



First Things ~ December 2025

My dear friends in Christ,

Advent is a season of preparing for Jesus to come to us. Of course, many of us are thinking of when Jesus came at Christmas. When I was a child, I always looked forward to my mom getting out the Advent calendar. Each day, I would wake up and check the next number, and sure enough there was a piece of chocolate waiting for me. I knew that as the days ticked by, Christmas was closer and that biggest piece of chocolate was waiting for me at the end on Christmas Day.

It's wonderful in the Advent season that we get to count down the days to celebrating our Savior's birth. We don't want to forget the other, even better, countdown that is happening, however: Jesus' Second Coming. Just as Jesus was taken up into the skies at his Ascension, he promises that he is going to come back in the skies again. When Jesus comes the second time, he won't be coming as a humble little baby only announced to a few shepherds at night. No, Jesus will be returning as the King of kings and Lord of lords and every knee in heaven and on earth and under the earth will bow before him. There will be no doubts left about the time and day when he finally does return.

This day of Jesus' return is a day that we Christians are able to look forward to with great anticipation because it is the day of vindication. It will be the day when everything that we believed in is proved right. It is the day when we receive the full benefits of everything we look forward to. It is the day when justice will be met out against all of the evil of the world. When we feel as though there's no justice, as though the wicked prosper, as though the devil and all on his side are winning, we can look forward to the day when Jesus comes, because on that day he is going to handle all of it. He will bring to a swift and sudden end all the schemes and works of all of our enemies. And he has something wonderful in store for you who believe in him: Life.

On the day of Jesus' Second Coming, he is going to establish his New Heavens and New Earth. God doesn't give us explicit details about how all of this will take place. Really, when you read the Bible it can come across one of two ways: Either 1) God is going to destroy everything and start over with a new heavens and new earth from scratch, or 2) He is going to purge everything that he has made of all the evil and use the same materials he originally created at the beginning to make everything good and right again, just like he meant for it to be. Either way, God is going to remake the earth in the perfect way; and that is where we are going to get to live eternally in our bodies. No, you aren't going to spend eternity floating out of your body on a cloud playing a harp. You are going to be yourself: Body and soul together. Only, you are going to be perfect this time. No more aches or pains. No more injuries. No more sickness. No more weakness. No risk of death. No risk of hunger. No risk of any harm at all. You will simply live in the very presence of God with God himself taking perfect care of you for all time.

Finally, in the Advent season, we see Jesus coming to us today. Yes, Jesus comes to you even now. How? Through the means by which he has promised: Word and sacrament. In the Bible, you hear God himself speak to you.

In Baptism, God himself washes you through water and the Word and his Holy Spirit comes to make his home within you. Your baptism is something that stays with you every day. You can always look to your baptism and know that God has made you a member of his family, he has marked you as his own, and nothing that you can ever do will take that away from you. You can always repent, and trust that in your baptism you are washed clean of all sin, guilt, and shame and that God will welcome you back.

In the Lord's Supper, you actually get to see, touch, smell, even taste Jesus' true body and blood. And, of course, this is not in a gross way. Instead, this is a special way that Jesus comes to you and communes with you. When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, heaven and earth come crashing together and you are in the very presence of God just as much as any of those Old Testament encounters such as Moses at the burning bush or on Mt Sinai or Elijah in the cave or in the New Testament as the disciples walked and talked with Jesus or even on the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus revealed his true divinity to Peter, James, and John. You get to touch and see just like Thomas was able to as he placed his hands in Jesus' wounds. And in this supper, by the power of the Word, your sins are forgiven and eternal life is yours. For that body and blood was given and shed for you. What a wonderful and special occasion it is whenever we receive the Sacrament of the Altar!

And so Advent is a season that celebrates all of the ways that Jesus comes to you. He came at Christmas and ended that long wait of his faithful Old Testament believers. He promises to come again to bring to fruition all the good he has promised. And yet, as we wait, he comes to you each and every day through Word, Baptism, and Communion. Praise God that we are not alone. Jesus comes to you. Happy Advent.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Pilarski

First Steps News



Many hours of practice and planning for the Thanksgiving Service were involved by the teachers and students, so we want to sincerely thank everyone involved. I also want to thank those that lent a hand with decorating the basement, and prepping and serving the food. We hope everyone had a good time and had a chance to get to know one another.

The Wishing Tree: During the month of December we will have a Wish Tree on the wall in the hallway between the restrooms. Feel free to look at the items the teachers have chosen that they could use in their rooms. The items will include things for 4k, 3k, toddlers, infants, kitchen, and general needs. If you see something you would like to get for the center, take the ornament. If you would rather contribute a monetary gift instead, place it in an envelope, marking which room it is for, and the item if chosen. It can be put in the drop box in the entry. Thank you!



Dedicated Projects Update:

Basement Windows: First set of windows will be installed the week of December 14th.
Current gifts received: \$11,500 of \$14,000.

Pew Bibles: The Council has elected to order the new Bibles once funds have been committed for their purchase. This will create no change to our worship, and we will continue to utilize the 2011 NIV translation in worship as we have done.
Current gifts received: \$350 of \$1,610 .

Fellowship Opportunities and Events

Every Saturday & Sunday Live Nativity- Dressing starts at 4pm in the NEW Early Childhood Building across the street from First Lutheran School (420 West Ave.). Roles are on a first come first serve basis so, if you have your heart set on the role you signed up for, please show up *before* 4:15pm. The Live Nativity runs each Saturday 5 PM – 10 PM, and Sundays 5 PM – 9 PM. If you would like to reserve a role link here: <https://nativitydiorama.com/> and the QR code to the right will direct you to the website, select “Volunteer Signup” to reserve your roll.



Tuesday, Dec. 16 Church Council- 6:30 PM

Monday, Dec. 18 First Steps Christmas Program- 5:30 PM
**** Please see below all the special services available to you this season! ****

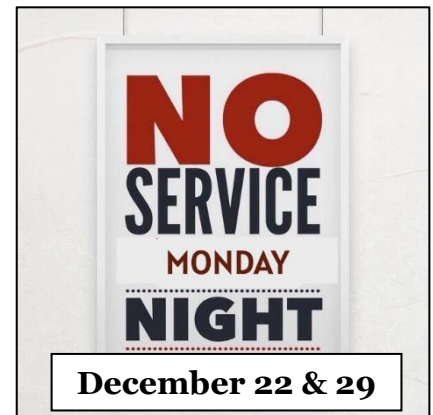
Saturday, Dec. 20 CrossTalk Christmas Program Practice- 10:00 AM

December 22 – 26 First Steps Early Learning Center Closed

December 25 & 26 Church Office Closed *A blessed Christmas to you all!*

January 1 & 2 Church Office & First Steps ELC Closed
Happy New Year!

Saturday, Jan. 10 Christmas Undecorating- 10:00 AM. All members wanted, as able.



Special Christmas Season Services



Sunday, Dec. 21 at 9 AM – CrossTalk Christmas Service

Wed, Dec. 24 at 6:30 PM – Christmas Eve Worship

Thurs, Dec. 25 at 9 AM – Christmas Day Worship with
Holy Communion

Wed, Dec. 31 at 6:30 PM – New Year's Eve Worship with
Holy Communion

October

Summary of Financial Information 2025

Financial Summary				
	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Difference	Comments
Net Income (Loss) Church	(\$19,339)	\$0	(\$19,339)	
Net Income (Loss) ELC	\$17,384	\$7,069	\$10,315	
Total	(\$1,955)	\$7,069	(\$9,024)	
Grants (net)	(\$16,336)	(\$13,212)	(\$3,124)	
Without Grants	(\$18,291)	(\$6,143)	(\$12,148)	

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	\$17,384
	<u><u>\$6,564</u></u>

Giving Summary				
	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Difference	Comments
Offerings	\$174,556	\$200,105	(\$25,549)	87.2%
Debt Reduction	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Total	\$174,556	\$200,105	(\$25,549)	

Assets				
	2024 December	2025 October	Change	Comments
Checking Account	\$61,664	\$56,282	(\$5,382)	
Money Market	\$51,540	\$63,586	\$12,046	
Total	\$113,204	\$119,868	\$6,664	Net increase in cash balance

Liabilities & Equity				
	2024 December	2025 October	Change	Comments
Dedicated Funds Total	\$87,041	\$94,791	\$7,750	
Other Liabilities	\$1,830	\$2,699	\$869	
Assets less Liabilities	\$24,334	\$22,379	(\$1,955)	Net decrease in equity
Mortgage Balance	\$255,292		Interest Rate	6.34%
Balloon Payment Due	11/1/2027		Monthly Payment	\$2,587.01
			Extra Principle	\$500.00

Basement Windows Project	
Total	
Est Cost*	\$14,000
Donations to Date	\$9,511
Amount Needed	<u><u>\$4,489</u></u>
As of November 30	

Required Offerings				
		Budget	Catch up	Total
November Offerings Needed	\$16,362			
November Offerings Received	\$18,027			
December Offerings Needed		\$17,781	\$23,883	\$41,664

* West side	\$6,000
East side	\$8,000

First Lutheran Church

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