



February

take up the shield of faith Ephesians 6:16

February 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...

Wednesday Lenten Services

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Luke 23:34

This year’s weekly Lenten series is called, **“Words of Life from the Cross.”** The theme is based on the seven words of Christ that He spoke from the cross as He offered up His life for the life of the world. Each word gives a blessing and is a Word of the Gospel. The weekly Wednesday sermons will build on these words of Christ, linking them to Jesus’ words and works recorded in the Gospel as well as the Old Testament prophecies that pointed to Him. Each Word of Christ proclaims and delivers something about Him, the Word Incarnate, and delivers His saving death to us that we would trust Him for forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18	The Pardoning Word	Luke 23:34
February 25	The Promising Word	Luke 23:43
March 4	The Faithful Word	Matthew 27:45-46
March 11	The Compassionate Word	John 19:26-27
March 18	The Suffering Word	John 19:28
March 25	The Dying Word	Luke 23:46

You are invited:

To make Lent an experience of repentance and renewal in the home.

To strengthen our church fellowship with your presence at worship as we receive the gift of God’s renewing grace in Christ.

In Christ,
Pastor Johnson

President's Message

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As I sit here writing this on a cold winter day, the wind is howling, blowing at about 40 mph. It moves the snow, changing the landscape, seeping in through cracks, letting chilly but fresh air in the house. The wind is so strong like it wants to get inside your very soul. Where does the wind start? Where does the wind stop? John 3:8 states "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." The Holy Spirit can seep in through our cracks/doubts and change our landscape, giving us a fresh new perspective. Get my drift? Allow that fresh breeze in to change how we feel about this sometimes negative world.

The Holy Spirit is certainly flowing through Faith Lutheran. There are more Bible studies than ever before at Faith. We met this past summer as focus groups to see what we wanted for Faith in the next fifteen years. Now a month into the new year it is time to start implementing some of these ideas or continue brainstorming for our next fifteen years. This past summer Ideas circulated like what programming we need to get new families to come to Faith or just increase attendance in our members. We need to work on this one! We talked of sanctuary enhancements. We already cleaned the carpets! We talked of a welcoming center to make the entrance to Faith more inviting. An outdoor space was kicked around and would be a great use of our acreage. Security was at the top of our lists and is more important than ever considering what took place in St. Paul recently, so we will again be asking our security team if they have any wants or needs. We started dreaming and thinking of a new sanctuary. It is time to put some of these ideas into motion! We've also gone through some changes and thanks to individuals stepping up these challenges are being navigated. One is Nick Leibold stepping up to at least temporarily help out with the youth group. Thanks to all who are assisting with youth events as attending youth events lets our kids know that there are adults who choose to spend time with them. These events might even breathe new life into your life as well. Participation and contribution can also come in small amounts like on God's day by volunteering to teach Sunday school even just one Sunday a year. Open the windows of your heart and let the wind blow!

There are many easy and unstressful ways to serve. Ushers and greeters are needed to open the doors and let the fresh air rush in and welcome our Faith family. Lectors, altar guild, music, education, Bible studies, refreshments, soup suppers, the list is endless and open to new ideas! Let the Spirit be your guide. The season of Lent will soon be upon us and hopefully some fresh, warm spring air moving / stirring us to serve.

Forward in Faith,
Faye

Attendance & Offering

January	4:	130	\$ 5,425
January	11:	126	\$ 3,399
January	18:	118	\$ 2,615
January	28:	136	\$ 3,372

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

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Faith Lutheran Church Council Meeting

December 18th, 2025

Present: Pastor Mark Johnson, Mark Berger, Brian Bergs, Linda Collins, Glenn Hietala, Michael Johnson, Zach Leibold, Tom Lippert, Faye Sandy, Renae Stueber, Pam Trang, Sarah Kalkbrenner. Absent: Chris Scholl, Steve Tschida

Faye called the meeting to order. Pastor Mark opened with scripture (John 14:27) and prayer. There were no additions to the agenda. Mark moved to accept agenda as presented, Glenn seconded. The motion carried.

Council Secretary's Report: Brian moved that council minutes be published in the newsletter after they have been approved by the council, Linda seconded. The motion carried. Tom moved to accept the minutes as presented, Renae seconded. The motion carried.

Treasurer's Report (Brian): Total Revenues for the year are above budget mainly due to the money received to pay off the debt. Total Expenses are below budget but ahead of last year. General Revenue to date is still short a little from last year. Brian went over each of the Committees expenses (actual expenses this year vs budget vs actual expenses last year) in preparation for discussing the proposed 2026 budget. The Summer Trip Pass Through under Liabilities on the Statement of Financial Position is currently showing negative – this will be cleared up. Brian will check on the “Memorial – Ryan Lippert” and “Pastor Continuing Education” lines on the Cash Balance by Fund Report. He is still in process of completing the CD purchase. Tom moved to accept the financial reports, Zach seconded. The motion carried.

Pastor's Report: He continues to keep our sharing of the Gospel front and center. He asked if it is okay to use remaining vacation days next year. Faye let him know that the Council had decided previously not to allow this. He will be helping with the Triple Header (Thursday Spiritual Services at the Little Falls Care Center, St. Otto's, and Highland Living Center) going forward. He is in need of pianist to assist with hymns for the services. He thanked Renae for directing the Children's Christmas program. He gave a verbal shout out to Sarah and Amanda for keeping things running smoothly at Faith. The New Member Class is finished. New Member Sunday will be scheduled after the New Year. There will be six new members. Confirmation – Independent Study – has started. He shared the schedule for confirmation for the rest of this school year. The Christmas Eve Service is at 4 p.m.

Old Business:

Nominating Team Check In – Tom gave update. Faye and Zach will run again. Jim Nelson, Patty Zumberge, Shelly LeBlanc, and Eric Kalkbrenner have also agreed to run. Tom asked Sarah to reach out to the candidates and ask for biographies.

Pianist & Alter Guild Guide Documents – Renae moved to accept the new alter guild document, Zach seconded. The motion carried. Faye shared that Matthew is moving, so won't be able to play piano for us anymore. Glenn moved to accept the two pianist documents, Mike seconded. The motion carried. Faye spoke with St Francis about getting another pianist. She checked with the music people in Pierz as well. If anyone has any suggestions for a pianist, please let us know. The pianist does receive a stipend, \$80 per Sunday currently. This is a priority. Brian will check with the college music dept in Brainerd.

New Business:

2026 Annual Meeting Date – The date was set for January 25th, the last Sunday in January.

Youth Director Resignation – Heather will announce her resignation to the congregation on Dec. 28th. She requested that she be able to do this herself. Sarah will pick up a card for Heather. Heather informed the youth last week. Faye had a question on Bible Camp tuition for kids going to camp. She will check with Amanda about when this needs to be done to get the early bird discount.

Reports:

Church Secretary Report (Sarah): The chest freezer died. The Men's Bible Study said they would donate up to \$500 so a new freezer can be purchased. Our website hosting company is increasing the price next year. Recycling: we can get recycling at the church it would need to be sorted and placed in a bin. The cost would be \$8 per month. Sarah will do some more checking on this to see if they will pick up and how many bins would be needed, etc. One of the front entry doors sticks. Soap dispensers aren't working properly – she asked the Finance & Management Team to check on them. There was a request for wheels for the large round table in the Narthex. No action will be taken on this matter at this time. We received the proposed Property Tax statement. Property Tax was \$186 this year. Proposed Property Tax is \$180.

Ministry Volunteer Coordinator Report: Amanda ordered the kit *Love Thy Neighbor*. This would be something we could do this winter. It was noted there are study guides available for *The Chosen*, this may be something to pursue as a study option.

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Continuing with New Business:

Ministry Team Reports

- Children's (Mike) – they talked about the Children's Christmas program. They chose two substitute teachers for when Adam is gone. They agreed to keep the same budget as last year.
- Congregational Life (Mark) – The money raised from the Boutique will go towards handicapped accessible doors for the entry and the bathrooms.
- Finance & Management (Brian) – They did not meet. The bench is set up in the entry and the plaque has been attached. Carpet Cleaning – we will need a crew to move out all the chairs, etc., beforehand. Zach suggested scheduling for a Monday so that the congregation can help move chairs the Sunday before. Brian will see if they are available January 19th.
- Mission & Outreach (Linda) – Glen moved to approve paying \$3,000 from the Family Emergency Fund to a family in need, Mark seconded. The motion carried. Zach moved to approve giving \$500 to Herald of Faith (Honduran Mission). Tom seconded. The motion carried.
- Worship & Prayer – They did not meet
- Youth & Family/Youth Director Report (Renee) – Heather handed out the calendar for rest of the school year. Nick Liebold will be assisting with leading the youth with Heather leaving.

Faye requested the council return Pastor Evaluations to her by Sunday. Employee evaluations have already been done – Pastor will verify the date they were last done.

2026 Budget Approval – Linda moved to approve the 2026 budget to not exceed \$303,334.70. Mike seconded. The motion carried.

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

The December Council minutes were approved by the council at the January 15th, 2026 council meeting.

Ministry Volunteer Coordinator Newsletter

Current/Upcoming Small Groups:

1. Women's Bible Study meets on Friday mornings at 9. They go over the sermon text for the upcoming Sunday.
2. Men's Bible Study on Wednesday mornings at 9. They go over the sermon text for the upcoming Sunday.
3. Mission Quilters meet on Thursdays at 9am in the Narthex.
4. Dig Deep; a study on Christian Doctrine for Women. Wednesday evenings at 6:30pm at church **Note: This study will meet at 5:30pm during Lent.**
5. Gospel of John, this is led by Blaine MacNeil. He is leading a comprehensive Bible Study on the Gospel of John. This takes place on Wednesday evenings at 6:30pm in the library. **Note: This study will be paused during Lent.**

Vacation Bible School planning will begin in February! VBS will be held at Grace Covenant this year, June 1-5. If you are interested in helping or would like details about volunteering, please let me know☺

Thank you to all those who have been available to assist with Sunday morning service. Just a reminder, sign-up sheets are available on the signup table in the gathering area at church. Online sign-up is also available. To sign-up online, follow the link in the weekly 'Faith Happenings' email or scan the QR Code on the sign-up table in the gathering area at church.

We encourage everyone to text "Update" to 320-633-2057. This will help us to keep information updated in our system and we will be able to text important messages and reminders about events. Some people told me that they liked the text option. Those that have already filled this out were able to receive the message that our evening Tough Talks session was postponed due to weather. After you text "Update" please follow the link in the text you receive and fill in your information. Thank you for taking time to do this!

If you are interested in being in or leading a small group, feel free to contact me, I would love to discuss options with you! My contact info is below.

If you are on the prayer chain, all you have to do is pray when you receive a prayer request! To join the email list, send an email to secretaryfaithlutheran@gmail.com. To receive prayer requests by text message, text the word "Pray" to 320-633-2057.

Upcoming Events (mark your calendars)

March 8: Pajama Day at church! Daylight Savings; move clocks forward

March 11: Next Senior Lunch

March 27: Glowing Easter Egg Hunt returns!

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