

The *First* Word

Volume 27, Issue 8

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL — HELENA, MONTANA

August 2026

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

Special August Dates

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.....Aug. 2
Book Club potluck.....Aug. 8 Home of Nancy Bowe
Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.....Aug. 9
Vacation Bible School.....Aug. 10-14
Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.....Aug. 16
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost...Aug. 23
First day for FLS staff.....Aug. 25
Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost..Aug. 30

Mission & Ministry Council 2026-2027

Officers

President.....	Steven Johnson
Vice-President.....	Walt Wareham
Secretary.....	Linda Fromm
Treasurer.....	John Champagne

At-Large Members

David Goodson
Randy Middlebrook
Roger Schultz
Seth Siefken

Advisor

Pastor Larry Miller



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Voters elect MMC members and elders, receive reports, approve spending plan

Forty-four eligible voting members signed the voter registration sheet for this meeting, and after enjoying a light lunch and an opening prayer offered by Elder Rick Northrup in the absence of Pastor Larry Miller (who was recovering from open-heart surgery), approved the minutes of the June 8, 2025, voters' meeting.

These minutes had also been approved by the MMC at its July 15, 2025, meeting and posted to the bulletin board in Ziegler Hall for perusal by interested members.

Voters elected Steven Johnson as president; Walt Wareham as vice-president; and David Goodson and Randy Middlebrook as MMC at-large members. All terms are for 2 years, and will begin on July 1, 2025.

Secretary Linda Fromm, Treasurer John Champagne, and at-large members Roger Schultz and Seth Siefken all have one year remaining on their 2-year terms. There were no nominees for the fifth at-large position.

Voters elected Marty Baumann, Bill Spellman, and Paul Taylor to the Board of Elders, all for 2-year terms to begin on July 1, 2025.

Charlie Mueller, who serves as an usher at the late service, spoke about the Stepping Stone Garden project he had

instituted, and thanked Trustees Larry Laposky, Mike Johnson, and Bruce Larson for their help with the project.

Laposky updated the voters on activities the trustees are currently working on, as well as the costs associated with those projects, and also spoke about projects for the future.

Speaking on behalf of the School Advisory Committee, School Director Sue Taylor outlined activities accomplished during this school year, as well as plans for the next school year.

President Jason Mercer updated the voters on what had happened in the past year, and what might be possible in the future, reviewing the 2-page 2028 *Strategic Plan: 2023/2024 Objectives*, which he had put together at the beginning of his 2-year term, and which was distributed to the voters.

The plan was built on input from members during several sessions. He noted that we have started the process of improving our "footprint" by meeting with Tempest Technologies to discuss making our church website more "user friendly."

See MEETING, Pg. 2

Supporting new moms and their babies



If you are interested in supporting Options Clinic here in Helena, please consider purchasing packages of BABY WIPES for the donation box under the mailboxes in Ziegler Hall. They are very much appreciated by the moms who attend parenting classes at the clinic.

Many thank to all of you who donate regularly to help new mothers make better homes for their children!

Ruth Stelter
Janice Larison



Meeting

Continued from Pg. 1

One of the main things the MMC has worked on is looking at the investment accounts, and has developed a plan by which these accounts are being consolidated into a single account with the LCMS Foundation that the church can access as needs arise, with the intent to look at this with the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25).

The MMC will be considering the possible development of a communications director position for the church, and will also be considering plans for future staffing.

Treasurer John Champagne distributed — and reviewed — his *2025-2026 Financial Report and Proposed Spending Plan for Fiscal Year 2026-2027*, noting that all monthly financial reports are posted to the bulletin board in Ziegler Hall for perusal by members.

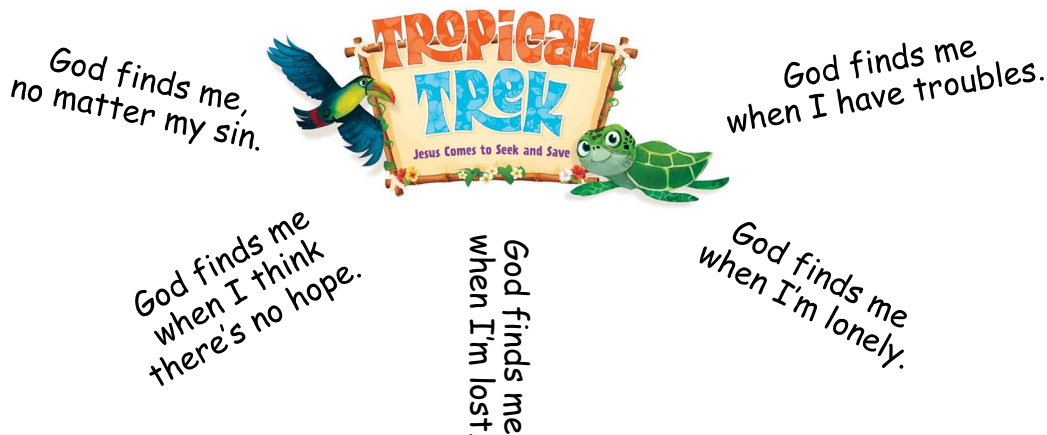
The spending plan for Fiscal Year 2026-2027, which was unanimously approved by the voters, shows estimated income of \$564,428, and estimated expenses of \$545,080, leaving an estimated net income of \$19,348.

— Linda Fromm, Secretary
Mission & Ministry Council

Grab your trekking poles and join us for VBS!

This year, our Vacation Bible School program will take us on a “Tropical Trek” adventure as we continue to learn how Jesus Comes to Seek and Save! Each day our lessons will focus on Law and Gospel as our students explore “God Saves Baby Moses,” “Ruth and Naomi,” “Jesus and Zacchaeus,” “Jesus Rises from the Dead,” and “Jesus Appears to Paul.”

Through the directed activities in Bible exploration, music, crafts, games, Bible storytelling, and snacks, our teachers are given the opportunity to lead our students to see Jesus coming to seek and save. Our VBS students will head home with the knowledge that:



**Join us on our adventure during the week of August 10-14 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.
We would love to celebrate God's Word with you!**

Christian Symbol

SHELL — A scallop shell, often shown pointing downward with three drops of water falling from it, is a Christian symbol of Baptism and the washing away of sin. The three drops of water represent the Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

From the earliest centuries of the church, the shell was connected with Baptism because it could be used to pour water over a person's head. In a time when many Baptisms took place in rivers, lakes or outdoor settings, a simple shell served as a natural vessel, reminding believers that God uses humble, ordinary things to accomplish sacred purposes.

Today, the scallop shell continues to appear in Baptismal fonts, church art and Christian design. It quietly proclaims the message of Baptism: washed by grace, claimed by God, and welcomed into the family of faith.

— The Newsletter Newsletter

The First Word

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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 19.**

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

Gus and the One Thing Necessary

The Lord answered her,

"Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is necessary.

Mary has made the right choice,

and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:41-42



I could hardly bear the smell but I couldn't leave. "I apologize for the mess," he said. "So, what have you been up to lately?" I shouted. He looked down. **"Just sitting here waiting to die."** What could I say?



Every time I visited, we came to this point. We talked about the weather, his previous work, even about his kids who hadn't visited him in years, but it always came back to this thought. **"Nothing to do. Just waiting to go home."** He was right. He had nothing to do. Ninety-some years old, living in a rented room, dark ruts worn into the carpet in lazy lines from the armchair to the bathroom and down the hall to his single bed. He hadn't showered, waiting for the nurse who came by once a week. "Well, why don't we get on with it then?" he said. "I know you're busy." We prayed, I gave him communion, and went out of the house. I took a breath, started my car, and almost felt like I was escaping.

It was hard to see a man like that. I visited Gus and always hoped to bring him some comfort, but was never sure if my visits cheered him. I pulled into the church's parking lot and got back to work. There was a lot to do and I needed to be productive. But as I did, I realized that **all of my busyness and striving could never save me from becoming Gus.**

What's your schedule like? Wondering how to fill up the time? Or racing around so fast, you wish you could slow down the clock? Is there any spare time at all? Maybe you're even wondering what a schedule is because yours is dictated for you by responsibilities and burdens you never expected. For just one moment, step back and realize that **nothing you are doing will ever save you from becoming Gus.**

Let the Lord's words come to you today. *"Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is necessary."* We might think that what is necessary changes based on needs and circumstances, but God says only *one thing* is necessary. Mary didn't sit at Jesus' feet because she had nothing to do. There was plenty of work to get done, but she just had something more important to do. **The eternal Lord offered His Word to her and with it forgiveness and life.** She was going to take the time regardless of what was left undone.



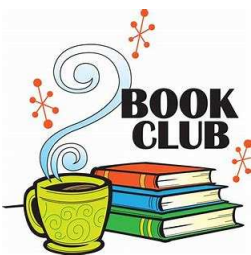
The truth is everything can be taken away from us. And someday we may end up sitting with Gus, wondering when we can go home. What will be necessary at that point will not be how good our kids were at basketball, or how much money we made, or even what we did for the church. What will matter are the words that welled up tears in Gus' eyes, **"The true body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in the true faith, until life everlasting. Your sins are forgiven."**



Christ was crucified for you! That message, received through Word and Sacrament, is the one thing necessary. It is the bond of peace that focuses you in the years of busyness and the cord of strength that sustains you when your time on earth becomes a desert drear. It is the truth that will save any and all who listen to the Word. It is the one thing necessary that secures for an everlasting home where there is no stress or anxiety, no deadlines or bills, no comparison or judgment, no age restrictions, and no death.

This fall, I hope you will take the time to be in the Word. What is important is rarely urgent and what is urgent is rarely important. Make sure that you and your family are getting your spiritual rest. Christ is the one thing necessary and His Word the truth. *"Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her."* **It won't be taken away from you either, not in this life or the next!**

Pastor Miller



Members of the First Edition Book Club will meet at the home of Nancy Bowe at 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, August 8, for their annual potluck. Husbands and/or friends are invited to join in the fun!

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

Please RSVP to Nancy by Saturday, August 1, by texting or calling her at (406) 440-5550. 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 the meeting dates and hostesses for the 2026-2027 year. Books to be read will already have been chosen by vote; we will only need to decide in which month each book will be read. Members were provided a list of books recommended by members for consideration for the coming year, including pertinent information about those books. A ballot was included with the information about the books, and members are to return their ballot to Bridget by July 31.

At the potluck, members will set the September meeting date, the book to be read for discussion at that meeting, and the hostess.

Charlie's garden taking shape

I'm Charlie Mueller, an usher at First Lutheran's late service. It was laid upon my heart to start an east side church landscaping project, and I was touched to take on the project. With help from Larry Laposky, Mike Johnson, and Bruce Nelson of the Trustees, the project was begun. The area was cleared and replaced with rocks, and my wife and I have started adding stepping stones to the project, which is why I'm calling it the Stepping Stone Garden.

I am asking for the congregation's help. There is lots of room for more stepping stones, and it doesn't matter if some are duplicated. Please consider purchasing a stepping stone to help make the church landscaping beautiful! Stones can be purchased on Amazon, but please be sure they measure at least 9"x9" and use Bible passages or Christian themes.

Please do not put an individual's name (or names) on the front of the stone, as memorials, but names can be placed on the back side of the stepping stones.

Thank you for your consideration and for helping to make this a wonderful area! If you have questions, please call me at (406) 461-7837.



LCMS School Ministry at First Lutheran Church: Education that is Christ-Centered

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's School Ministry focuses on education that equips children as disciples of Jesus Christ. Throughout its history, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has treasured its schools. Instruction in the Word of God and about God's creation, preparing young people for their various vocations, and sharing the Good News with those who come from outside the church remain the heart and soul of Lutheran schools.*

Lutheran teachers love communicating the Good News of Jesus' death and resurrection to every child. At First Lutheran School, we take every opportunity to show our students the love of Christ as we instruct them in God's Word. Thank you for your continued support and prayers for our school as we maneuver through the challenges of reduced enrollment and changes to our program. We continue to focus on our mission to share God's message of salvation in Jesus Christ to the children and families enrolled in our school.

*Kevin Armbrust, *Lutherans Engage*, Spring 2022



Ezekiel Hollatz

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."

*Confirmation
May 24, 2026*



I chose John 3:16 because it's the first verse I ever memorized and it's one of my favorites. The cross in the middle of the banner represents Jesus' sacrifice for the sins of the whole world on Calvary. On the shoulders of the cross rest a heart and a world. The heart represents Jesus' eternal love for us. The world represents God's beautiful creation and all He made for us. It also paints a picture of what the New Jerusalem is going to be like when we go live with Him in heaven eternally, sinless and perfect.

Being “in The Word” at First Lutheran

There is never a better time than *now* to learn more from God’s Word while enjoying fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ. First Lutheran has a number of Bible study group options available to you!

- **Sunday morning Bible Study** - Each Sunday at 9:45 a.m. between worship services (during the Sunday School hour) in the Fellowship Hall (Pastor Miller).
- **Sunday morning Young Adult Bible Study (YABS)** - Each Sunday at 9:45 a.m. in the church library, beginning with fellowship. Currently studying The Books of Moses, published by Concordia Publishing House. Young adults ages 18 through mid-20s welcome to join us as we dive deeper into God’s Word (Sue Taylor).
- **GIFT (Growing in Faith Tuesday) Women’s Bible Study** - Meet every Tuesday at 12 noon, studying the Bible book of Daniel.
- **Women of the Word (WOW!)** - Second and fourth Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m. at the church (Shari Miller). (See back page for complete information.)
- **Pro-8 (Proverbs 8) Men’s Bible Study** - Second and fourth Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. in the church basement (Rick Northrup and Bill Spellman).
- **WNT (Wednesday New Technology) Bible Study** - Every Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 12 noon in the church library. The group meets by conference call and is led by Hank Trenk from Missoula. Currently studying the Gospel of John. Everyone welcome! Contact Sandee Reimann (406-439-2738) or Ruth Stelter (406-439-9335) for further information.
- **Noon Men’s Bible Study** - Every Thursday from 12 noon to 1:15 p.m. in the church library (Allen Keim and Brian Buhr).

Carried and called to follow

Jesus the Good Shepherd is one of Christianity’s most endearing images.



Scenes of Jesus holding a small lamb bring comfort during times of trouble, reminding us of God’s tender care when we are weak or hurting. In those moments, we are grateful to be carried.

Yet this image also points to a deeper truth. The Shepherd’s role is not only to carry the lamb, but to lead the flock. When we are restored and strengthened, we are called to rise, to walk, and to follow where He leads.

God meets us in our need with compassion, but He also calls us to move forward with purpose. The same hands that lift us up also guide us on the path ahead.

There is a time to be carried, and there is a time to follow.

— The Newsletter Newsletter



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!



HIS Kids



If you are in first (1st) to eighth (8th) grade, YOU are invited to be a member of **HIS Kids!** We have a LOT of fun and practice to sing in church about one Sunday a month.

Our first **HIS Kids!** rehearsal is **Sunday, September 13**, immediately following early service (around 9:15).

It will be an exciting year as **HIS First Lutheran Kids!** join their voices in praise to our awesome God! YOU are invited to become part of **HIS Kids!** Please contact Shari Miller or Darcy Goodson if interested or for more information.



Happenings at First Lutheran School



Director
Sue Taylor

Get Set Teacher
Shannon Champagne

Pre-Kindergarten Teacher
Lori Radtke

Pastor
Larry A. Miller

We are currently in the midst of enjoying our summer camp events. There are 12 students attending our 12-week summer camp program, where they are immersed in God's Word. Throughout the summer camp excursions, our students are instructed in God's creation and His plan as they learn about outer space, the earth, animals, machines, weather, plants, and much more.

All the summer camp students will join our Vacation Bible School "TROPICAL TREK" adventure during the week of August 10-14. We are blessed to have this opportunity to share God's Word with them and watch His kingdom grow!



Our First Lutheran School 2026-27 school year will kick off with an open house on the evening of September 1, 2026. Classes will start bright and early on the morning of September 2 with Ms. Lori and Ms. Shannon greeting our students for another wonderful school year. Our Get Set class (for 3- to 5-year-old children) and our PreK class (for 4- to 6-year-old children) will provide exceptional opportunities for our students to learn and grow in the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

August Birthdays at First

August 1

Gloria Mayer
Stan Sternberg

August 2

Cole Koenig

August 3

Susan McCormack

August 4

James Cole
Curtis Mohs

August 6

Tyler Marquardt
Marlane Reichert

August 7

Camden Ballard
Dennis Eccleston

August 8

Tammy Anderson
Brad Kraft
Isaak Mohs

August 9

Taylor Boucher
Matt Elvbakken
Rosalyn Freeman

August 10

Debbie Bjerke
Catherine Carson
Keeli Manninen

August 11

Darcy Goodson
Jan Leitzke
Matt Westerbuhr

August 12

George Maier

August 13

Rebecca Blair
Danyel Wagner

August 15

Andrew Carson
Lindsay Cole
Todd Jones
Alice Lawson
Maggie Pentecost

August 16

Greg Criswell
Jeannie Hubbard
Trish Pentecost
Tami Ross

August 17

Carla Adair

August 18

Judson Brown

August 19

Alan Giulio
Felix Klapmeier

August 21

Andrew Berg
Leah Ellwein
Leighanna Miner

August 22

Mary Ann Gregory
Jayden Miller
Jacie Sobeck
Theo Woehl

August 23

Erica Blair
Delrene Rasmussen

August 24

Teaghan Gozelanski
Olivia Johnson

August 25

Becky Lawson
Petra Meek

August 26

Nicole Sparks
Alina Sweeney

August 27

Holly Bjerke
James Johnson
Isaiah LaForge
Jill McIntosh

August 28

Susan Bartels

August 30

Briella Ballard
Linda Greaves
Joyce Nachtsheim

How quickly time passes ... and it's GARAGE SALE TIME!

You didn't wear those shorts and shirts LAST summer ... and you still have them!?

You replaced the couch in the family room but are hanging onto the old one ... but not sure why ... ?

The kids/grandkids haven't played with/used those toys/games/bikes the past couple years ...

You want some new cookware/dishes for the camper/cabin ... but what you still have is still good ... ?

The ANSWER to all of the above is ... ***"I DON'T NEED THAT!"***

BUT the **Human Care Ministry GARAGE SALE** will gladly take those items off your hands!

Saturday, September 26, is the target date for you to clean out the accumulated items you no longer need or want!

Start NOW ... don't delay! Your generous contributions have made this fundraiser an event MANY of our shoppers seek out every year! This is a FACT — many of our repeat customers have told us so!

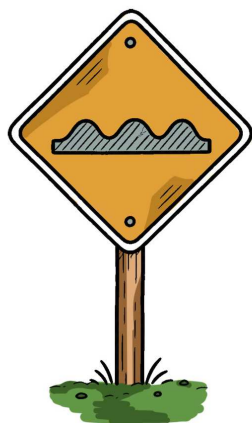
Please keep our sale in your prayers for how YOU CAN:

- Help contribute items.
- Contribute your time to help set up and display items.
- Share the September 26 sale date with people you know/meet, and encourage them to attend.
- Help load up items remaining after the sale.

First Lutheran Church and School members in need and community agencies that support "What Jesus Would Do" (i.e., Good Samaritan, Florence Crittenton Home, God's Love, Options Clinic) are the recipients of the funds raised from this sale.

With YOUR DONATIONS, we can make a difference for our brothers and sisters in need!

When the road gets rough



It had been a long trip home, and the weary traveler still had miles to go. So when a sign appeared reading, "Rough Road Ahead — 4 miles," he braced himself.

Rough was an understatement. The lanes narrowed, the shoulder disappeared, and traffic slowed to a crawl. Drivers carefully weaved around potholes and construction equipment, inching forward one stretch at a time. But just as the sign promised, after four difficult miles, the road opened up and smoothed out again.

Jesus offers a similar kind of clarity about life. In John 16:33 (NIV), He says, "*In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*" Notice He doesn't say we might face trouble. It is part of the journey. There will be stretches that feel slow, uncertain, and hard.

Notice that Jesus didn't say we "might" have trouble. Sooner or later, problems will come. The road will get rough. But Jesus has already defeated everything the world can throw our way. We just have to keep moving, fueled by hope.

The promise is just as certain as the warning sign. The rough road does not last forever, and it does not have the final say. Christ has already gone before us, and smoother ground is ahead.

— The Newsletter Newsletter

The devil is most happy when he can snatch from a servant of God true joy of the spirit. He carries dust with him to throw into the smallest chinks of conscience and thus soil one's mental candor and purity of life. But if joy of the spirit fills the heart, the serpent shoots his deadly venom in vain."

— St. Francis of Assisi

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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!”

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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 of the Word

The Women Of the Word (WOW)
group meets this fall beginning
September 8, 2026, at 9:30 a.m.
We meet at the church.

It is not too late to join us in studying
the Lifelight series, *John, Part 2*. We
have delved in-depth into this book of
the Bible in *John, Part 1* and have now
begun *Part 2*.

We have five sessions to go as we finish up the Book of John. If
you need a copy of the study, please let Shari know by **August 15**.
Upcoming sessions include:

Session 5—Learn of Jesus Christ to Pray

Session 6—Jesus: Tried and True

Session 7—He Suffered, Was Crucified, Dead, and was Buried

Session 8—He Rose Again from the Dead

Session 9—The Ministry of Jesus Continues

Our WOW group meets **the second and fourth Tuesdays of
the month**. We meet at the church and we’d love to have you join
us!

September 8 and 22
October 13
November 10 and 24

WOW! Bible Study,
Lifelight: John, Part 2,
begins September 8, 2026,
at 9:30 a.m.

The **Women’s Christmas Event**
will be held on Thursday, **December**
10. Mark these dates on your
planners, tablets, phones, calendars,
and **join us!** Talk to Shari Miller for
more details.

