, a personal friend of Lincoln, said that “Lincoln’s laugh was striking.” McClure later published a book of *Abe Lincoln’s Yarns and Stories*. Here is one of Lincoln’s favorite stories:

A minister and a lawyer were riding on a train together. “Sir,” the minister asked the lawyer, “do you ever make mistakes while in court?”

“Very rarely,” the lawyer said proudly, “but on occasion, I must admit that I do.”

“And what do you do when you make a mistake?” the minister asked.

“If they are large mistakes, I mend them,” the lawyer said. “If they are small mistakes, I let them go. Tell me Reverend, don’t you ever make mistakes while you are preaching?”

“Of course, said the minister. “And I dispose of them in the same way that you do. Not long ago, I meant to tell the congregation that the devil was the father of liars, but I made a mistake and said the father of *lawyers*. The mistake was so small that I let it go.”