



First Things – April 2025

Greetings dear sheep of Christ's fold,

This month, we are resuming our series where I share with you some of the things that God gives you through a pastor or simply by being a member of a Christian congregation.

Last time, we discussed that through your church and through your pastor you get to expect and demand that you receive the gospel; this is the good news of Christ which comes to us in Word and sacrament. We discussed the benefits of Confession and Absolution, including private confession, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. We will examine Baptism and the Lord's Supper in more detail in coming months.

This month, however, there is something else to examine, which you also may and should demand of me and your church: the proper use of God's Law. The goal of the gospel, of course, is to raise us spiritually dead people to spiritual life. And only the Holy Spirit can do that. The goal of the law, however, is to make us spiritually dead people realize that we are dead so that we might be thirsting for the life-giving water of the gospel. The simple way to say this is that the law shows our sin while the gospel shows our Savior.

So what should I be looking for from my church and pastor when it comes to the use of God's law? We want the full thing. We want every word that God has to say about and against sinners to hit me with its full weight. We want the strong-toothed, accusatory, damning law that is going to kill me to death. Of course, that sounds bad, but we always remember that this is because we are then properly prepared to receive the full resurrection to spiritual life through the gospel.

If the preaching of God's law in my church is weak and wimpy, if it's the kind of law that let's me off the hook and leaves me thinking that there's still something good in me and something still spiritually living in me, then when the gospel comes, I end up very confused. I look at Jesus on the cross and I have to ask "Hey, what are you doing there? You're there for me? Come on down, Jesus; I'm doing fine!"

Of course, we are not doing fine. God really does punish sinners with eternal wrath and hell. We need to be terrified of this reality so that we can fully understand and grasp the beauty of what Christ did by taking the full punishment of my sin and by giving me his righteousness, which he won for me. So you aren't going to accept a watered-down message of the law, because you don't want a watered-down message of the gospel.

It takes a certain bravery to come to church knowing that you are going to be put to death by God's law, knowing that you are going to be brought to your knees in despair over your sin. However, you get to be brave in this way, not because you are brave in yourselves, but because you know how the story ends: Christ is risen!

Easter is coming. And his resurrection guarantees your resurrection. So no matter how much the law puts you flat on your face with nothing to say for yourself but to despair, the gospel is able to raise you up to someone alive, someone new, someone better – the person God always wanted you to be: his child.

One final word here: If I am to preach a law like this, then I have to know you. It has been such a benefit to visit so many of you in your homes. This will make my preaching better. If you have not signed up for a visit, please do so! I'm putting a new sheet out this week. But honestly, one visit isn't enough. I want to keep visiting you. I want you in Bible class where we can study God's word together. I want to be a part of your lives. I want to be there when you get engaged, married, have kids. Invite me to birthday parties and graduations and anniversaries. I want to come to your sporting events, concerts, plays. I want to garden with you, discuss the latest book you've read, have a cup of coffee (I prefer tea). I want to be there when you're sick or injured, when a loved one dies, when you are facing death. The more you can invite me to be a part of your life, the better pastor I can be for you.

Finally, come to me with your sin and I will absolve you. Take advantage of the gift of privately confessing your sins to your pastor and know that it is as if you are confessing your sin to Christ himself. This is the power that Christ has given to his church. I will never let a word of what you confess to me slip out to anyone. However, you will get to leave completely free of sin. And our relationship will grow in ways that you've probably never experienced with a pastor if you've never tried private confession. The more of our members who are coming to me with their daily sins and struggles, the better pastor I can be for our whole congregation.

Pastor Pilarski

About Dedicated Accounts

Each Sunday, members of the congregation give offerings to the Lord through the church. Many of the members have offering envelopes for this purpose.

The offering envelopes can be used to contribute to the general fund, or to various other funds, sometimes referred to as 'Special Funds' or 'Dedicated Funds.' Here at First Lutheran, we refer to these funds as Dedicated Accounts or Dedicated Funds.

We currently have 15 active Dedicated Accounts:

Care Fund	Memorials Fund	Technology Fund
First Steps ELC Fund	Luther High Fund	Basement Floor Fund
Youth Group Fund	Building Fund	MLC Matching Fund
First Women	Mortgage Debt Fund	Altar Team Fund
WELS Missions Fund	Basement Windows Fund	Music Fund

The offering envelopes have two lines for recording your offering, General Fund and Other. The General Fund line is used to record your offering for the day-to-day operations of the church. The Other line is used to record your contribution to the dedicated funds listed above. When contributing to a dedicated fund, write in the amount of the contribution and the designated fund. If neither of the lines are filled in, the contribution will default to the general fund.

If you would like to know the purpose of any of these funds, feel free to ask a board member or any of the Dedicated Accounts Committee members (Diana Holub, Barb Hoff, Lisa Wendt, Dan Buchholz).

Holy Week Worship Schedule

Maundy Thursday,
April 17
Worship with Holy Communion
at 6:30 PM

Good Friday,
April 18
Worship at 6:30 PM

Easter Sunday
April 20
Worship at 7:00 AM
and 9:00 AM
Easter Breakfast at 8:00 AM

Fellowship Opportunities and Events

- Saturday, April 12** Easter for Kids- Egg hunt, cookie decorating, and fun activities on **Saturday, April 12 at 9:00 AM**. We are looking for volunteers that would be interested in help setting up. Please reach out to Carol Schroeder at 507-895-5704. Thank you!
- Sunday, April 13** Usher's Meeting – All Ushers, and those wanting to learn more about assisting as an Usher, please meet after worship **Sunday, April 13**.
- Wed, April 16** LHS: Holy Week Concert- Luther High School will be presenting its Holy Week Concert in the chapel Auditorium **Wednesday, April 16 at 7:00 PM**. You will want to plan on attending this special concert!
- Sat, April 19** Church Spring Cleaning with Lunch- The season is changing and that means our church home needs a little sprucing up. We would appreciate your help! Please take a moment to sign-up to help with spring cleaning at church Saturday, April 19, beginning at 8:00 AM. We are planning a brunch/lunch for all attendees.
- Flower Drop- Off: All members that have flowers for the Easter Memorial Garden are welcome to drop them off at church Saturday, April 19 between 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM.
- Easter Meal Set-Up: Preparations for the Easter Meal will begin at 5:00 PM.
- April 23 - 25** Pastor Pilarski Out of Town: Pastor Pilarski and family will be out of town Wednesday through Friday. Should you require any Pastoral care, Pastor John Unnasch has graciously agreed to be our Pastor on Call. You can reach him at: 507-450-2882.
- Saturday, April 26** Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) Spring Rally: The **LWMS Spring Rally** will take place at Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church in Winona. Registration begins at **8:00 AM** with Speaker Eric Roecker from WELS Commission and Evangelism. Women of First will be carpooling and have room for more. Please contact the church office if you would like to join the carpool!



Sunday, April 27 Quarterly Voters' Meeting: Will be held in the church sanctuary after Worship.

February

Summary of Financial Information 2025

Financial Summary				
	YTD		Difference	Comments
	Actual	Budget		
Net Income (Loss) Church	\$912	\$0	\$912	
Net Income (Loss) ELC	\$13,633	\$6,589	\$7,044	
Total	\$14,545	\$6,589	\$7,956	
Grants (net)	(\$3,824)	(\$2,642)	(\$1,181)	
Without Grants	<u>\$10,721</u>	<u>\$3,947</u>	<u>\$6,775</u>	

Total Deficit of ELC	
2018	(\$17,051)
2019	(\$23,087)
2020	(\$2,544)
2021	\$39,832
2022	(\$10,484)
2023	(\$8,202)
2024	\$10,716
2025	<u>\$13,633</u>
	<u><u>\$2,813</u></u>

Giving Summary				
	YTD		Difference	Comments
	Actual	Budget		
Offerings	\$41,817	\$40,482	\$1,335	103.3%
Debt Reduction	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Total	<u>\$41,817</u>	<u>\$40,482</u>	<u>\$1,335</u>	

Assets					
	2024		2025		Comments
	December	February	February	Change	
Checking Account	\$61,664	\$71,274	\$71,274	\$9,610	
Money Market	\$51,540	\$51,917	\$51,917	\$378	
Total	<u>\$113,204</u>	<u>\$123,192</u>	<u>\$123,192</u>	<u>\$9,988</u>	Net increase in cash balance

Liabilities & Equity					
	2024		2025		Comments
	December	February	February	Change	
Dedicated Funds Total	\$87,041	\$82,566	\$82,566	(\$4,474)	
Other Liabilities	\$1,830	\$1,747	\$1,747	(\$83)	
Assets less Liabilities	<u>\$24,334</u>	<u>\$38,878</u>	<u>\$38,878</u>	<u>\$14,545</u>	Net increase in equity
Mortgage Balance	\$267,958		Interest Rate	6.34%	
Balloon Payment Due	11/1/2027				

Basement Floor Project	
Total Cost	\$15,376
Donations to Date	\$11,482
Amount Needed	<u>\$3,894</u>
	As of March 31

Required Offerings		
March Offerings Needed	22,840	
March Offerings Received	19,161	
April Offerings Needed		17,028