

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

408 Ninth Street NW
Mandan, ND 58554

Phone: 701-663-3594
E-mail: jackie@firstlutheranofmandan.org

Building Faith and
Transforming Lives
in Christ.

www.firstlutheranofmandan.org
We're on the web!



ADDRESS LABEL

Christmas Eve
Services

2:00 P.M.

4:00 P.M.

Merry Christmas!

Please Note: We will have ONE Worship
Service on Sunday, December 21st & 28th at
10:00 a.m. & NO Worship Service on
Wednesday, December 31st

First Lutheran Church
December Newsletter

December 2025

First Lutheran
Staff

Pastor
Rev. Phil Leer
663-3594
701-341-7784

Pastor
Rev. Adam Barden
663-3594

Parish Administrator
Jackie Klein
663-3594

Financial Administration
Curtis Peterson

Worship Accompanists
8:30
10:45
6:30 (Wed.) Kathy Brandvold

Bell Choir Director
Cathy Long

**First Lutheran Is A Mission
Partner with Camp of the
Cross Ministries**



Friends in Christ,

I wrote the following essay for our December 2019 church newsletter while I was a pastor in my former parish, which was in Harvey. As some of you know, I helped as a volunteer girls and boys cross-country coach for about five years there before I took the call to First Lutheran, and I just loved working with those kids. I was never in track or cross country when I was younger, so it was a brand-new experience for me; what I lacked in “technical” running and training knowledge, I made up for in unbridled enthusiasm for those kids—both in our practices and in their races. I put A LOT of miles on my bicycle as I rode with them on their practice runs! Here’s an indelible memory from one of those races. Thanks for allowing me to share it with you.

Midway through our HWC Cross Country season this fall, we had a Saturday meet at the beautiful Grahams Island Recreation Area, south and west of Devils Lake. I accompanied the kids there by myself that day, since our head coach had a conflict, and as always, I got a very good workout chasing the kids around the 3.1-mile course for their various races and cheering them on like a madman. *Out of the way, Ethel! Here come our runners!* But, aside from *not* running the imaginary Ethel over like a reindeer clomping over an unsuspecting star, one memory in particular from that day will always stick out for me...

About a quarter of a mile from the finish of the girls’ varsity race, I was positioned at a handy “cheering juncture” waiting for one of our girls (Nicole) to round the bend. As she came near to where I was crouched, I noticed something curious: she and another girl were running in tandem; and *talking!* Now, one of my cross-country rules of thumb goes like this: If you can carry on a conversation with someone during a race, *you are not running fast enough!* If you want to have conversations with other kids in a sporting event, join baseball or softball, for heaven’s sake. You shouldn’t even be able to mutter a feeble “Hello” during a cross country race—because you should be working way too hard for that to happen! So, *what were these two girls thinking?!?*

I still recall what I was thinking: *get going, Nicole...NOW!* So, I yelled something to Nicole about “pushing it” to the finish up ahead, then bolted there myself (without running Ethel over), positioning myself on one side of the flag-adorned “finishing chute” that kids barrel through at the end of each race. Our two girls soon appeared thereafter, still running in tandem and poised to make their final dash to the finish line. And you’ll never guess what they were doing (besides running): *talking, AGAIN!*

(Continued on page 9)

ANGEL TREE NAMES

The gifts have to be delivered to the church no later than Sunday, December 14th, 2025. They are also wanting chapstick, hats, mittens, scarfs, & non-perishable food items (canned goods with "pop top" lids) by the tree to give to the children. If you have any questions please call Linda at 426-2462.



In order for your contributions to be posted to 2025, contributions must be received in the church office by **Friday, December 26th, 2025.** Our mailing address is: 408 9th St. NW, Mandan, ND 58554.

If you bring your contribution to the church office anytime after December 26th, it cannot be recorded in 2025.

Thank you for the many ways you contribute to the ministries of this congregation. When you share the gifts that God has entrusted you, you are growing in your relationship with Him and ministry continues. It's with great joy that we can look forward to where God might be leading us in the present and in the future.



38 "Thankfulness Baskets" for our homebound, assisted living, and nursing home residents were assembled and delivered beginning Sunday, November 16, 2025. A special "Thank You" to Dave & Eunice Wolf, the Friendship Circle, Carlee Alderin, Pastor Adam, Britany Barden, Lee Dire, Aubrey Doll, Dennis Hambrick, Kendra Harrington, Jeanne House, David Leer, Pastor Phil, Gail Mayer, Carol Nitschke, Corby Rachel, Joyce Sayler, Jody Schmidt, Drake Schoellkopf, Jan Stenmoen, Jean Thompson, Church School and Confirmation students, Lori Meyers, and all who provided items for the baskets, which assisted in this amazing outreach opportunity.



Thank you to Adam Klein Chapter 3 Disabled American Veterans for the generous donation to LAF & serving LAF on Thursday, November 20th. It was greatly appreciated!

BUILDING MANAGEMENT REPORT

Retaining wall and parking lot project report:

Team members Tim Schwagler, Lanny Harris, Gregg Grube, Tim Faller, Kenton Holle.

The team hired Braun Intertec Corp. to evaluate the condition of the wall blocks, the walls and the pavement.

The team met with Braun Intertec to discuss their findings.

The primary findings is that for a 30 year old wall everything is in an acceptable condition and no immediate action is required.

The report shows;

*the wall has settled several inches on the west end. “Eventually “ settling could cause the block to no longer be locked together and the wall could fall down. No indication of that happening soon.

* the lower wall does show that it is leaning out past level. Some places showing as much as 2” past level. Other places the wall is no longer leaning back against the hill but has moved out to the point of being level. Tim Schwagler has identified several places on the wall and has taken measurements and will monitor to record what outward movement the wall is doing.

* In some places on the lower wall the bottom 1-3 rows of blocks are deteriorating. There are areas of the wall that have a white covering, this is from water seeping through the blocks. This will primarily affect the corners of the blocks causing them to deteriorate.

* Many of the caps on the tops of the walls are broken dislodged or missing. Loss caps on the walls could be a potential fall hazard if someone would walk on the wall.

* Concrete slabs by the east steps have slide are cracked. Many areas of concrete sidewalk have cracked and are uneven.

* The parking lot does have cracks but does not show any sub-grade failure. Continue regular maintenance should extend it’s use.

* The final review shows a 30 year old wall that is in good condition with no immediate work required. However some mitigation should be considered with in the next 5 years.

Braun Intertec gave us a \$5000.00 estimate for the work we wanted done. \$3,500.00 of that estimate has been billed, we will use the remains amount to have Braun give us an estimate and solution for the future. That information will be ready for us in time to report at the church’s annual meeting.

December Youth Page

Mark Your Calendar...



- 4th: LAF ~ Nachos
- 11th: LAF ~ Hot Dogs
- 18th: LAF ~ Sloppy Joes
- 25th: No LAF

Upcoming Events



You are invited to join us on December 14th at 10:45 AM & December 17th at 6:30 PM for a Christmas Program.

Every child will receive a goodie bag as they leave. A cart will be in the Narthex.

Peanut-free bags are available on request.



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<h3>Pastoral Acts</h3> <p><u>Baptisms:</u> Koahen Calvin Rodger Kohler Taylee Journey Thompson Cayden Lee Stein</p> <p><u>Funerals:</u> Chad Friesz Emily Barnhart</p>			
<h3>Memorial Fund</h3> <p>In memory of Chad Friesz given for LAF.</p> <p>In memory of Greg Schlosser given by Jerry & Glynda Janz.</p>		<div>Deadline for articles for the January Newsletter will be December18th.</div>	
<h3>December ~ Mission of the Month</h3> <p>No Mission of the Month this month due to the giving for the Christmas Angel Tree!</p>		<h3>Worship Schedule</h3> <p>Sunday ~ 8:30 am ~ Traditional Worship 9:45 am ~ Church School 10:45 am ~ Contemporary Worship</p> <p>Wednesday ~ 5:45 pm ~ Church School 6:30 pm ~ Worship 7:30 pm ~ Confirmation</p>	
<h3>Special Thanks</h3> <p>Thank you to all the greeters, ushers, communion servers, readers, communion set-up, coffee hour workers, and to all who have supplied goodies for the last month. Your help is greatly appreciated!</p>			

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<p>You see, unbeknownst to me, the two girls (they had never met before) had begun hatching a plan somewhere earlier along the route and that last bit of conversation was the signal that the final piece of the plan would now commence: <i>In a split-second they clasped hands(!), faces bursting in exhausted relief, and sprinted like giggly gazelles towards the finish.</i> One of our parents captured this kingdom-of-heaven-come-down-to-earth scene with her camera and the picture positively <i>explodes</i> with the kind of joy you just can’t possibly cook up and only comes as unbidden gift. They both ended up finishing the race at exactly the same time.</p> <p>Um....hey, girls, Race Rule #1: <i>No talking!</i> Race Rule #2: <i>No hand-holding and finishing the race at the same time--this, after all, is a competition!!</i> Apparently, there was a larger narrative being written in that particular race that day by those two girls that transcended their competitive natures, and maybe not-so-apparently there was also a divine narrator more concerned with sprinkling the sugar plumbs of sweet joy upon an unsuspecting world (Ethel, me, and all who witnessed the scene) than he was with which of the girls was going to beat out the other girl.</p> <p>Now, it’s tempting to want to do too much with what happened that day, especially if you are a preacher! But maybe the best I or anyone can do with that explosively beautiful and unexpected scene is just let it preach without cluttering it up too much with a clanging cacophony of words, allowing it to remind us that at the deep, holy and hidden heart of <i>all</i> things, joy, not madness, lies; light, not darkness; hope, not despair. Oh, and of course: Jesus, the <i>joy-drenched, word-become-flesh dwelling among us even in sweat-drenched cross-country races.</i></p> <p>Whatever else I saw on the faces of those two girls that day, I saw the spectacular, luminous face of God. And the impossible-to-contain-or-restrain joy of God. The joy of a God who for some crazy reason hatched up a plan to <i>become</i> a little human baby once upon a time, and for some crazier reason still, will never stop smiling upon you and me and upon this whole mad, bad, broken and sad world he so desperately loves and would do anything for (even die).</p> <p>“<i>Hey,</i>” God says once again to all of us as we enter this mysteriously exquisite and hopeful journey of Advent, <i>give me your hand...I want to show you what happens at the finish line of this life—your life, everyone’s life. Even the life of time as we understand it this side of eternity. But, have no fear: it’s good, it’s all very good. Because when that time comes, we’re all going to cross over together. Hand in hand. All your hands in mine. In the meantime, pass the eggnog and let me tell you a story about a feeding trough that I slept in one star-scattered evening....</i>”</p> <p>Grace, peace and Advent joy,</p> <p>Pastor Phil</p>		

If you are not using your offering envelopes please call the church office and let us know so we can save money on sending them out! The church office number is 663-3594. Thank you!



Gingerbread Truffles

- 1 16-ounce box ginger snaps
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 12 oz. white chocolate, chopped
- Holiday sprinkles, for decorating



Directions:

Pulse the ginger snaps in a food processor until fine crumbs form. Add the cream cheese and vanilla and continue to pulse until combined. Scrape into a bowl and refrigerate until firm, about 30 minutes.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Roll the mixture into 1-inch truffles and arrange on the baking sheet. Refrigerate until firm, about 30 minutes.

Put the white chocolate in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave at 50 percent power in 30-second intervals, stirring after each, until melted.

Dip the truffles into the melted chocolate to coat evenly and lift out with a fork. Gently tap off the excess chocolate and return to the baking sheet; decorate with sprinkles while the chocolate is still wet. Repeat with the remaining truffles. Refrigerate until set, at least 30 minutes.

First Lutheran Church Council Minutes

Date: November 20th, 2025

Members Present: President Brenda Allan, Veronica Barnick, Travis Schmidt, Tim Faller, Desiree Reile, Kristy Mindt, Greg Grube, Pastor Phil, Pastor Adam

Members Absent: Kenton Holle

Additional Present: Jackie Klein, Curtis Peterson, Mission Trip kids, Stacey Aune, Jamie Doll, Jodi Hammer, Janine Wetzel, Muriel Soule, Jen Harrington

Some of the Mission Trip kids, along with their parents, came to discuss the Mission Trip.

Meeting was called to order by President Brenda Allan

- Motion to approve the agenda was made by TIm. Kristy seconded. Approved.
- Motion to approve the October minutes was made by Travis and seconded by Tim. Approved.

Correspondence:

- Mandan Golden Age Club Thank You for home delivered meals

Devotion: Pastor Phil - How is your soul? The soul is the deepest part of us. Regardless of what is happening to us, it is well with our soul. Julian of Norwich said, "All shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."

Pastor Phil's Report: 2 funerals, 1 burial, 1 prayer service, no weddings and 2 baptisms. Confirmation on Oct 26th. Sunset Nursing Home service with Pastor Adam, regular hospital calls shared with Pastor Adam, some nursing home/care center calls. Senior choir practices and one performance. Leading confirmation large group gatherings with Pastor Adam. LAF gatherings. Spoke at Buehler Larson "Remembrance" service. Attended Boundaries Training Workshop. Praise Team reorganizational meeting after Jakub's termination. Attended Emily's Donor Walk. Participated in Trunk or Treat. "Longest Night" service will be at Faith Lutheran Church Dec 21st at 4pm. Community Thanksgiving service at Church of the Cross in Bismarck will be next Tuesday Nov 25th at 7pm. Pie will be served. The choir Christmas Cantata is Dec 21st at 10am.

Pastor Adam's Report: He and Britany got moved into our townhome on Oct 17. Thanks to those who assisted us that day. Still trying to find homes for our belongings. Wed church school students sang in church; He and Britney participated in Trunk or Treat. Two Memorial services, Participated in Praise Team with the next worship service on Dec 7. Helped with the No School Fun Day at Good Shepherd. Will be meeting with Joyce, Gail and Lori to discuss homebound member visitation. Looking at doing Holden Evening Prayer for advent Wed services. Traveling to Des Moines on Dec 28th to celebrate Christmas with Britany's family and will be back by New Years Day. Will celebrate our First Wedding Anniversary Dec 30. Planning a youth mock-in here at the church on January 30, 6-10 pm for 6-12th graders. Also, starting in January, Pastor Phil and Pastor Adam will be providing a worship service at Maple View the 3rd Tuesdays of each month.

Financial Report: Financial Report by Curtis Peterson.

- A motion was made to approve the October financial report as presented was made by Tim. It was seconded by Greg. Motion carries.
- Dakota Community bank has a community credit card and we can apply for it and we would be able to get the number of credit cards that we need.
- Curtis will get a rough draft to us before next month's meeting so it can be discussed/ finalized at the December meeting.

Jackie’s Report:

- Wreaths will be coming Mon Nov 24th. Poinsettias will be coming on Mon Dec 8th.
- Kristy made a motion that if overtime is unavoidable, overtime would be approved for 15 hours a month. Anything over that amount of time will need to be approved by the executive team. Tim seconded. Motion approved.
- Jackie will take the mission trip kids shopping for their Angel Tree names on Sat Nov 29th and then come back to the church to wrap them.
- Dec 16th 8am-1pm there will be a police officer training in the basement
- The HIT cleaning crew loves the new scrubber. It has made it so much easier to keep the floor clean.
- LAF numbers have been increasing. It is great to see. Disable American Veterans came today to volunteer and gave a generous donation. They would like to come more than twice a year.

Team Reports:

- Executive Team: All items covered in the agenda
- Worship Team: Dec 21st and Dec 28th we will have one worship service at 10am. Christmas Eve Services will be at 2:00pm and 4:00 pm. No Wed service Dec 31st
- Evangelism & Outreach: Trunk or Treat was a success once again
- Property Management: See Old Business for updates. • Stewardship: A reminder has been put in the bulletin and newsletter about our council openings and other ways to contribute to the mission of the church
- Youth & Parish Education: Christmas programs on Sun Dec 14th at 10:45 and Wed Dec 17th at 6:30

Old Business: Property Project – Team members Tim Schwagler, Lanny Harris, Greg Grube, Tim Faller, Kenton Holle. The team hired Braun Intertec Corp. to evaluate the condition of the wall blocks, the walls, and the pavement. The team met with Braun Intertec to discuss their findings. The primary findings is that for a 30-year-old wall everything is in acceptable condition, and no immediate action is required. The report shows; The wall has settled several inches on the west end. “Eventually settling could cause the block to no longer be locked together and the wall could fall. No indication of that happening soon. The lower wall does show that it is leaning out past level. Some places show as much as 2” past level. Other places the wall is no longer leaning back against the hill but has moved out to the point of being level. Tim Schwagler identified several places on the wall and has taken measurements and will monitor to record what outward movement the wall is doing. In some places on the lower wall, the bottom 1-3 rows of blocks are deteriorating. There are areas of the wall that have a white covering. This is from water seeping through the blocks. This will primarily affect the corners of the blocks, causing them to deteriorate. Many of the caps on the tops of the walls are broken, dislodged, or missing. Loss caps on the walls could be a potential fall hazard if someone would walk on the wall. Concrete slabs by the east steps have slides that are cracked. Many areas of concrete sidewalks have cracked and are uneven. The parking lot does have cracks but does not show any sub-grade failure. Continuing regular maintenance should extend its use. The final review shows a 30-year old wall that is in good condition with no immediate work required. However, some mitigation should be considered within the next 5 years. Braun Intertec gave us a \$5000.00 estimate for the work we wanted done. \$3,500.00 of that estimate has been billed; we will use the remaining amount to have Braun give us an estimate and solution for the future. That information will be ready for us in time to report at the church’s annual meeting.

- West sidewalk – Brenda emailed the city to see what they found when they evaluated 4th street by the church. She received no response.
- East gutters on the corner– Travis cleaned them out. There was a lot packed in there. We should think about getting the gutter screens so that this doesn’t keep happening. The tree also needs to be trimmed, so the branches don’t keep hitting the gutters.
- Missouri Slope relationship – keeping open communication.
- Confirmation photos – Brenda plans to work on this after the new year
- Church School task force – meeting will happen after the new year
- Mission Trip Leader – Pastor Adam is going to take this on
- 2026 Budget – Curtis is working on this
- The floor scrubber has been delivered and is in use. Steins has a maintenance agreement. They will come 4 times a year with a \$70 charge per visit. This would be a good idea so that it can stay in good working order. Kristy motions to sign the maintenance agreement. Greg seconded. No one opposed. Motion carries.

New Business:

- Dec 21st and Dec 28th we will have one worship service at 10am. Christmas Eve Services will be at 2:00pm and 4:00 pm. No Wed service Dec 31st
- The church received a letter from the Western Synod inviting us to prayerfully consider our 2026 Mission support. We will consider this when making the budget for 2026. We currently give 5% to all missions and 63% of this 5% goes to the Synod.
- Chairs do need to be purchased. We probably should not wait. We don’t have enough when we have bigger events downstairs. Our last quotes were from summer and fall of 2024.

Next Meeting: December 18th, 2025

Lord’s Prayer

Meeting Adjournment A motion was made to adjourn by Kristy. Seconded by Greg. Meeting Adjourned.

October	Oct-25	YTD	2025	Percentage
FINANCIAL GIFTS	2025	2025	ANNUAL	2025
	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	BUDGET	%
Total Receipts	52,955.22	478,032.96	634,158.69	75.38%
Total Disbursements	50,619.17	423,754.87	634,158.69	66.82%
Receipts Over or (Under)				
Disbursement	2,336.05	54,278.09		
BUDGET 2025				
ACTUAL INCOME vs. BUDGET				
	Received	Weekly	Difference	
October 5, 2025	8,516.02	12,195.36	(3,679.34)	
October 12, 2025	17,489.30	12,195.36	5,293.94	
October 19, 2025	6,291.83	12,195.36	(5,903.53)	
October 26, 2025	19,929.02	12,195.36	7,733.66	
Interest Earned on Checking	\$ 729.05			
	52,955.22	48,781.44	4,173.78	
BUDGET 2025				
DEBT RETIREMENT				
BUILDING FUND	Received	Weekly	Difference	
October 5, 2025	848.55	1,153.85	(305.30)	
October 12, 2025	2,897.08	1,153.85	1,743.23	
October 19, 2025	1,117.58	1,153.85	(36.27)	
October 26, 2025	1,063.59	1,153.85	(90.26)	
	5,926.80	4,615.40	1,311.40	
IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE FOR OCTOBER 2025		ATTENDANCE FOR OCTOBER 2024		
October 1, 2025	74	October 2, 2024	64	
October 5, 2025	277	October 6, 2024	186	
October 8, 2025	113	October 9, 2024	83	
October 12, 2025	192	October 13, 2024	181	
October 15, 2025	48	October 16, 2024	49	
October 19, 2025	169	October 20, 2024	182	
October 22, 2025	82	October 23, 2024	93	
October 26, 2025	312	October 27, 2024	464	
October 29, 2025	153	October 30, 2024	86	
Total Attendance for Month		1,420	1,388	