



First Light

Worship at First

Worship at First - Saturday at 5:30 p.m. and 9:30 a.m.
Weekend Worship is livestreamed each Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

Staff

Pastor Garrett Struessel

Senior Pastor

garrett.struessel@firstluth.org

Deacon Korra Looschen

Faith Formation Coordinator

Korra.looschen@firstluth.org

Maria Sutton

Office Manager/Volunteer Coordinator

maria.sutton@firstluth.org

Denise McDougall

Accountant/Administrative Assistant

denise.mcdougall@firstluth.org

Events Happening in December

- ♦ Saturday Worship, 5:30 p.m.
- ♦ Sundays, Livestreamed Worship Service, 9:30 a.m.
- ♦ Sunday School Hour - 10:45 a.m.
- ♦ Nursery - Sundays, 9:00 a.m. to 12 Noon
- ♦ Brass Angels Bell Choir – Tuesdays, 9:00 a.m., Choir Room
- ♦ Staff Meeting - Tuesdays, 1:00 p.m., Fireside Room
- ♦ Adult Bible Study - Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.
- ♦ Chancel Choir Rehearsal – Thursdays, 7:00 p.m., Choir Loft
- ♦ Alternate Giving Fair, Saturday, December 6, 6:30 p.m. and Sunday, December 7, 9:00 a.m.

- ♦ Homebound Communion – Sunday, December 7
- ♦ LWR Sewing Group - Wednesday, December 3, 9:00 a.m., Room USW-C
- ♦ Senior Advent Service and Luncheon, Wednesday, December 3, 11:00 a.m.
- ♦ Touch of Craft – Wednesday, December 3, 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 P.M., Room 6
- ♦ Prayer Shawl Group – 9:30 a.m., December 5, Fireside Room
- ♦ Council Meeting – Tuesday, December 9, 6:00 p.m. Conference Room
- ♦ Ryssby Candlelight Services – Saturday, December 13, 4:00, 5:15, 6:30. 7:45 p.m., Ryssby Church
- ♦ FLW Meeting – Sunday, December 14, 8:30 a.m., Conference Room
- ♦ Ryssby Candlelight Services – Sunday, December 14, 4:00, 5:15, 6:30 p.m., Ryssby Church
- ♦ Seasoned Saints – Wednesday, December 17 10:00 a.m.
- ♦ LWR Sewing Group - Wednesday, December 17, 1:00 p.m., Room USW-C
- ♦ Christmas Eve Services, Wednesday, December 24, 4:00, 5:30 and 11:00 p.m.
- ♦ Christmas Day Service, Thursday, December 25, Julotta, 6:30 a.m.
- ♦ Confirmation Class – Sunday, December 28, 11:45 a.m., First Lutheran Church



Pastor's Message

Dear Saints,

Jesus taught that feeding the poor is a physical act but also a spiritual one. In Matthew 25:35-37, Jesus links caring for the needy with serving him directly, stating, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat." This connection underscores the belief that helping those in need reflects one's faith and relationship with God.

Jesus taught that generosity towards the poor is rewarded by God. In Luke 14:13-14, he encouraged inviting the poor to feasts, stating that such acts would be repaid at the resurrection. This reinforces the idea that caring for the less fortunate is both a moral obligation and a pathway to spiritual blessings.

Christ Jesus was foretold by the angels to the shepherds, born in Bethlehem, raised in a small Galilean village, and he proclaimed God's love, even from the cross. "Father, forgive them..."

This season, we are reminded of special efforts to serve, special efforts to give, and special efforts to be generous. In our prayers and practices, we are called to follow Christ Jesus in all things. My hope for you this season is that the Holy Spirit will accompany you in all things.

My prayer for you is that Christ Jesus bless you richly with grace and mercy. May God bless you with hope in times of uncertainty. May God bless you with the peace that passes understanding.

Merry Christmas and blessed New Year to you.

In Christ, Pastor Garrett Struessel

Stewardship

"Money makes the world go around, the world go around, the world ago round" The song from "Cabaret" expresses a longing for wealth, suggesting that without money, life becomes difficult. It also portrays the struggles of people who lack basic necessities, such as warmth and clothing.

Isn't it distasteful to talk about money in church? No more so than discussing Jesus, or love, or music, or food, or time. The Church of Christ Jesus is commissioned to bring the Good News to the world. To do this, the Church needs financial resources.

Challenge: Please reconsider your financial support if you have considered giving or withholding financial contributions to the Church of Christ to support the pastor, or the staff, or the building, or another purpose. We are not called to give for these reasons. We are called to reflect God's generosity to us in daily living.

Once these motivations are revisited, the giving of time, talent, and treasure is restored as a spiritual, faithful practice. A True response to the generosity of our Creator. PG

What Is Church Growth?

By Pastor David Hansen, Director for Innovation and Communication, churchanew.org

As the church moves into a new era, we hear phrases like *growing church* and *congregational vitality*. But what does growth mean for us as followers of Christ?

Growth Is Contextual

Every congregation's setting shapes what growth looks like. A rural church holding steady in attendance may actually be thriving in a declining population. A fast-growing suburb may call for a different kind of response. Job markets, family schedules, and community demographics all factor into how we understand growth—and how we faithfully pursue it.

Growth Is Holistic

Worship attendance matters, but it's only one part of the picture. True growth includes deepening discipleship, expanding outreach, increasing generosity, and strengthening relationships. These signs of life work together, revealing how God is forming us into a community centered on Christ's mission.

Growth Is Consistent

Healthy growth unfolds over time. One year we may grow in service, another in faith formation, another in worship participation. By looking at long-term patterns rather than short-term dips or spikes, we see how the Holy Spirit is shaping us for the future.

The Good News

God has planted us in a unique context, equipped us with gifts, and called us to build up the Body of Christ with joy and purpose. Growth isn't just about numbers—it's about living our mission boldly, offering hope, deepening discipleship, and stepping into the opportunities Christ places before us.

Let's embrace this season with gratitude and enthusiasm. Christ is at work among us—let's get to work with Him.

Deacon Korra's Reflections

Happy New Year! According to the church calendar, we begin a new church year and season, the season of Advent. Unlike the traditional calendar that has a focus on shopping and attending Christmas parties, the season of Advent is a time for slowing down. A season of preparation and anticipation that leads up to celebrating the first coming of Jesus Christ and looking forward to his second coming. The word "Advent" means "arrival" and it is observed for four weeks. I invite you to consider ways you might make space to slow down during this season. Make time for lighting a candle, reading a devotion together as a household, praying for one another, and blessing each other by making the sign of the cross on each other's foreheads. (Faith 5). If you live alone, call someone on the phone and share this practice.

Faith is formed by the power of the Holy Spirit and most often in our own homes. When you gather for family celebrations, consider how you can include faith conversations and prayer. Make space to ask others about their "God sightings". Listen. Be truly present with and for one another. When you attend worship services, keep your eyes open for people you don't know well. Introduce yourself and get to know them. Remember, children and youth *need to feel they belong before they believe*. May we continue to be a congregation that nurtures faith for all ages and stages of life by growing in our relationship with Christ and one another.



Sky Ranch Advent Retreat

DECEMBER 5TH-7TH

COME & JOIN US FOR "SHALOM"

All are invited to the mountains to pause, reflect, and prepare your heart for the coming of Christ. Join us for a weekend filled with worship, and time to grow closer to God and one another. Enjoy festive activities like Christmas cookie decorating, special crafts, games, and joyful fellowship. Let this special time at Sky Ranch help you enter the Advent season with peace, gratitude, and anticipation for the birth of our Savior.

\$125 PP-
ADULT/CHILD
4YRS AND
UNDER-FREE

CABINS &
LODGE ROOMS
AVAILABLE



Winter Solstice

"Stretching Over Scriptures Yoga"

*A time for grounding and reflection
with Christ*



Tuesday, December 16

6:00-7:00 p.m.

First Lutheran Church-Downstairs,
Room 5

- ♦ Free!
- ♦ Bring a yoga mat and water

Council Corner—November

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” Hebrews 10:24

Here are the Church Council highlights from November:

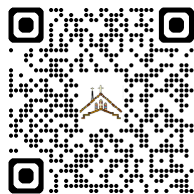
The Parish House Return to Housing Project group (David Bishton, Milenda Powers, and Herb & Vicki Hergott):

- ♦ The group shared with Council their ongoing discussions with the City and a proposed remodel plan to create two housing units for families placed there by the Our Center.
- ♦ We will have a Congregational Conversation in 2026 that focuses on the Parish House Project’s research and proposal. The congregation will vote on any decision we make about how our property should be used to forward our Mission to serve others with love and care.

The Stewardship Committee (Mary Hall, John Oppenlander, Milenda Powers, Pr. Garrett):

- ♦ Completed a letter and commitment card that was mailed out to the congregation. We ask you to plan for 2026 by submitting your commitment. This information helps us create our 2026 budget.
- ♦ There was a discussion about how to encourage one another to use our time and talents. Examples include serving on committees, participating in Sunday school/ Bible study, meeting with social groups, or assisting with worship.

If you haven't already, please mail or bring your Estimate of Giving card you received by mail to the church office, submit it electronically via the Church website at www.firstluth.org, scan this QR Code or call the office at 303-775-2800. Additional cards are available in the Narthex. Thank you.



The Budget Committee (Andrew Howell, Rick Samson, Denise McDougall & Pastor Garrett)

- ♦ Budgeting for 2026 is well underway.
- ♦ To support our mission, a draft communications job description is being developed to support future communications.

Thank you!

OUR Center, First received a letter dated 10 October, 2025 : “Your recent gift of 230 pounds of food helps more families in the St Vrain Valley receive vital resources such as food, rent, utilities, car repairs, parenting support, and more in helping them move to self-reliance. Thank you for your support of our mission—“We help people move toward self-sufficiency by unifying community resources.”

Sincerely, Elaine Klotz, Development Director, OUR Center

Ann Noble Art Gallery

Let it snow! Let it snow! Let it snow!
Our next showing will be featuring SNOW!

A big thanks to those of you that shared mountain pictures. They will be coming down the last week of October unless you have snow on your mountains, then we will leave it up for the next display that will run from December through February.

Since snow is the theme, we are asking for photos, needlework, paintings or anything depicting snow. Snow on trees, snowflakes, snowmen that you have built or snowstorms are some ideas for you. These pictures should be brought to Maria's office the last week of October so we can get them hung by the first of December.

Thanks again to the participants for our present display and we can't wait to see what we get for the next!!

Worship Committee

The Worship and Altar Care Committee are continually working a season ahead. Sandy Moore is hoping this request finds you during the Christmas Holiday season, where use of Red and Gold ribbon may abound. I would like to ask if you might be willing to part with partially used rolls of red or gold ribbon (any width) after you are finished. The Altar Care committee is already planning for décor to be utilized for Pentecost in 2026. After the Christmas holiday, if you find entire rolls of red or gold ribbon on sale, or for a great deal at a thrift store, please remember this project. You may bring the ribbon in Maria's office, c/o Sandy Moore's attention, and I'll join it together with what I already have. Thank you for helping me enrich your worship experience with décor that creates an atmosphere rich in symbolism and color.

Ryssby Candlelight Services December 13 and 14

The dates and times are as follows:

Saturday, December 13, 4:00 p.m., 5:15 p.m., 6:30 p.m. and 7:45 p.m.

Sunday, December 14, 4:00 p.m., 5:15 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

You can also make or change reservations online at www.Eventbrite.com starting Tuesday, December 18 when tickets open to the general public. Space is limited to 175 per service and space will fill up fast! If you have made a reservation that you will not be using or if you need to change a reservation, please let us know, so we can make the reservation available to others. Thank you!

Thank you!

Thank you to the volunteers who participated in leaf raking at the church and homes of church members last weekend. Al Manley, Stephanie and Dan Nieuwlandt, Sandy and Mark Moore, John Osberg, Dianne Rasmus, Tim Beaschler, Herb and Vicki Hergott, Kayla, Carmen, Beatrice Morelli, Bill, K.C., & Carter Campbell, Deacon Korra Looschen, Preston, Erik and Finn Johnson.

Thanks to all who contributed to the "Noisy Offering" last Sunday that our children collected. \$304.65 was collected to benefit a local food pantry called, "The Round Pantry". This will benefit many families in our community experiencing food insecurity.



12-20

© 2012 BJ Keane, Inc.
Dist. by King Features Synd.
www.familycircus.com

"Then the three wise men came to baby-sit Jesus so Mary and Joseph could finish Christmas shopping."

By
and
JEFF
KEANE

Little Free Pantry

A Reminder of Why the Little Free Pantry Matters

On November 10th, when First Lutheran volunteer, Erin Ross, stopped by to restock our Little Free Pantry, she found a small handwritten note taped to the door. Its simple message of gratitude was a powerful reminder of how essential this ministry is to our neighbors.

We don't often see the individuals who rely on the pantry, but messages like this remind us that it truly makes a difference. The Little Free Pantry is more than stocked shelves-it is a quiet lifeline and sign of hope for those facing difficult days.

And it exists because of you.

Your donations, prayers, and support keep this ministry going. Thank you for your ongoing generosity and for helping us care for our community in such a meaningful way.

We may never meet the woman who wrote the note, but may her gratitude inspire us. Please keep her, and all who depend on the pantry, in your prayers.

God's peace,

Holly Keenan

I often wonder where
I would be if I was in an
other state in the world in
the position I am in.
The kindness and generosity
has given me hope when
I surely had none left.
Looks can be deceiving
& I've learned to ask
for help. I've almost
died a few times out
here a female alone.
So please know how
much this means to
me & others.
Thank you

I often wonder where I would be if I was in another state in the world in the position I am in. The kindness and generosity - you have given me hope when I surely had none left. Looks can be deceiving and I've learned to ask for help. I've almost died a few times out here a female alone so please know how much this means to me and others. Thank you.

Enduring Gifts Endowment Fund Committee Sept & Nov 2025

Administrative

- ◆ We have begun coordination of messaging and scheduling with the Stewardship committee.
- ◆ Determined that a standard request form and process is needed for grant proposals.
- ◆ Assigned a task to develop and then review a grant form.

Financial

Reviewed 3rd Qtr 2025 Thrivent statements and balances, per each of our three investment selections:

- ◆ 54% in Thrivent Income Fund
- ◆ 30% in Thrivent Charitable Impact Fund
- ◆ 16% in Thrivent Moderately Aggressive Allocation Fund
- ◆ Total FELC Endowment holdings at end of period: \$274,776
- ◆ Fund allocations are consistent with the committee's Thrivent survey responses regarding investment strategies.
- ◆ Ongoing statements are posted in the church's shared Endowment Google Drive, and available upon request.

Grants

We began initial discussion to explore a potential new grant request for mission work.

Communications

- ◆ Near final version of updated Enduring Gifts brochure was reviewed. Expect printing and distribution to begin in January.
- ◆ Postponing until 1st quarter 2026: Thrivent guided congregational workshop(s) regarding charitable giving and financial planning.

New Business

- ◆ The committee continues discussions on the importance of awareness and guidance that we can provide for any level of legacy gifting toward Christian community heritage.
- ◆ Gathered online information of how other churches manage and communicate their endowment programs.

- ◆ In 2026, Plan to review and compare others' programs for FELC knowledge.

Alternative Giving Fair

Three weeks until the Alternative Giving Fair in the Friendship Center on **Saturday, December 6 after the worship service and Sunday December 7 from 9 - 11:30a.m.**

We have some very talented and creative members who generously donate all types of gift ideas that are sold to raise money for ELCA World Hunger. If you are planning on preparing something, tags are now available in the narthex. **Donated items will be accepted in the Church Conference Room, Saturday Dec 6 from 9-11am.** Please contact Stephanie Nieuwlandt at nieuwlandt33@msn.com or 303.774.9383 with any questions or to volunteer for this event. Thank you for your contributions to support World Hunger Relief!

Children's Christmas Program and Santa Lucia

Children's Christmas Program and Santa Lucia Festival, Sunday, December 21 - Join us for a special worship service! At the annual Santa Lucia Festival the youth of First Lutheran will tell the story of Santa Lucia followed by the Sunday School Children's Program coming to you "Live from Bethlehem!" The FLW will be hosting a reception in the Big Room with Swedish treats after the service.



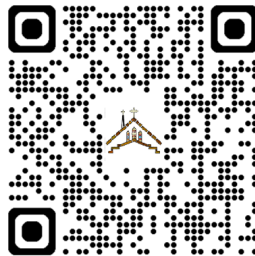
Children's
Christmas Program

Financial Update for September 2025

	September Month-To-Date			September Year-To-Date		
	Actual	Budget	Variance Fav/(Unfav)	Actual	Budget	Variance Fav/(Unfav)
Income	46,040.72	53,995.40	(7,954.68)	534,426.08	553,727.72	(19,301.64)
Expenses	66,207.88	72,008.25	5,800.37	571,893.44	593,707.34	21,813.90
Net Income/(Loss):	(20,167.16)	(18,012.85)	(2,154.31)	(37,467.36)	(39,979.62)	2,512.26

Giving Options

Giving Online is available on our website! Giving online allows you to make one-time or recurring offering contributions with a Credit or Debit Card or ACH bank transfer through Breeze ChMS (our church management system) who partners with Stripe for secure financial services. As with any electronic transaction, our church pays a small transaction fee to process the online payments. If you choose, you may cover that fee for the church at the same time you give which increases your contribution.



<https://firstluth.breezechms.com/give/online>

Thrivent Choice Dollars – Eligible clients with Thrivent membership can recommend where Thrivent distributes some of its charitable grant funds. These recommendations are shared by directing Choice Dollars to enrolled nonprofit organizations, including churches.

Thrivent Action Grants – Thrivent Action Grants are financial awards designed to empower individuals and groups to initiate small-scale projects that benefit their communities. Sponsored by Thrivent Financial, these grants provide **up to \$250** to help kickstart service projects addressing various social needs, such as feeding the hungry, supporting education, or enhancing community facilities

King Soopers Community Rewards – This program makes fundraising easy by donating to local organizations based on the shopping you do every day. Once you link your King Soopers Rewards Card to an organization, all you have to do is shop at King Soopers and swipe your Shopper's Card.

Safeway Community Giving Card Program returns 5% of amounts loaded on reloadable grocery gift cards provided to First Lutheran after we meet minimum thresholds. Simply load your gift card at the grocery store, shop for groceries at Albertsons or Safeway using the gift card and reload the card when it gets low. Every time you reload the gift card, we get closer to earning 5% cashback. See Maria in the office to pick up a reloadable gift card that is linked to First Lutheran.

Please contact the office at (303) 776-2800 if you would like more information about any of these ways of sharing your generosity!

December Calendar 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1		2 9:00 a.m. – Brass Angels Bell Choir 1:00 p.m.– Staff Meeting	3 11:00 a.m. – Senior Advent Service and Luncheon 9:00 a.m. – LWR Sewing Group 11:00 a.m.– Touch of Craft	4 10:30 a.m. – Adult Bible Study 7:00 p.m. – Chancel Choir Rehearsal	5 9:30 a.m.– Prayer Shawl Group	6 5:30 p.m.– Worship Service
7 Homebound Communion 9:30 a.m.– Worship Service 10:45 a.m. – Sunday School Hour	8	9 9:00 a.m. – Brass Angels Bell Choir 1:00 p.m.– Staff Meeting 6:00 p.m. – Council Meeting	10	11 10:30 a.m. – Adult Bible Study 7:00 p.m. – Chancel Choir Rehearsal	12	13 5:30 p.m.– Worship Service 4:00, 5:15, 6:30, 7:45 p.m.– Ryssby Services
14 8:30 a.m. – FLW Meeting 9:30 a.m.– Worship Service 10:45 a.m. – Sunday School Hour 4:00, 5:15, 6:30 p.m. – Ryssby Services	15	16 9:00 a.m. – Brass Angels Bell Choir 1:00 p.m.– Staff Meeting 6:00 p.m. – Winter Solstice Yoga	17 10:00 a.m. Seasoned Saints 1:00 p.m. – LWR Sewing Group	18 10:30 a.m. – Adult Bible Study 7:00 p.m. – Chancel Choir Rehearsal	19	20 5:30 p.m.– Worship Service
21 9:30 a.m.– Worship Service 10:45 a.m. – Sunday School Hour	22	23 9:00 a.m. – Brass Angels Bell Choir 1:00 p.m.– Staff Meeting	24 CHRISTMAS EVE 4:00, 5:30, 11:00 p.m. - Candlelight Services.	25 CHRISTMAS 6:30 a.m. – Julotta	26 CHURCH CLOSED	27 5:30 p.m.– Worship Service
28 9:30 a.m.– Worship Service 10:45 a.m. – Sunday School Hour 11:45 a.m. – Confirmation Class at FLC	29	30 9:00 a.m. – Brass Angels Bell Choir 1:00 p.m.– Staff Meeting	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE	NEW YEAR'S DAY CHURCH CLOSED		



Elise Eidsness	December 01	J.T. Sears	December 15
Betsy Winn	December 01	Marilyn Williams	December 15
Matt Hergott	December 02	Kathleen Campbell	December 16
Colin Haley	December 03	Andres Puky	December 16
Karen Gralewski	December 04	Cory Wolff	December 16
Noah Bassoff	December 05	Cyndi Johnson	December 17
Anders Denniston	December 05	Wesley Henry	December 18
Linda Fildes	December 05	Carol Leslie	December 18
Zeke Haley	December 05	Matthew Winn	December 19
Dan Slupik	December 06	Kevin Berg	December 20
Jayne Wilson	December 07	Claire Watson	December 21
Carson Palmer	December 08	Joyce Crozier	December 23
Majkin Palmer	December 08	Cathy Dillon	December 23
Nancy Dahlgren	December 09	Marilyn Treharne	December 23
Ayvin Eidsness	December 10	David Boettcher	December 24
Tyler Beckmann	December 11	Abby Carter	December 24
Leslie Dreyer	December 11	Todd Grivetti	December 25
Anne Cookson	December 12	Brian Watson	December 25
Jakie Hammarstrom	December 12	Sandy Salyards	December 26
Dean Larson	December 12	Eli Brast	December 27
Harper Miracle	December 12	Chris Douse	December 28
Alan Sterns	December 12	Sally Douse	December 28
Marcus Johnson	December 13	Carol McGill	December 29
Patricia Satur	December 13	Judy Wittmann	December 29
Trent Tadewald	December 13	DJ Christian	December 31
Michael Bell	December 15	Mark Maxner	December 31

First Evangelical Lutheran Church
Third Avenue and Terry Street
PO Box 327
Longmont, Colorado 80502-0327

