



January



take up the shield of faith

Ephesians 6:16

January 2026 Newsletter

Take Note...

Online giving now
available on our website:
faithlutheranlittlefalls.org



**Faith's Core
Values:**
*Discipleship,
Hospitality,
Prayer,
Service,
Stewardship,
Worship,
and Unity*

From Pastor Mark...

Festival of Light

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

John 1:5

The Second Christmas: January 6

The 12th day after Christmas is Epiphany. This is like a second Christmas and marks the arrival of the wise men in finally finding the baby Jesus after following the star. Epiphany is the celebration of God's manifestation, or appearance, to the Gentiles. In some parts of the world, Epiphany is known as the *festival of lights* as a way of celebrating the light that Jesus brings to *all* people.

Christmas and Epiphany celebrations are the simple announcement that the Son of God, Jesus, is Immanuel – God with us. The many forms of darkness which overshadow the world and our heart give way to the light of God's grace and love.

New Year

We don't know what the coming year holds in store for us, but together, we trust the good Lord to guide us along the way. We look to scripture to remind us of God's great deeds in this world and we trust the Holy Spirit to reveal God's will for us. May you look forward to the possibilities in each new day, being renewed by the hope of our Lord & Savior, Jesus Christ who, I pray, will open your heart to God's Word and strengthen you in Christ's call to follow and share the good news of the Gospel. Pray that we, as a congregation, can meet the challenges of our calling with a faith that is bold and aware of the needs of others.

Thank You & have a blessed Epiphany...

My family and I thank you for your partnership in sharing the Gospel. May you have a blessed Epiphany and a joyous and prosperous new year.

In Christ,
Pastor Mark

President's Message

Dear Friends and the Gracefully Broken!

This is a story that was shared on Facebook by a dear friend a while back who after suffering from cancer for several years passed away. I feel this is very applicable for our present times.

I was in Dollar Tree last night, and there was a lady and two kids behind me in the LONG line. One was a big kid, and the other one was a toddler. The bigger one had a pack of glow sticks, and the toddler was screaming for them. The Mom opened the pack and gave him one which stopped his tears. He walked around with it smiling; but then the bigger boy took it, and the toddler started screaming again. Just as the Mom was about to fuss, the older child bent the glow stick and handed it back to the toddler. As we walked outside at the same time, the toddler noticed that the stick was now glowing; and his brother said, "I had to break it so that you could get the full effect from it."

I almost ran, because I could hear God saying to me, "I had to break you to show you why I created you. You had to go through it so you could fulfill your purpose."

That precious child was happy just swinging that "unbroken" glow stick around in the air, because he didn't understand what it was created to do - which was "glow".

There are some people who will be content just "being," but some of us that God has chosen... we have to be "broken."

We have to get sick.

We have to lose a job.

We are going through a divorce.

We have to bury our spouse, parents, best friend, or our child...

In those moments of desperation, God is breaking us. But... When the breaking is done, then we will be able to see the reason for which we were created. So when you see us glowing, just know that we have been broken but healed by his grace and mercy!!!

God Bless and keep our glowing congregation always,
Happy New Year,
Faye

Attendance & Offering

December	7:	140	\$ 6,471
December	14:	136	\$ 3,827
December	21:	143	\$ 18,570
December	28:	82	\$ 15,704

Mission Statement

Know, Grow, Go

- *Know* God and others
- *Grow* in Faith
- *Go* in Faith to Love and Serve the Lord



Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to **stand** your ground, and after you have done everything, **to stand**. **Stand** firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the **shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the **Word of God**. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Ephesians 6:16

Faith Lutheran Church

303 18th St. SE

Little Falls, MN 56345

320-414-0533

faithlutheranlittlefalls.org

secretaryfaithlutheran@gmail.com

Faith Lutheran Church Council Meeting

November 20th, 2025

Present: Pastor Mark Johnson, Mark Berger, Brian Bergs, Linda Collins, Glenn Hietala, Michael Johnson, Zach Leibold, Tom Lippert, Faye Sandy, Chris Scholl, Renae Stueber, Pam Trang, Steve Tschida, Sarah Kalkbrenner. Special Guests: Pastor Blaine MacNeil and Pastor Don Block

Faye called the meeting to order. Pastor Mark opened with a devotional (Matt 11:28-30) and prayer. Additions to Agenda: Brian requested we add under Old Business: Clarification on purchase of certificate of deposit

Council Secretary's report: Glenn moved to accept the minutes as presented. Tom seconded. The motion carried.

Pastor's Report: Pastor shared he will be gone Nov. 30th, Pastor Blaine will fill in for him. He has been making hospital, shut-in, and various other visits. He thanked his wife Sarah and Pastor Blaine for leading Bible studies. He thanked Amanda for serving coffee in Joe's absence. He thanked Heather for overseeing Operation Christmas Child. They filled 100 boxes in less than 20 minutes. He thanked Tod Tonsinger for covering the air conditioning units for the winter. The New Member classes are finished. New Member Sunday has yet to be scheduled. Tod Tonsinger's mom's funeral will be held at Faith on Monday, Dec. 8th. He is doing Confirmation as an Independent Study for a student who can't make the weekly meetings.

Pastor presented two guests with experience as pastors and with conflict resolution. Pastor Blaine MacNeil and Pastor Don Block. They shared information about their experience and a plan to create a task force for conflict resolution. After some discussion, the council was not prepared to decide so Sarah requested that Blaine share the plan with the council so they can take time to review and make a decision later.

Treasurer's report (Brian): Finances are very similar to previous months. Expenses are under budget but are still \$11,000 higher than last year. Much of this is due to having a Youth Director this year, her not being full-time makes expenses less than budgeted. General Revenues have not caught up with last year. Cash assets are pretty strong. When he went in to do the CD, they asked if everyone needs to sign on it. The rest of the signers need to go into the bank to sign (Zach, Faye, Sarah, & Brian). Brian will get the CD set up on Monday. Tom moved to accept the financial reports as presented, Zach seconded. The motion carried.

Old Business:

Nominating Team Check In – Tom and Steve have not done anything yet. Tom will make an announcement in Worship on Sunday.

Snow Plowing – Seward & Sons – an email vote was done to approve their use again this year. Faye requested we formalize that decision. Mark moved to use Seward & Sons for snowplowing again this year. Mike seconded. The motion carried. We paid them \$160 per time last year. Faye will let Sarah know if rate has gone up this year.

Alter Guild Guide – Faye passed out the new Alter Guild Guide. The book they were using was outdated and not specific to us. We will vote on it next month. Thank you to Faye for her work getting this together.

Handicap Parking Signs – Faye suggested putting in 4 more handicap parking spots. Tod Tonsager has already ordered the signs and they are here. Stands need to be made. No one knew the cost for the posts. Striping for the new spots won't be done until the parking lot is redone. Brian moved that two more handicapped parking spots be added by using the existing signs and obtaining budget to pay for the posts. Glenn seconded. The motion carried

New Business:

Pianist Documents – Worship & Prayer Team have put together a duties and responsibilities document for the pianists. The council will review this document, then return it to the Worship & Prayer Team to go over with the pianists.

Library Books – Karena Johnson will be able to work with our church on Monday and Tuesday through her current position. Faye suggested she could work on organizing the library.

Continued on next page...

Continuing with New Business:

Bible Donation – Sarah shared that someone left an antique Bible at the church. Brian will see if the Weyerhauser Museum would like to take it.

Reports:

Church Secretary Report (Sarah): Payroll Company letter – payroll pricing is going up again.

Ministry Volunteer Coordinator Report: Text in Church program – we were gifted a year’s subscription for free. That subscription needs to be renewed in March. Finance will include this in the budget. Finance Committee is also working on the new State Paid Leave Law starting next year – we will be required to contribute to it.

Ministry Team Reports:

Children’s (Mike) – They met on the 2nd and mostly discussed the Christmas program, “The Promise Fulfilled”. Refreshments will be served after the program. The kids will be pulled from the service the first Sunday of Dec for practice.

Congregational Life (Mark) – They met on Nov 4th. They discussed the Thanksgiving pie event and the Boutique and Bake sale. The council discussed the Silent Auction idea – how will the baskets be picked up? The money raised from Boutique sale will be put towards making exterior and bathroom doors handicap accessible.

Finance & Management (Brian) – We have a quote for doing the pipe wrap – it is being done tomorrow. Office doorknob changes have been made. The memorial bench is here and needs to be put together. They recommend the Text in Church program. Zach moved we pay \$1,528 to have the Sanctuary, Narthex, and Nursery carpets cleaned. Steve seconded. The motion carried. All the furniture needs to be moved out before they come in. MN paid leave policy will be in the budget. The budget will be presented next month. Water and sewer will be higher next year. Insurance also going up. Millie Messerschmidt and the Men’s Bible Study are willing to contributing towards the flag. Brian stated Finance tabled the Flag Pole project because the cost came out quite a bit higher than they expected. Zach will check with the company his parents used for their flag pole.

Mission & Outreach (Linda) – Kathy Hyatt is looking for assistance in purchasing a generator for the Jamaica mission. Tom moved to donate up to \$500 towards the purchase/shipping of the generator. Brian seconded. The motion carried. Renae moved to donate \$500 for Toys for Tots. Linda seconded. The motion carried.

Worship & Prayer – have not met.

Youth & Family/Youth Director Report (Renae) Paula Bergs went to Friendsgiving, was well attended (24 kids). It went really well; the kids loved it.

Hire Custodian: Todd resigned; he said position wasn’t for him. Christina Otremba is interested in the job. We received her application; the background check came back good. She has 20 years cleaning experience. She gets \$25 per hour. We would offer her the same contract and conditions as we did Todd, for 10 hours a week. Brian moved we hire Christina Otremba at \$25 per hour, Zach seconded. The motion carried.

Mark moved to adjourn the meeting. Tom seconded. We closed with the Lord’s Prayer.

