First Lutheran Church ELCA
The Ambassador

October 2026 Volume 26 Issue 10

News From Pastor Bob

A Season of Change and Hope

October is one of those months when you can almost **feel the seasons changing** around us.

The days are getting shorter. The evenings are cooler. The leaves are beginning to turn. And here in Nebraska, the combines are moving through the fields as another corn harvest gets underway.

There is something reassuring about harvest. Seeds that were planted months ago, when the fields were still cool and bare, have grown and matured. Now comes the gathering in.

And, of course, another sure sign of autumn in Nebraska is Cornhusker football. As long as the Huskers keep winning, there seems to be a little more joy in the air! It is amazing what a football victory can do for the mood of an entire state.

Halloween will soon arrive, with children dressed as everything from superheroes to princesses to creatures we probably won't recognize. But for us as Lutherans, October also brings another important day: **Reformation Sunday.**

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther set in motion a movement that would change the church and the world. Yet the heart of the Reformation was not really about Luther. It was about rediscovering the wonderful truth of the Gospel:

We are saved by God's grace through faith.

We do not earn God's love.
We do not have to prove ourselves worthy of it.
God's grace comes to us as a gift through Jesus Christ.

That is at the heart of what makes us Lutheran.

Reformation also reminds us that the Church is always being re-formed. The Church changes because the world around us changes, people change, circumstances change, and sometimes congregations enter new chapters they did not necessarily anticipate.

(Pastor Bob's Newsletter Article continued on Page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

First Lutheran is entering such a season.

This October we welcome **Pastor Joyce Miller,** who will walk with First Lutheran during this time of transition.

Transitions can bring questions and uncertainty. But they can also bring new possibilities. They give us an opportunity to listen—to God and to one another. They give us time to remember who we are, to appreciate the ministry that has brought us this far, and to prayerfully ask where God may be leading us next.

I believe there are good reasons to look ahead with hope.

Like the farmer who plants a seed without knowing exactly what the growing season will bring, the Church lives by faith. We plant. We water. We cultivate. Sometimes we pull a few weeds! But ultimately, we trust God with the harvest.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

"*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.*"
—1 Corinthians 3:6

That seems like a good word for First Lutheran right now.

Many people have planted seeds of faith in this congregation over the years. Others have watered and cared for those seeds. Now another season is beginning.

So as the combines move across the Nebraska fields this October, perhaps they can remind us of something more than harvest.

They can remind us that **God is still at work.**

As we celebrate the Reformation, we remember that God has guided the Church through countless seasons of change.

And as Pastor Joyce begins her ministry among us, let us welcome her, pray for her, pray for one another, and enter this new season with patience, kindness, a little humor, and plenty of grace.

The seasons change.

Pastors change.

Congregations change.

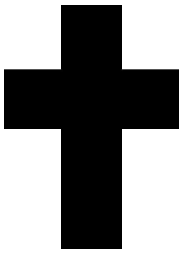
But the promise at the center of our faith does not:

God's grace is sufficient. Christ is with us. And the Holy Spirit isn't finished with First Lutheran Church yet.

May God bless our harvest, our congregation, Pastor Joyce, and this new season we are entering together.

Happy October—and Go Big Red!

Pastor Bob Oleson



We Remember in Our Prayers

Please keep these people in your thoughts and prayers

Family of Marilyn Svendgard
Chris Gilmore
Mark Becker
Shawn & Terri Powell - healing
Michael Reed - healing
Deb Katt
Marian Thomas
Judy Thompson - healing
Heather Fredericksen
Jeff & Cindy Smith - healing
Sandy Josephsen (Wilke) - prayers for healing
Shelli McGregor - healing and answers
Betty Megrue - prayers
David Latwaitis & Family - peace and healing
Dr. Mariah Meyer LeFeber - prayers
Holly Petersen (Daughter of Marcy Bottorff)
Randy Isaacson - prayers
Debra Harris
Mary Jean Rahlfs - healing
Alicia (Niece of Deb Katt and Mother of Georgia) - prayers
Gavin James - prayers
Greg Megrue (Son of Betty Megrue) - serious health problems
Paul Kempcke - healing
Jennifer Novak-Haar - healing
Mary Connely
Sana and Elley Smith
Marcie Ellenberger - healing
Carla
Kari Hernandez - healing
Clint Clausen - prayers
Greg Reed
Mary Frey (mother of Rhonda McMurtry) - prayers
Wayne & Carolyn Behrend (Parents of Deb Henson) - prayers for healing
Mick Jensen
Julia Maettes - cancer treatments - prayers & healing
Patrick McKinnis - healing
Elijah - healing
Thomas Uhlman - diagnosed with lung cancer
Randy Backman - healing
Deloris Matson - early stage lymphoma - healing & prayers
Vivian Walvoord - healing & prayers
Dana - healing
Betty Anderson
Irene Thorsen
Meredith Dickerson - Alpha Gal Syndrome
Zach - cancer healing/treatment side effects
Misty - healing and pain relief
Merriebeth Ferguson (sister-in-law of Merriellen Bourn) - cancer - healing
Chris Kesling - healing
Alex - surgery & healing
Mary LaScala
Martin Kuhr - prayers and healing
Riley
Georgia (great niece of Debbie Katt) -prayers & healing
Kyler Reed - healing
Scott & Katie Abrams - prayers & healing
Kay Melby (Angela Ulven and Kari Hernandez's mother) - healing
Stacy Thompson Green (daughter of Marcy Bottorff) - prayers & healing
Larry Kastrup – healing
Leo Aguilar-Hicks – healing for Leukemia
Lekura Parish
Nebraska Wildfire Victims and all those we name in our hearts.

Notes, Dates, & Reminders

Join us for a Guest Speaker!!
Youth Emergency Services

YOUTH EMERGENCY SERVICES

Wed, October 7th @ 6:45pm

yes' mission: to provide youth & young adults with safe & stable housing, essential needs & programs that prepare them to lead self-sufficient lives.

We are now
livestreaming our
worship services on
Facebook Live.

Please join www.facebook.com/flcblair to be alerted whenever a live video
Begins. This is a real-time, virtual worship experience, and we invite you to join us if you can't be with us in person.
Each live video will begin as the regularly scheduled worship time.

Women's Bible Study

Come and join other ladies on Friday mornings as we begin a new study about women of the Bible entitled "Brave and Beloved" by Meredith Storrs.

"Women of the Bible are just like us, but their particular lives, choices, and problems can sometimes feel foreign when we read them today. Through their stories, we can glimpse a vision of what it means to be a godly woman, but sometimes their experiences leave us scratching our heads. This Bible study looks specifically at key women in Scripture to discover how their stories upend cultural expectations and reveal the nature and character of the God who created us all."

This Bible study meets on Friday mornings from 9:15 to 10:45 in the church library. No need to sign up, just show up. Questions? Email Susie Pinquoch at spinquoch@gmail.com or call (402) 533-3735.

Mid Week Meal Information Meeting on Tuesday, October 6th

We will be having a meeting for people that are interested in helping with the Mid Week Meal on Tuesday, October 6th at 7:00pm in the Fellowship Hall. Please join us for this informational meeting. If you have questions please call either Ruth Jensen at 402-639-2785 or Deb Katt at 402-609-7131.

The Christian Growth Board would like to remind members of FLC to consider including the Christian Growth Fund in your estate planning.

Notes, Dates, & Reminders

MWM

MID WEEK MEAL



Mid Week Meal is continuing without interruption!!

John Lund and Ruth Jensen have stepped up to lead the MWM ministry.

We are so excited to be able to continue this ministry for the Blair community.
Please use the contact information below effective immediately.

Contact Information
NEW PHONE NUMBER: *402-278-9051*

NEW EMAIL: *blairmidweekmeal@gmail.com*

NEW DEDICATED FACEBOOK PAGE: Midweek Meal
Please like and follow and share to get the word out!!



Please drop off candy donations in the FLC Office by October 28th!!

New Christ in Our Homes are here

Christ in Our Homes-If you would like a Christ in Our Homes daily devotional they are available at the Welcome Center in the Narthex and also on the usher table outside of the LIFE Center for October, November, and December. The Christ in Our Homes is a book that has a daily devotional to read and pray. Please stop by and pick one up if you would like or if you need one delivered please call the church office at (402) 426-4073.

Our in-house meal is back on Wednesdays @ 5:30-6:15pm!!

Carl & Alice's Welcome Table



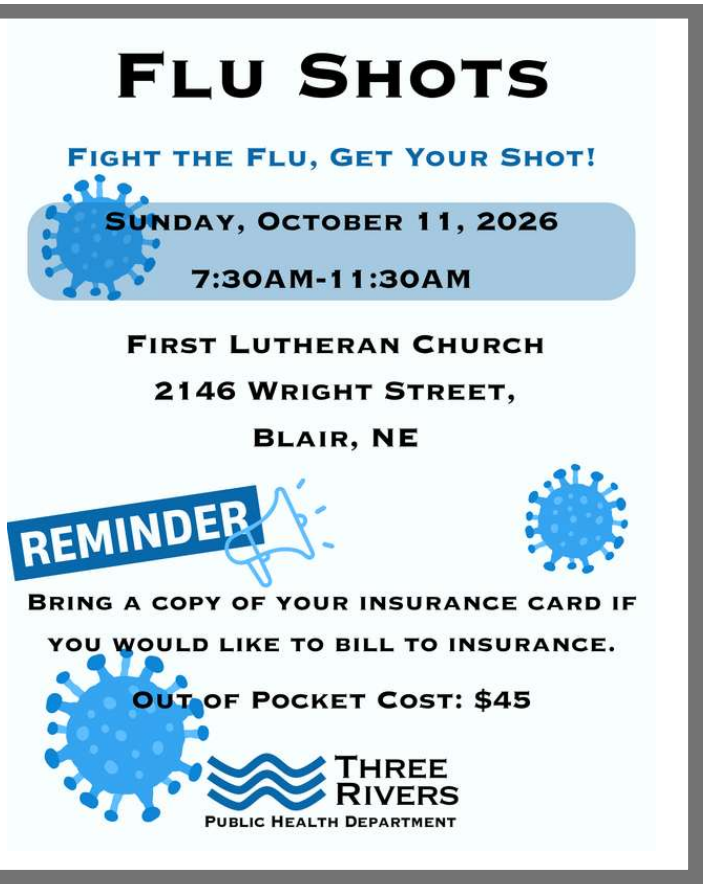
Join us in the Fellowship Hall for food, fellowship and fun!!

Notes, Dates, & Reminders

Flowers for Worship Services

Would you like to provide flowers for worship services at First Lutheran in celebration of an important event in your life or to honor someone important? We would be grateful for your gift! Please follow these directions:

1. Sign up for an available weekend on the flower chart on the bulletin board outside the Sacristy door. Only one family per weekend please.
2. Mark your calendar or leave yourself a reminder! You will NOT receive a reminder notice from the church prior to the weekend you have chosen.
3. You are responsible to order and pay for a floral arrangement and provide for it to be delivered or brought to the church on the Friday afternoon prior to the weekend you would like it used. The church staff is NOT available to order or pick up flowers for you.
4. You may wish to consider the season of the church and choose suitable colors. Please bring LIVE flower arrangements only.
5. Information about the flowers and to whom they are dedicated must be provided to the church office (office@firstlutheranblair.org) by Thursday afternoon. It will be included in the weekly email blast.



SAVE THE DATE!

The annual fundraising craft fair sponsored by the First Lutheran Church Women will be November 21, 2026, from 9am to 3pm. Volunteers will be needed to shop, bake, serve the noon meal, staff the bake sale table, and clean up. Sign up sheets will be available at the end of October. Vendor registrations are available at FLCkraftfair@gmail.com. Contact Rhonda McMurtry, 402-427-3341, or Amy Mommsen, 402-677-3924, for any questions.

Notes, Dates, & Reminders

October is Stewardship Month

Stewardship: More Than a Month

For many churches, October means stewardship.

It's a tradition that goes back a long time. In the fall, congregations look ahead to the coming year, talk about their ministries and budgets, and ask members to consider their financial commitments. At FLC, a new Stewardship Committee has been formed to help us recognize and celebrate the many ways people can contribute to the life and ministry of FLC, while we continue to grow in generosity, participation, and service.

But here's a funny thing that the Stewardship Committee discovered: FLC has been practicing stewardship all along.

Every week, people share their time, their talents, their resources, and their attention to make ministry happen. Someone plays music. Someone prepares communion. Someone teaches. Someone makes coffee. Someone vacuums. Someone waters the flowers. Someone welcomes guests. Someone puts their envelope in the offering basket.

Take a look around FLC sometime. Really look on all 3 floors. Look at the things hanging on the walls, the displays in the narthex, the quilts, the classrooms, the kitchen, the fellowship hall, the memorials, and all the things that people have built, purchased, repaired, created, and cared for over the years.

There is a story behind almost everything here. Someone gave it. Someone made it. Someone paid for it. Someone took care of it. Someone decided it was worth doing. Someone chose it.

That's stewardship.

So, starting this October, we're taking a year-long look at FLC stewardship. Not only what we give, but what our giving makes possible. We'll learn more about our ministries, celebrate the people who make them possible, discover ways to join in, and consider how our gifts support the good we do together.

And, of course, financial giving is part of that (you knew that was coming).

However, the goal isn't just to ask for more. It's to help us notice what we already have, give thanks for it, and consider how each of us can be part of what comes next.

We want to make giving as easy and flexible as possible. Along with traditional offerings and IRA distributions, you can give through Realm by bank account or credit/debit card. We've also added Apple Pay and Google Pay, and you'll soon see Giving QR codes around the church that will take you directly to FLC's online giving page.

But financial gifts are only part of stewardship. The time someone gives. The meal someone prepares. The quilt someone makes. The artistic gifts someone shares. The visit, the prayer, the welcome, and all the work that happens behind the scenes.

All of these gifts matter. Stewardship is everything we have and everything we do in response to what has been entrusted to us.

It's the people. It's the ministries. It's the building. It's the community we serve. It's the things that have been handed down to us. And it's the things we are building together for the future. October is just the beginning.

FLC KIDS NEWS

A note from Erika:

Go Chase Wonder!

Use your phone and go outside with your kids for this Photo Scavenger Hunt!!

Something that flies
Something that is broken
Something that grows
Something peaceful
A reflection
An interesting shadow
Neighborly love
Something beautiful
Something hopeful
A pattern or texture
Something blue

A chance to go outside and enjoy family time this fall!

October 2026

Next BIG Event:

FLC Kids' Halloween Party!!

Saturday, October 31st
4pm - 5:30pm

Join us indoors for a room full of Halloween games and activities for PreK - 5th graders!
Bowling & Roll the Dice
Lollipop Tree & Tic Tac Toe
Parachute & Photo Booth
Halloween Bingo
Decorate a paper pumpkin
Ring around the Witch's Hat
Halloween Blessing & more!

Lesson Schedule:

OCTOBER 7TH	Water & Creation Art & Special Music
OCTOBER 14TH	Noah & the Ark Lesson & Music
OCTOBER 21ST	Noah & the Ark Art & Special Music
OCTOBER 28TH	Baby Moses in the Nile River Lesson & Music

October Offering:



The Jeanette Hunt Blair Animal Shelter

The shelter provides compassionate care, shelter, adoption services, & education that promote responsible pet ownership & the humane treatment of animals. They work to ensure every animal has the opportunity for a safe, healthy, & loving future.

OCTOBER BIBLE VERSE:

"Then God said, 'Let the water be filled with living things. And let birds fly in the air above the earth.'" Genesis 1:20

FLC YOUTH NEWS

OCTOBER 2026



Announcements

2027 ELCA Youth Gathering

2027 ELCA YOUTH GATHERING
IMAGINE more

June 26 - July 2, 2027
All 9th - 12th graders in fall, 2026

ATTENTION!!

Meeting #2
Sun, Oct 11th
6-7:30pm - with supper!!
(attendance required
no parents/guardians)

678 CONFIRMATION UPDATES!!

Wednesday, October 14th
Service Night at Confirmation!!
Greenery Fundraiser starts

Monday, October 19th @ 8:15am-4pm
Service Plunge in Omaha
Sign up in Youth Nook in FHall

Saturday, October 31st @ 4-5:30pm
Halloween Party for PreK-5th
Inside OR Outside Service Opp!
(can also setup at 2pm)
Sign up at Youth Nook in FHall

Next Fundraiser

HOLIDAY GREENERY!!

We will begin selling greenery early this year. The company requires us to submit order 2 WEEKS early,instead of 3 DAYS.

Orders Start October 14th
Orders Due November 7th
Pick up orders November 25th

Find your order sheets in the Youth Nook in FHall or get from Erika!

9 to 12 Youth Group

Annual Pumpkin Painting!!

Sunday, October 25th
4-6pm in FHall

El Vallarta for dinner after!!
Friends are welcome!!

Micah 6:8



Do justice
love kindness
walk humbly
with your God.

To Serve As Jesus Served...

projects and events of the church, the community, and the world reported monthly by the FLC social concerns committee.

FLC Ambassador
Social Concerns Committee
October 2026

Living Lutheran, the quarterly magazine of the ELCA, celebrates the centennial of the Oaks Indian Mission's Children's Home.

In 2026, the Oaks Indian Mission is celebrating two landmark events, the 225th anniversary of its founding by Moravian missionaries in 1801 and the centennial of the Children's Home in 1926. The ELCA has permitted FLC to share the article that is in the magazine's Fall issue because of FLC's long support of the Oaks Indian Mission dating back to 1892. Please know that the OIM staff are so grateful for FLC generosity and participation in its work and hope you enjoy reading the article from *Living Lutheran.*

Please see the article "A blessing to this day" from Living Lutheran on page 11 & 12. We were given permission to publish this article from the Living Lutheran.

God's Work; Our Hands

The committee wishes to thank all who participated on Saturday morning, September 12th in FLC's continuing effort to upgrade the Potter's Field in the Blair Cemetery. The Blair City Parks Department had prepared and set out the crosses, and congregation members raked and laid sod around identified graves as well as seeding grass in other areas. We especially want to thank Mike Jones for organizing this September effort. We invite congregation members to drive by the site and note the work that has taken place.

Washington County Recycling Center

Committee members also want to thank those who volunteered at the Washington County Recycling Center on Saturday, August 29th. Though we did not have as many volunteers as usual, the WCR Center is grateful for FLC's willingness to regularly provide volunteers. Please note that the next time that FLC will provide volunteers is Saturday, November 7th. Please consider volunteering!

The Garden Market and Food Cart will end on Sunday, October 18th.

Gardeners, please continue to share what you can through that date, and congregation members please support this effort by taking what you can use and donating what you can.

ELCA World Hunger Appeal

Looking ahead to November, the Social Concerns Committee is planning to spotlight the ECLA's World Hunger Appeal on the weekend of November 14th and 15th.

FINALLY, We Need You!

Do you have a mind for service? Would you like to be a part of a committee who helps make decisions about how we can serve others both in the community and in the world? Consider joining the FLC Social Concerns Committee. We are in need of a couple more individuals to support our efforts including focus areas such as ELCA World Hunger, Garden Market, Have a Heart for Hunger, Washington County Recycling, Oaks Indian Mission, CROP WALK, Bread for the World and more (we are open to new ideas!). We generally meet on the 2nd Monday evening of the month and would love to have you join us! Questions or to say "yes", please reach out to Lynette Jennings (402-278-0164) or John Mark Nielsen (402-427-4443).

Please see the article "A blessing to this day" from Living Lutheran on page 11 & 12.

"A blessing, to this day"

OAKS INDIAN MISSION CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF CHILDCARE

By Steve Lundeberg



2026 marks the 100th anniversary of the Oaks (Okla.) Indian Mission children's home, an affiliated ministry of the ELCA.

In the northeastern corner of Oklahoma, at the end of the Trail of Tears, stands an enduring haven of hope.

Oaks Indian Mission (**oaksindianmission.org**), a ministry of the ELCA, offers residential care for Native American children, support for local families of the Cherokee Nation and transitional housing for families of various backgrounds. Eben Ezer Lutheran Church, established in 1903, serves the mission and the Oaks community.

The 20-acre site also includes a museum commemorating the early contributions of Danish Lutherans and celebrating the ongoing evolution of the mission and the lives it touches.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the mission's children's home, which provides food, shelter, clothing and education annually to

This article from *Living Lutheran* is reprinted with permission. © ELCA

roughly 50 boys, ages 7 to the upper teens, from more than a dozen tribes. The children, most of whom have been living in poverty, arrive at the home via placement by their guardian or tribe.

Additionally, for the last five years, Oaks Family Services Humanitarian Aid has supplied immigrant families, domestic violence survivors and people facing other challenges with food and fully furnished temporary housing on the Oaks campus.

"It's such a healing place, with such a long history," said Dan Cooper, the mission's executive director. "It's been 225 years of this ministry, helping people in need, children in need. Helping Native Americans is our history and is still very important to us, and I'm really pleased at what we are trying to do here by helping even more people."

The mission's history

Twenty miles from the nearest grocery store and 6 miles from the closest gas station, Oaks traces its roots to a partnership between the Cherokee Nation and Moravian missionaries that led to the establishment of the Springplace (Ga.) Mission in 1801.

Moravian missionaries had emigrated from Europe in the 1700s to work among Native Americans in Georgia and the Carolinas. In the late 1830s, the Moravians at Springplace stood by the Cherokee people when the U.S. government rolled out its Indian Removal Act policies, whose purpose was relocating tribes in the Southeast to reservations west of the Mississippi River.

The missionaries chose to accompany the Cherokee on the brutal banishment that became known as the Trail of Tears. Exact numbers are unknown, but historians estimate that 16,000 Cherokee people were marched westward and 4,000 of them died of exposure, exhaustion, disease or starvation.

In all, the Indian removal policies resulted in about 95,000 Native Americans being driven from their homelands, and 15,000 deaths.

Seven hundred forty miles from its original location, Springplace Mission was reestablished in 1842 as New Springplace near the site of the current town of Oaks. The Moravians ultimately closed Oaks Indian Mission five decades later, but a Danish Lutheran, Niels Laurits Nielsen, stepped in to spearhead educational, spiritual and other forms of service to the local Cherokee people.

In 1902, the Moravians transferred the mission to the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church (UDELC). Often referred to as the Blair Church (it was launched in Blair, Neb., in 1884), the UDELC later became part of the American Lutheran Church and then the ELCA.

A story of hope

Against a historical backdrop of Christian complicity in the colonization, forced assimilation and cultural erasure of Native Americans, the story of Oaks Indian Mission illustrates what can happen through multicultural empathy and respect, said Ashley Cooper, Dan's wife and the mission's director of operations and development.

"Without our relationship with the Moravians and then the Danish Lutherans and other Lutherans, I wouldn't exist, my family wouldn't exist," said Ashley, whose ancestors traveled the Trail of Tears. "The whole story of Oaks Indian Mission is tied to my family story and the legacy of Oaks helping Cherokee families. And now I get to do exactly the same thing: help people from other cultures."

That help, of course, requires funding. With a monthly operating budget of $80,000, Dan Cooper sees fundraising as one of his foremost duties. "That money comes from all different states and churches," he said.

The imprint of the Blair Church's involvement remains strong. "In 1926, when the children's home started, it really captured people's imagination, and the Nebraska Synod and its congregations continue to be very supportive," said John Mark Nielsen, a member of First Lutheran Church in Blair who serves on the Oaks Indian Mission board. "We're so pleased to be celebrating the centennial of the children's home and the dynamic, evolving impacts of the mission. This has been a long and positive relationship between the Cherokee Nation and other Native Americans and Christians."

Ashley Cooper agreed, citing personal experience. "I understand other people's struggles, the negative interactions between some Christians and Native Americans," she said. "But for my family, it was a blessing, and it's still a blessing, to this day.

"It's the story of generations of Cherokee children who had nothing and found hope and family and community, of churches that are faithful in giving after more than two centuries, and of a faithful God who is still faithful and has never stopped working for Oaks Indian Mission." †

Photo: Courtesy of Oaks Indian Mission

Notes, Dates, & Reminders

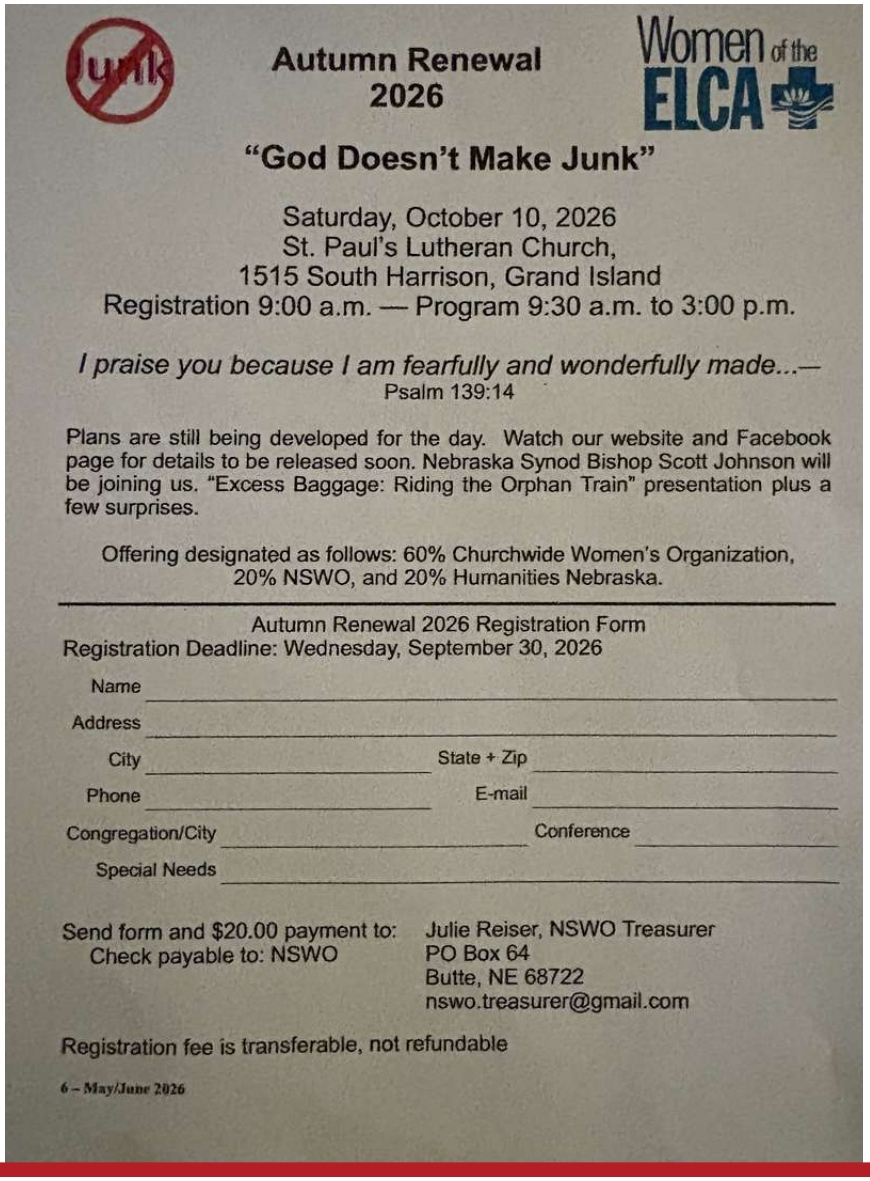
Women of the ELCA - Autumn Renewal 2026
"God Doesn't Make Junk"

This is the theme for the 2026 Autumn Renewal, which will be held October 10, 2026 at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 1515 South Harrison St, Grand Island, Nebraska.

Come and join us for a fun filled day featuring Nebraska Synod Bishop Scott Johnson as our speaker.

Registrations are on the women's table. Hope to see you there!

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Psalm 139:14.



Junk

Autumn Renewal 2026

Women of the ELCA

"God Doesn't Make Junk"

Saturday, October 10, 2026
St. Paul's Lutheran Church,
1515 South Harrison, Grand Island
Registration 9:00 a.m. — Program 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made...—
Psalm 139:14

Plans are still being developed for the day. Watch our website and Facebook page for details to be released soon. Nebraska Synod Bishop Scott Johnson will be joining us. "Excess Baggage: Riding the Orphan Train" presentation plus a few surprises.

Offering designated as follows: 60% Churchwide Women's Organization, 20% NSWO, and 20% Humanities Nebraska.

Autumn Renewal 2026 Registration Form
Registration Deadline: Wednesday, September 30, 2026

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State + Zip _____
Phone _____ E-mail _____
Congregation/City _____ Conference _____
Special Needs _____

Send form and $20.00 payment to:
Check payable to: NSWO

Julie Reiser, NSWO Treasurer
PO Box 64
Butte, NE 68722
nswo.treasurer@gmail.com

Registration fee is transferable, not refundable

6 – May/June 2026

FLC Youth to Minnie 2027 (ELCA Youth Gathering)

We are selling Cookie Dough!!
Try our "break and bake" cookie dough from "Wooden Spoon".
$18 for 40 cookies - chocolate chip, oatmeal cranberry white chunk, peanut butter, snickerdoodle, or triple chocolate.

Order by Oct 14th and pickup at FLC on Oct 28th
Order here: https://store.myfundraisingplace.com/1428fa49-3c6e-4617-a458-7d1202bfea45
Or order in Narthex or contact Erika!!



FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
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BLAIR, NE 68008
October 2026