First Lutheran

All are welcome

Focus

on life at First

November 2026

Our Mission

To experience and celebrate God's amazing grace together.

Our Vision

First Evangelical Lutheran Church will share God's amazing grace by welcoming, growing and serving in Christ's name, enriching the well-being of all.

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Dear Friends of First,

According to a medieval legend, God once sent two angels to the earth on a special mission, with each one carrying a basket. One angel was assigned to gather up all the prayers of petition, and the other was assigned to gather up all the prayers of thanksgiving.

The first angel returned very quickly, her basket overflowing with requests. "Ah, yes," reported this angel, "the people of God have remembered well the Bible's counsel: 'Ask, and you shall receive.'" Yet the second angel was gone a long time, and when she finally returned, her basket was nearly empty. "I had a hard time finding people who pray prayers of thanksgiving," she said quietly.

Like everyone else, I have plenty of prayer petitions to place in the first angel's basket. These include prayers for an end to ongoing wars, geopolitical tensions, and violence, seeking protection for innocent civilians and wisdom for world leaders. My petitions also include prayers for those suffering from chronic illnesses and a lack of access to basic healthcare, as well as for healing across cultural, political, and economic divisions to foster a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive neighborhood environment. I also ask God to inspire and empower each of us to be part of the answer rather than part of the problem, bringing an end to racism, gun violence, oppression, poverty, hunger, and homelessness. May God empower us with divine, global love for all humanity.

At the same time, I do not want to neglect the second angel's basket, as we are all often tempted to do. I want to give thanks for a God who steadfastly refuses to give up on any of us—a God who is forever and always at work for good, forming, reforming, and transforming the world, the church, and every human heart. I want to give thanks for the privilege of being called and able to serve—along with all my sisters and brothers in faith—as active participants in the ongoing struggle for peace with justice in our neighborhoods and our world.

Finally, I want to give thanks for the abundant blessings of community, grace, and love that sustain us each day, and for the opportunity to share those gifts with a world in need.

May the Lord bless you and keep you this November. May God fill your hearts with a spirit of gratitude, overflow your baskets with peace, and guide your steps to be a blessing to others.

Pastor Jim

Harvest Fest Thank You

We had another successful Harvest Dinner. A great big thank you goes out to all the people who help make it possible. We would like to name everyone but don't want to leave anyone out. We would never be able to put on such a nice meal without all of you who stepped up to help.

Thanks again for all who helped and all who came to share this special day with us.

Sheree Voigt and Marian Kruger
Co-Chairmen

Highway Clean Up

First Lutheran will be having Highway Clean-up on **Saturday, November 7th.**

Please meet in the church parking lot at 9am.



Military Care Packages

Social Concerns will be sending packages to our military members and friends in November. Please turn in addresses of any military person you would like to receive a care package to the church office **by Monday, November 9th.**



Thanksgiving Service & Pie Social

Come join us on **Wednesday, November 25th at 6pm for Thanksgiving Worship.** We will be having a Pie Social following worship.

If you are interested in making a pie, purchasing a pie, or serving, please sign up on the Friendship Hall bulletin board **by Monday, November 23rd.** If you would like to donate towards the purchase of pies, please bring your donation to the church office by Monday, November 23rd as well. Thank you!

Retirees

Lucy Viola – (920) 887-7137 or (920) 296-4757

Retirees will meet on **Thursday, November 12th beginning at 10am** to finish up our tray favors. There is still plenty to do to finish so if you can help it would be greatly appreciated. We are making bookmarks and putting them inside a Christmas card. We'll put a little personal message inside the card and deliver them to Hillside Manor, Beaver Dam Nursing Home and Eagles Wings.

Our meal will be at 11:30am, as usual. Many thanks to Pizza Ranch for supplying our food, and thanks to Rick and Pat Marthaler for delivering our meals to us. Please call Lucy to let her know that you'll be attending and what you would like for lunch. Choices are: 2 pcs of Chicken with sides; choice of salad (garden, chef, chicken fiesta or taco); or choice of pizza. Price is $8; milk, coffee and dessert are included. We are finished in time for you to attend the 1pm worship service with Pastor Jim.

Retirees will, once again, be participating in the Toy Drive for Dodge County; whose mission is to make sure that every child has a gift to open on Christmas. There will be totes placed in Friendship Hall for any donations you may wish to give. This is for children 15 years old and younger. Toys should be unwrapped and in original package. Last year, we were able to give over 100 toys which was greatly appreciated as the list of those in need had grown. Monetary gifts are also welcome. These can be given directly to the bank.

Be sure to join us in December as well. We will welcome Dave and Carol Crawford as we celebrate Christmas. This is always a great time for all.

Christmas Toy Bank



First Lutheran's Retirees group will be collecting toys for the 2026 Dodge County Toy Bank. We invite you to join us! The toys should be new, in their original package, and unwrapped. They should be appropriate for ages newborn though age 15. We are suggesting a price range of $5 to $10. Toys will be taken to the American National Bank to be distributed in time for Christmas.

Look for bins in the Narthex or Friendship Hall in which to put your donation. **We will collect from November 1st through November 30th.** Please help us make Christmas brighter for Dodge County's underprivileged families. Thank you.

Monetary contributions may also be made out and sent to:

Dodge County Toy Bank, Inc.
P.O. Box 438
Beaver Dam, WI 53916

For more information see the Bulletin Board in Friendship Hall.

Baby Steps

Thank you for your generous contributions to Baby Steps!!! We will continue to collect infant care items through fall and winter for Dodge County Maternal and Child Services.

Look for the community baby shower to come in the spring!

Worship Committee

We are firming up plans for the upcoming Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons.
Our next meeting is **Monday, November 2nd at 6pm**, in the conference room off of Friendship Hall.

If you would like to attend to give us some input, please do! The next meeting after that is December 7th.

Solo Deo Gloria

Ten years ago, at a Spiritual Retreat, I asked composer of liturgical music, Marty Haugen, "How do you let a choir die?" He wisely suggested rephrasing that to, "How do you let a choir transition?"

Joyful Praise Choir is closing the books. Countless thanks to everyone who has ever sung in the group. We have been down to one on a part and that is too much pressure on any one individual. We have always aimed to provide quality music to enhance worship and inspire worshippers. We have done that consistently for a number of years. We have certainly treasured the camaraderie and community provided by our small group. We appreciate the feedback we receive when people express compliments on a musical offering.

Always, as Bach would write on all his manuscripts, "Solo Deo Gloria." Glory to God alone.
Respectfully submitted,
Mary Irwin, Director

Nine Lessons and Carols

Christmas Eve 10:30pm

Although Christmas is two months away, it is time to begin planning the Nine Lessons and Carols service. We will need nine readers, and if you wish to participate musically, I will need to know so that I can determine how many carols to program.

If you want to be involved in this service, please see me at church or leave your name at the church office. It's early, so no need to commit yourself until you know you are available for this service.

Thanks, Tom Irwin

Faith Formation

Join us for the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering!



We strongly encourage all **8th-grade through high school students** to consider this incredible opportunity planned just for them! The 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering and Young Adult Gathering will take place from June 28 to July 2, 2027, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This life-changing event brings thousands of young people from across the country together for powerful worship, deep faith formation, exciting service projects, and unforgettable community building.

Even better? **Friends are welcome to attend too!** You don't have to navigate this amazing journey alone—invite your friends to share the experience.

Registration Timeline & Cost: The official registration window is open. Securing your spot early gets you the best possible rate. Please note that a **$175 non-refundable deposit per person** is due at the time of registration. For more information contact Pastor Jim at 920-885-4497 ex. 2.



Meet Julia

Hello, everyone! My name is Julia Unertl, and I am excited to serve as the new Youth Director at First Lutheran! I graduated from Loyola University Chicago in 2019 with a degree in Elementary Education. My experience includes five years in before- and after-school care, teaching, and mentoring teens. Outside of work, I enjoy traveling, reading, hiking, and spending time with family, friends, and my dog!

My husband, Tyler, and I began attending First Lutheran about two years ago. Since then, we became members and welcomed our son, Franklin, who was baptized here. After taking some time away from work, I am excited to bring my passion for working with youth to our congregation!

My initial projects include supporting Confirmation, First Communion, Sunday School, and The Gathering (see above). Looking ahead, I hope to establish a youth group for middle and high school students—a welcoming space to explore faith, build relationships, serve our community, and have fun! I want every young person to feel they belong and know their questions are welcome.

If you or your family are interested in participating or volunteering, please reach out. I would love to begin planning! I also welcome ideas for other activities and opportunities to support the children and youth of our congregation.

Looking forward to the adventure ahead, Julia Unertl

Thrivent

Normally, we combine our November and December meetings into one. We will be meeting at the church on **Wednesday, December 2nd at 4pm** to help with Christmas decorating. We will have pizza and salad first, then decorate! Anyone is welcome to join us for the meal and/or decorating. If interested, call Sheree Voigt at 920-296-3285.

Watch the announcements for when our Cookie Sale will be in November, as well as the time the day before when we will be baking.

For those who have choice dollars to designate, please remember to do so by December 31st, 2026. We thank all those giving their choice dollars to First Lutheran Church!

Quilting

Although our people numbers are down, our output is doing well. If you would care to join us (we don't bite), we meet **Wednesdays at 9am** in the basement.

We will gladly welcome full, queen and/or king sheets. Hope to see you!

Befrienders

Befrienders are a trained group of people who visit shut-ins; be they at home, the hospital, assisted living, or a nursing home. The mission is to take communion and other materials from First Lutheran, and provide a listening ear, comfort, and care.

There are several Befrienders in our church. The visits may be needed for a short time or for several years depending on the person's needs and wishes. If you know someone who may like a visit, please call the church office (920-885-4497). New people to visit are always welcome.

2026 Annual Reports

It's never too early to start thinking about putting together your committee's annual report for 2026.
Reports are due Wednesday, December 9th.

Please submit them electronically to Michelle at michelle@firstluthbd.org.

Annual Reports will be available two weeks prior to the 2027 Annual Meeting.
If there are items that you would like to suggest be added to this document,
please share your ideas with a church council member.



Christmas Poinsettias

We will be adorning the Sanctuary and Narthex with poinsettias for Christmas! If you would like to donate toward poinsettias, please fill out a form online or outside the church office **by December 1st.**

Please indicate if you plan to take a poinsettia with you after Christmas. The cost is $17 per plant. Thank you!



Holiday Food Baskets

Social Concerns Small Group Ministry asks for your continued support in helping us provide food baskets for those in our congregation and community less fortunate than others.

If you, or a family you know, are in need of a holiday food basket, please fill out the Food Basket form located by the church office.

Please return the paper form to the Church Office by December 14th.
They will be delivered December 19th.

Christmas Bazaar & Cookie Sale

December 5th | 8am - 2pm

First Lutheran's Christmas Bazaar and Cookie Sale will be back on Saturday, December 5th.

The Christmas Bazaar Committee and volunteers will be holding a planning meeting on **Tuesday, November 17th at 11am.** All are welcome to join!

Christmas Cookie Sale

The holidays are fast approaching! We are in need of people to provide Christmas cookies, candies, and special treats to be sold during the Christmas Bazaar on December 5th.

Not a baker? No problem! We will also need volunteers to promote the sale and help package goodies on December 4th.

Please contact Leanne Gensch at 920-210-9851 if you have any questions.

Help Needed!



We are looking for helpers to decorate the church for Christmas on Wednesday, December 2nd. We will meet at the church at 5pm. The Thrivent group will be meeting at 4pm for our meeting and pizza and salad meal and then will be decorating. Anyone is welcome to join us!

If interested, please contact the church office at 920-885-4497 or Sheree Voigt at 920-296-3285.

Thank you in advance for your help!

December Special Service Times

Children's Christmas Program
Sunday, December 13th during worship

Christmas Music during Worship
Sunday, December 20th

Christmas Eve services
4:00pm, 6:00pm and 10:30pm

Christmas Day service
10am

A Prayer of Gratitude for the Simple Things

Thank you, God, for all your blessings to me and my family;
for the strength you give me each day
and for all the people around me who make life more meaningful.
Amen.

Remember In Prayer

God of sinners and saints, while facing sadness and death, we grieve. As Jesus provided generously in a moment of need, provide generous gifts of healing for those in need this day especially for Joel, Kyle, Amber, Kristin, Kathy, Jan, Michelle, Tina, Jason, Pat, Bev, Sandy, Harold, Tom, Ruth Ellen, Dan, and Eileen. Gather us into the joy of your glory. Amen.

Beaver Dam Loaves & Fishes

Report to First Lutheran - Q3 2026

Financials - Beaver Dam Loaves & Fishes' financial position continues to be strong. We are blessed with individual donations, donations from our partner churches, and business donations. In the 3rd Quarter, we received a grant from United Way of Dodge County for $1,334.49. We also raised $2,000 on our Kwik Trip fundraiser and $1,000 on our Pizza Ranch fundraiser. We have received many donations from individuals and businesses. Thank you to all who support our Ministry!

# of Meal Dates January thru Sept	# of Meals Served January thru Sept	Average # of meals served per Meal Date January thru Sept
Jan-Sept **32**	**30616**	**957**

The number of meals served continues to increase.

Staffing

All dates for volunteer groups are full for 2026, and volunteer groups are filling in 2027 dates. The core group numbers remain strong.

Mission

Our mission is to serve a weekly healthy hot meal to anyone who wants one. There will be no income requirements. We care about serving the physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual needs of all people in our community. We want to create an environment where everyone feels welcomed and loved and a part of our community. We look to follow Jesus' command from John 13:34 – "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."

Ministry Opportunities

Loaves & Fishes donated fresh produce from our garden to the CWCAC food pantry, St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, The Gathering Source Food Pantry, and Food is Free Food Pantry.

We continue working with the Social Concerns Committee Personal Essential Pantry. We are proud to partner with Social Concerns, and we see the Ministry growing!

Loaves & Fishes Garden Project

Garden Planted – May 24th
Produce Season – First Picking July 1st, last picking October 4th

Harvest Results:

Cucumbers: 800 lbs – 535 lbs used in L&F meals, 265 lbs donated to CWCAC food pantry

Bell Peppers: 880 lbs – 685 lbs used in L&F meals (or frozen for future meals), 195 lbs donated to food pantries, CWCAC, St. Vincent de Paul, The Gathering Source

Green Cabbages: 140 heads with 40 second crop heads – all 140 heads and 20 second crop cabbages used in meals, 20 second crop cabbages donated to CWCAC

Red Cabbages: 61 heads – all 61 heads used in L&F meals
Tomatoes: 3,400 lbs – 2,000 lbs used in L&F meals (or frozen for future meals), 1400 lbs donated to CWCAC, St. Vincent de Paul, and The Gathering Source

Onions: 75 lbs used in L&F meals

Potatoes: 800 lbs to be used in L&F meals

Various Herbs: Dried to be used in L&F meals

Thank you to all that made the Loaves & Fishes Garden a huge success!
Respectfully Submitted, John & Linda Smedema

Hello Fellow Members...

I'm coming to the close of six years on our church council. My time on council has gone so fast. In fact, I enjoyed it so much, I've served two terms.

I had thought about ways I could get more involved at church, and there were so many committees to choose from, but I had not selected anything just yet. Then, I received a phone call from another member asking me to consider adding my name to the list for council elections at our next annual meeting. I thought and prayed about it, and decided this was something I'd like to pursue. I added my name and was selected. I had no idea how much I would learn about what makes everything "work" at church. I quickly realized how many hands were involved in the everyday activities at church. I've been able to share my ideas and help make lots of impactful decisions. I've learned how to help be good stewards with our finances. I've gotten to meet and know so many people; more than I could have ever imagined. It's been a very rewarding experience for me.

Since my council time is coming to an end, I'll be heading up the nominating committee for the upcoming year. Someone on the committee may reach out to you! If so, please consider pursuing a position on the council. It's a three-year term, which includes attending the monthly council meeting and acting as a liaison for one of the committees at church, most of which also meet once a month.

So many wonderful things are happening at our church! This may be the perfect way for you to get more involved. Thank you, Lynn Seibel

Weather Closing Information & Reminders

As we approach the winter season, please be aware of where you can find the weather closing information for our church.

For weekdays, if the Beaver Dam United School District is closed due to weather, the church office, as well as all other church activities, will be cancelled for that day. An email will be sent out to advise if Thursday Worship is cancelled.

If the Sunday Worship Service is cancelled, it will be posted on the church website (www.firstluthbd.org), Facebook (facebook.com/firstluthbd), and you will be notified via email.

These are the places we will always share cancellations due to weather. WBEV will also be notified of the closing and it will be announced on the radio.

Council Highlights

The Council Meeting for this month was held on Wednesday, October 21st.

- **Financial Report:** Expenses were in line but a little less income than expected for September. Renovation has slowed down but should increase by the end of the year. Next year's budget is being worked on. Jim was asked to explain the difference between the four categories in missions. They are the expenses related to church missions such as Stewardship, employment and office expenses.
- **Ministry Report:** Pastor Jim has a Confirmation Class of 10 students. First Communion is next week. Pastor is preparing for Advent. He has been visiting health facilities. He is also busy trying to fill the janitor position.
- **Endowment:** Next meeting will be October 22nd.
- **Evangelism:** Trunk or Treat will be this Saturday October 24th from 2-3:30pm. The basket for donation of baby items will be out all winter. The committee will take part in the baby shower in April. It is hoped that the new placemats will be ready for the Christmas dinner. Our church will have a float in the Christmas parade which is on December 5th. A block party is in the planning for next spring.
- **Faith Formation:** Julia Unertl spoke at the meeting. She will support programs such as Sunday school administration, the Christmas program and Confirmation class. The position will be 15 hours per week. Personnel will prepare a job description.
- **Personnel:** They are still looking for a person to fill the janitor position. Leanne does have the name of another candidate. A person to fill the maintenance position will be hired about six months before Bob retires so he can train them.
- **Property:** The car port roof has been completed. We now have hot water back in the lower level for the kitchen and bathrooms. A bench and cabinet will be added to the new bathroom. Quotes for ceiling fans in the sanctuary and a new HVAC are being worked on. Loaves & Fishes have requested adding two alto shams to the kitchen.
- **Rummage Sale/Christmas bazaar:** The Christmas Bazaar is December 5th.
- **Social Concerns:** On October 3rd, a Women's Health Fair was hosted in Friendship Hall. The next distribution for PEP is set for November 10th. Loaves & Fishes held a fund raiser at Pizza Ranch on October 7th raising $1,000.
- **Stewardship/Holy Currencies:** Approximately $80,000 still needs to be raised for reroofing the sanctuary.
- **Worship:** David Douma will not be playing October and November. Mary Irwin will be playing during this time with help from Leanne S. The organ will need to be tuned before Christmas. All the pianos need to be tuned since that has not been done for a long time. Mary K talked to Sven about a jazz service. He would like to have one in either January or February. The Thanksgiving service will be November 25th at 6pm. A pie social will be held after the service. The Sunday School Program will be December 13th. The "Festival of Music" will be held December 20th. Christmas services will be December 24th at 4pm and 6pm. The 4pm service will be traditional and the 6pm service will be blended. Tom Irwin will do the 10:30pm service, "Lessons & Carols." Christmas Day will be a traditional service at 10am. A decision is still to be made about the late service on Christmas Eve. Bonnie and crew are taking pictures of the banners to include in a binder. Sheree is collecting orders for poinsettias. She is planning to decorate the church on December 2nd for Christmas.
- **Old Business:** Employee reviews need to be completed. Heidi and Matt Freeby have offered to display their train set. It could possibly be used with the Sunday School or Vacation Bible School curriculum. The space required and time for the display need to be considered.

The next council meeting will be held Sunday, November 15th at 10:15am.

2026 Church Council

Marian Krueger
President (Executive)

Lynn Seibel
Vice President (Faith Formation)

Leanne Gensch
Secretary (Personnel, Property & Stewardship/Holy Currencies Team)

Jim Feil
Treasurer

Deborah Doerfert
(Social Concerns)

Sam Herringa
(Mutual Ministry)

Scott Jacquart
(Worship)

Phyllis Marthaler
(Rummage Sale & Christmas Bazaar)

Charlie McDonald
(Endowment)

Judy Weishan
(Evangelism, Faith Formation & Stewardship/Holy Currencies Team)

Bev Yunto
(Congregational Health)

Worship Schedule
8am - Previous Sunday's Worship
Radio on FM 95.3 WBEV
9am - Blended Worship
Thursday 1pm - Traditional w/Communion

All Sunday Services Online
Facebook Live, Church Website
& YouTube Live

Drive-Thru Holy Communion
1st Sunday of the Month
November 1st | 10 - 10:30am

Contact Us
Phone: 920-885-4497
E-mail: churchoffice@firstluthbd.org
Website: www.firstluthbd.org

Rev. Jim Wendt
pastor@firstluthbd.org

If you would like to receive this newsletter via email, or if you do not wish to receive this paper newsletter in the mail, please contact the Church Office.

First Lutheran Church
311 W. Mackie Street
Beaver Dam, WI 53916

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NOTES FROM THE OFFICE

Office Staff Hours

Monday thru Thursday 9:00am-12:30pm

Church Mailbox & Office Mailbox

There is a secure church mailbox installed outside of the Friendship Hall doors by the doorbell. There is also a secure church office mailbox installed on the wall to the left of the office window. Members can use either mailbox as a dropbox if you need to drop off items for staff after hours.

Due Date Reminders - Email to breanna@firstluthbd.org & michelle@firstluthbd.org

Focus Articles: Due on the 3rd Friday of the month
Sponsors, Bulletin, Welcome Slides, or E-Announcements: Due on Tuesdays by noon

Prayers of the Church

If you would like to be included in the prayers of the church, please contact the church office. If you have prayer requests for the Prayer Chain, please contact Lois Bennett at (920) 887-2698 or benn1741@gmail.com.

Koepsell – Murray
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