



Dear First Lutheran Family,

We are excited to share an important next step in the life and ministry of First Lutheran Church.

After a season of transition, prayer, discernment, and preparation, the First Lutheran Church Council is calling a **Special Congregational Meeting** to vote on the Call Committee's recommendation to call **Pastor Julé Ballinger** as the next **Lead Pastor of First Lutheran Church**. In accordance with ELCA governing practices and our congregation, a two-thirds majority of voting members present and voting will be required to issue the call.

Special Congregational Meeting

Date: September 27, 2026

Time: 11:15 AM

Location: First Lutheran Church Sanctuary

Calling a Lead Pastor is an important responsibility and an opportunity for our congregation to prayerfully discern where God is leading us next. Based on our Ministry Site Profile (MSP) developed by the congregation, staff, and Council, the goal was to identify a candidate who met the profile qualifications. Through an intentional interview process, the Call Committee determined Pastor Julé strongly met all qualifications.

This moment is particularly meaningful because Pastor Julé is already well known to our congregation through her ministry as our Pastor of Intergenerational Ministry. During this time of transition, we have had the opportunity to experience her leadership, faith, care for people, preaching, teaching, theology, and commitment to First Lutheran's mission and future.

As we gather, we give thanks for the pastors and leaders who have served First Lutheran through this season of transition, and we ask for your continued prayers for Pastor Julé, our staff, Church Council, Call Committee, and the entire congregation.

Leading up to this special congregational meeting, please feel free to reach out to our Call Committee, Council, or Pastor Julé for conversation.

We believe this is an exciting opportunity to take the next faithful step together as we continue our mission of being a church where faith and life meet. We encourage all voting members of First Lutheran to attend this special meeting, join the conversation, and participate in this important decision for our church's future.

With joyful anticipation,

Bruce Belseth

On behalf of the First Lutheran Church Council and Call Committee

Council Members:

Bruce Belseth - Chair
Scott McDonald - Vice Chair
Cody Hammer
Gene Hartwig
Michelle Flaten
Stephanie Heseltine
Dave Holtz

Call Committee Members:

Julie McDonald - Co-Chair
Jeff Lindoo - Co-Chair
Jeremy Boe - Youth Representative
Stephanie Heseltine
Jackie Peters
Larry Ortloff
Roger Schultz



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Transition Taskforce Timeline

- **October 2025 – March 2026:** Established the Transition Taskforce. Congregational, staff, and council surveys were sent out, and data were collected for the Ministry Site Profile (MSP). Three separate listening sessions were held, allowing church members to hear the information and ask questions. Church Council and Transition Taskforce were in monthly communication.
- **April 2026** – Council reviewed/confirmed the MSP and the work the Taskforce had been doing and established a list of members for the call committee.
- **May 2026** – The MSP and Call Committee were established and voted on by Council. The Call Committee members and Synod were informed, and the Call Committee held its first meeting.



Call Committee

Call Committee Timeline

- **May 6, 2026** – Meeting with Church Council and Pastor Genelle Netland, Assistant to the Bishop for the Northwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA.
- **May 17, 2026** – Initial Call Committee meeting to establish our process. We discussed proceeding with Pastor Julé as the sole candidate and voted 6-0 to proceed (one member absent).
- **May 31, 2026** – The Call Committee met to discuss Pastor Julé's interview.
- **June 22, 2026** – The Call Committee's initial interview with Pastor Julé was conducted.
- **June 28, 2026** – The Call Committee met to review the initial interview, evaluation, and conversation, and decided to proceed with a second interview.
- **July 14, 2026** – The Call Committee's second interview with Pastor Julé.
- **July 20, 2026** – The Call Committee representatives met with staff and received feedback on Pastor Julé.
- **July 21–August 5, 2026** – The Call Committee continued gathering staff feedback and completed reference checks.
- **August 13, 2026** – The Call Committee met to review staff feedback and references, and voted to recommend Pastor Julé for the call of Lead Pastor to Church Council.
- **August 17, 2026** – The Call Committee called a special meeting with the Church Council to recommend Pastor Julé for the call of Lead Pastor. The committee gave a presentation, had a conversation, and took a vote.
- **August 19, 2026** – The Call Committee was notified by Bruce Belseth that the Church Council unanimously approved Pastor Julé for the call as the next Lead Pastor.