

The Lantern - February 2026

First English Lutheran Church, ELCA



"Sharing the Light of Christ"



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

STAFF AND CHURCH COUNCIL

Pastor: Reverend Mary E. Zupansic

pastor@firstenglishlutheranwausau.org

Parish Administrator: Debra Kluetz

parishadmin@firstenglishlutheranwausau.org

Minister of Music: Daniel Larson

Pianist: Hal Osborn

Custodians: Shawn & Jenny Blaschka

Sunday School Superintendent: VerJean Detert

Church Council:

Officers:

President: Cindy Hermel

President-Elect: Mike Vaningan

Past President: Sherry Larson

Treasurer: Marla Zumann

Recording Secretary: Karen Czechowicz

Council Members:

Carla Baumgardt

Russ Michalski

Jenny Blaschka

Kalynn Pempek

Angela Greenfield

Dina Santangelo

Neil Juedes

Lois Stasko

Michael Klapperich

Nicholas Schumacher (Youth Rep)

Your comments, questions and concerns are important to us. Feel free to talk to any member of our staff or Church Council.

Pastor's Reflections

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Blow the trumpet in Zion;

sound the alarm on my holy mountain!

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for

the day of the Lord is coming, it is near -

a day of darkness and gloom,

a day of clouds and thick darkness!

Yet even now, says the Lord,

return to me with all your heart,

With fasting, with weeping, and

with mourning. (Joel 2:1-2, 12)

The days of Lent, especially Ash Wednesday, invite us into a time when we come face to face with our mortality. A time when we come to know at a very deep level that dying is part of life. The church stands contrary to society and culture in that it chooses not to ignore this reality. Society prefers the dying to be closed away in separated hospital wards. Talk of death and dying are rarely topics of discussion even when they become reality for friends or loved ones.

The church boldly declares once every year that there is no avoiding death. And yet at the same time provides a means to understand death as people in Christ. Ashes, the sign of death, are put on the forehead not in some random pattern but in the shape of a cross. A reminder that yes, you will die. But you can die in Christ, whose death transforms your own death.

The placing of ashes has been a ritual and tradition in the Church for centuries. Many denominations impose ashes on ASH Wednesday (made from the palm branches from the previous year's Palm/Passion Sunday service) as a reminder that we will all return to dust...but that the final sting of death will not touch us under the cross of Christ.

"Remember, O mortal, that you are dust; and to dust you shall return." (Gen. 3:19).

**God's Peace,
Pastor Mary**



February 1: 4th Sunday after Epiphany

Worship at 9:00 a.m.

February 8: 5th Sunday after Epiphany

Worship at 9:00 a.m.

February 15: Transfiguration of Our Lord

Worship at 9:00 a.m.

February 22: 1st Sunday in Lent

Worship at 9:00 a.m.

Thursday Night Worship:

February 5 and 12

in the sanctuary – 6:00 p.m.

Note: After Feb. 12, there will be no Thursday worship services during the Season of Lent.

The Season of Lent 2026



Ash Wednesday

Brief Spoken Worship Service with scripture and the Imposition of Ashes
Wednesday, February 18, 12Noon. Soup to follow the service.

Traditional Worship Service with Holy Communion and the Imposition of Ashes
Wednesday, February 18, 2026 - 6:00 p.m.
5:00 p.m. Chili Supper provided by FELC Youth.

LENTEN MID-WEEK PRAYER

“Baptismal Promises”

**February 25 & March 4, 11, 18, 25
12:15 p.m.**

You have made public profession of your faith.
Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

*to live among God’s faithful people,
to hear the word of God and share in the
Lord’s supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ
through word and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of
Jesus,
and to strive for justice and peace in all the
earth?*

Each week we will consider one of the baptismal promises and how we live them out in our everyday lives.

SOUP & HEARTY BREADS

Following the 12:15 worship service, enjoy soup and hearty breads, accompanied by a variety of desserts.

LENTEN SOUP LUNCHES...

There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex for those who would be willing to provide a simple lunch of soup, bread and sweets.
ALSO – to get some idea of how many people to prepare for each week, there are sheets in the narthex for you to indicate if you will be attending.

LENTEN DAILY DEVOTION BOOKS

will be available prior to the start of Lent.

Love Outpoured focuses on portions of the apostle Paul's letter to



the Romans. In words that continue to speak to us today, Paul lays out foundational beliefs for a life of faith in Christian community.

With diverse voices and pastoral wisdom, the daily devotions encompass Ash Wednesday through the Resurrection of Our Lord / Vigil of Easter.

CROSS GENERATION FAITH FORMATION

Join us on Sunday, February 15, immediately following the 9:00am worship service for a special Cross Generation Faith Formation event. This gathering is designed to bring together individuals of all ages, providing a chance to grow in faith as a community.



Event Focus: Baptism

Our time together will center on the topic of Baptism. We will explore several key questions:

- What is Baptism?
- What are the Baptismal promises?
- How do we live out our Baptismal identity?
- How does Baptism unite us?

Activities and Discussion

Everyone will have the opportunity to participate in hands-on activities and group discussions. These activities are designed to engage people of all ages and help deepen our understanding of Baptism and its impact on our faith community.

First English Mission Statement

*Our mission is to grow in faith,
serve our neighbors, and
support one another.*



PARISH RECORDS...December 2025

* Transfers:

Sharon Carlsson to Messiah Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Madison.

Reese Aarthun to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Wausau (ELCA)



**Tuesday, February 3,
6:30 p.m.** We'll
gather in Fellowship
Hall.



8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
(closed for lunch: Noon – 1:00 p.m.)

Deadlines:

Bulletin: Wednesday afternoon
Next deadline for the March Lantern: Feb. 16.

AFTER WORSHIP COFFEE HOURS

Check out the new sign-up sheet in the narthex if you would like to provide after-worship treats on Sundays.

We extend our worship experience by staying after worship to share some fellowship with each other, especially with a treat! You don't have to provide fancy treats are just fine, and there is always someone around to help with making coffee! Thanks!



For God so loVed the world
thAt He gave His
onLy
begottEn
SoN,
thaT whoever
belIeves
iN Him should not perish
but havE everlasting life.
(John 3:16, NKJV)

ELCA WOMEN

Charity Circle...

will not meet in February.

Shalom Circle...

will meet on Thursday, **Feb. 19, 6:45 p.m.** in the Fireside Room.



FIRESIDE BOOK CLUB

The next book for Fireside Book Club is *The Flag, the Cross, and the Station Wagon* by Bill McKibben. We will discuss it on February 10 and 24. We meet at 11:00 A.M. Talk to a book club member for more details. New members are always welcome!



THE 2026 FLOWER CHART

is on the bulletin board in the narthex. If you want to provide flowers for our Sunday worship in memory of a loved one or a special occasion, you may sign up on your desired date.

On Sunday **Feb. 1**, the Sunday *before* the Annual Meeting, there will be a meeting to review and discuss the 2026 Budget of First English. The meeting will be in the Fireside Room following worship (around 10:15). Copies of the budget will be available in the narthex and church office a week or two before the meeting.



THE ANNUAL MEETING OF FIRST ENGLISH LUTHERAN CHURCH...

will be held on **Sunday, February 8, 2026**, beginning at 10:15 a.m. in the sanctuary.



Members, please mark this date on your calendars. Your support and participation in the ministry of your congregation in the new year 2026 is greatly appreciated.

CHURCH IN SOCIETY

Community Suppers

We are again committed to 5 Sunday afternoon suppers for 2026.

If you are willing to plan one of the meals, please sign up in the narthex as soon as possible. Our first date is February 15.

We also serve on the 3rd Sunday in April, June, October and December.

COMMUNION CARDS

First English members:

For our recording keeping purposes, please fill out a communion card **once per calendar year**. Thank you!



TREASURE SALE NEWS...

Treasure Sale 2026 will be held June 11, 12, & 13.

Once again -- **PLEASE do not bring microwaves, broken furniture or housewares (we have recently received a lot of**



these). If we receive a microwave, we won't sell it and it is then our expense to take it to recycling. We will not sell damaged items, and we end up throwing them away.

We accept clean clothes for all ages, housewares, collectibles, books, linens, DVDs, CDs, and more...all in good condition. If you donate linens, please mark them with what size they are. This is very helpful.

We also accept small appliances in working condition, and furniture.

Your donations can be brought downstairs in the hallway by the Sunday School rooms. There is a sign on the door.

Thank you so much for your donations!

LET US REMEMBER...

those in our congregation who are confined to their homes or are in nursing home or assisted living facilities due to illness, rehab/therapy, or are just unable to attend worship or fellowship activities. They would love and appreciate hearing from their church family with a card, visit, note or phone call.

Cady Home

1805 N. 6th Ave., Wausau WI 54401

- Michelle Detert Room 4

Crossroads Care Center

717 E. Alfred St., Weyauwega, WI 54983

- Rick Petzke

Mountain Terrace Senior Living

3402 Terrace Ct. Wausau WI 54401

- Diane Zuelke Room 133

Primrose Retirement Community

2100 Townline Rd. Wausau WI 54403

- Kathie Peterson Room 228

Rennes Health and Rehab

4602 Barbican Ave. Weston, WI 54476

- Sue McKee #235

- Dennis & Laurayne Nicoliasen #121

Rennes Health and Rehab

4810 Barbican Ave., Weston, WI 54476

- Ila Barttelt #206

Sylvan Crossings on Evergreen

1605 Evergreen Rd., Wausau WI 54403

- Dolores Hintz Room 13

Wood Aven Living Community

1821 N.4th Ave. Wausau 54401

- Gary Klingbeil Room 110

- Geraldine Hopperdietzel

AT HOME...

- John & Karen Otto 6401 Teagan Lane

Weston 54476 715-241-6369

- Delphine Saeger 151700 Fern Ln.

Wausau 54401 715-298-3210

- Eleanor Thorpe 2901 N. 7th St. Apt. W102

Wausau 54403 715-298-1865

GRIEF SHARE

is a 13-week video session and is a national program to help individuals journey with their loss of a loved one or someone very close to them. We held 2 sessions in 2025 with the help of co-facilitators Jane Seubert and Lynn Deffner. We will be offering another session at St. Stephen Lutheran Church beginning on Monday, February 16th and ending on May 11, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the Conference Room. You can register by contacting Shirley Ostrem either by phone 715-359-5531 or by email sjostrem2113@outlook.com OR go to the GriefShare.org website. Thank you for supporting this outreach program.



**Worship Assistants - Ushers
Communion Set-up / Assistants
Communionware Washers / Acolytes
Greeters / Lectors**

TO THOSE WHO ASSIST IN WORSHIP

FYI...this note is just to let you know Sharon Hunter is scheduling the weekly Thursday and Sunday worship service volunteers. If you cannot serve when you are scheduled, please find someone to take your place and let Sharon know so the correct name is reflected in the bulletin. We truly appreciate everyone who helps to make our worship service meaningful. Reach Sharon at shunteratdpi@msn.com or 715 212 1672.

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS:

February 1: Connie Vaningan
February 8: Lynne Santangelo
February 15: Pat Seivert
February 22: Lynne Santangelo

March 1: Connie Vaningan
March 8: Lynne Santangelo
March 15: Pat Seivert
March 22: Kalynn Pempek
March 29: Connie Vaningan

ACOLYTES:

February 1: Kaedyn Hadley
February 8: Brooklynn Detert
February 15: Annabelle Oestreich
February 22: Kynslei Koehler-Dahlquist

March 1: Kaedyn Hadley
March 8: Brooklyn Detert
March 15: Annabella Oestreich
March 22: Kynsley Koshler-Dahlquist
March 29: Kaedyn Hadley

LECTORS:

February 1: Sharon Hunter
February 8: Sue Juedes
February 15: Dawn Kramer
February 22: Kalynn Pempek

March 1: Lynne Santangelo
March 8: Pat Seivert
March 15: Connie Vaningan
March 22: Lette Becker
March 29: Karen Briggs

LECTORS: (Thursday Evening Worship)

February 5: Cheri Breneman
February 12: Barry Levine

***No Thursday evening worship during the
season of Lent.***

ALTAR GUILD:

February: Marla Zumann
March: VerJean Detert

GREETERS:

February 1: Lonnie & LeAnn Lewis
February 8: Gene & Lynn Schulz
February 15: Lois Stasko
February 22: Mike & Connie Vaningan

March 1: Dawn Schumitsch / Sharon Hunter
March 8: Amy Abitz and Eli Akey
March 15: VerJean Detert/Angela Greenfield
March 22: Cindy Hermel / Linda Kittel
March 29: Dilynn Koehler / Deb Kufahl

COMMUNION SET-UP:

February 1: VerJean Detert
February 8: Deb Kluetz
February 15: Dawn Kramer
February 22: VerJean Detert

March 1: Deb Kluetz
March 8: Dawn Kramer
March 15: VerJean Detert
March 22: Deb Kluetz
March 29: Dawn Kramer

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS:

February 1: Jenny Blaschka
February 8: Shawn Blaschka
February 15: Angela Greenfield
February 22: Joan Heahlke

March 1: Sharon Hunter
March 8: Dawn Kramer
March 15: Deb Kufahl
March 22: Lynn Schulz
March 29: Emma Schumitsch

COMMUNIONWARE WASHERS:

February 1: Lynne Santangelo
February 8: Neil & Sue Juedes
February 15: Lonnie & LeAnn Lewis
February 22: Deb Kluetz / Dawn Kramer

March 1: Lynne Santangelo
March 8: Neil & Sue Juedes
March 15: Lonnie & LeAnn Lewis
March 22: Deb Kluetz / Dawn Kramer
March 29: Bob & Pat Seivert



USHERS:

February 1: D Chapman / B Lampe / E Zabel
February 8: J Blaschka / N & S Juedes
February 15: Gene & Lynn Schulz / Deb Kluetz
February 18 (Ash Wednesday) M & L Heyne
February 22: M & C Vaningan / Sharon Hunter

March 1: Scott & Deb Kufahl / Steve Wendorf
March 8: D Chapman / B Lampe / E Zabel
March 15: N & S Juedes / Jenny Blaschka
March 22: Gene & Lynn Schulz / Deb Kluetz
March 29: Matt & Lori Heyne

Subs: Shawn & Jenny Blaschka, Lowanne Brokaw, Matt & Lori Heyne, Sharon Hunter, Sue & Neil Juedes, Deb Kluetz, Deb Kufahl, Mike Vaningan, Earl Zabel

FIRST ENGLISH LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2025, 6:00 P.M.

Members Present: Karen Czechowicz, Neil Juedes, Angela Greenfield, Cindy Hermel, Michael Klapperich, Russ Michalski, Kalynn Pempek, Dina Santangelo, Nicholas Schumacher, Mike Vaningan, Pastor Mary Zupansic

Members Absent: Carla Baumgardt, Jenny Blaschka, Marla Zumann, Sherry Larson, Lois Stasko

Neil Juedes led opening devotions.

Reports:

November Meeting Minutes: The November Council minutes were reviewed. Kalynn Pempek moved and Neil Juedes seconded a motion to approve the November minutes. Motion passed.

Financial Reports: October Financial Reports were provided via email. Dina Santangelo moved

and Michael Klapperich seconded a motion to accept the financial reports as presented.

Committee Reports:

- **Pastor's Report:** Presided and preached seven Sunday and six Thursday worship services. Participated as assisting minister in the Thanksgiving worship at Saint Andrew Lutheran Church. Presided at the funeral services of Alan Sexter and Joyce Utecht. Met with three prospective new members. Will have a cake reception for new members and they will be asked to wear nametags to identify them as new member. Attended the Wisconsin River Valley Conference meeting on December 9. Assisted with Christmas program practice and attended committee night.
- **Parish Ed** – Nothing to report.
- **Worship & Music** – Advent decorations on the Christmas trees will be swapped for Christmas ornaments after the December 21 worship service. Glow sticks will be provided for children attending the Christmas Eve services. Pastor Mary will purchase the glow sticks. Traditional lessons and hymns will be the content of the December 28 service.
- **Stewardship** – Discussed Christmas cards for homebound members, thank you cards, and Christmas flowers to be delivered December 19.
- **Church & Society** – Community supper will take place December 21. Lori and Matt Heyne will need support. Discussed The Neighbors' Place food pantry volunteering. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day will be celebrated on January 16, 2026 from 5:30-8:30 p.m. at Marathon Park East Gale Hall. United Way is another volunteer opportunity.
- **Property** – Nothing to report.
- **Youth** – There will be a meeting in January to gauge interest in the 2027 youth gathering in Minneapolis, MN and related fundraising. Other topics discussed were the February lock-in, Ash Wednesday soup supper and a sandwich fundraiser on Super Bowl Sunday.

- **Wage & Policy** – Nothing to report.
- **Fair Stand** – Nothing to report
- **Treasure Sale** – Nothing to report.

Old Business:

- **Narthex Screen** – Council viewed a demonstration of the screen setup last month. The monitor can display pictures and slides. There's a monthly subscription to a portal which allows us to sign in and upload content. The contract for the portal provides virtual training and tech support. The cost of the device is approximately \$1,300 with an additional monthly subscription. The only other expense would be for an electrician to run power to the device. Pastor Mary and potentially office staff would be the point of contact for generating content updates. Russ Michalski moved and Dina Santangelo seconded the motion to authorize purchase of equipment for the AV display, subscription cost and electrical expense. Motion passed. The installation logistics will be under the Property Committee.
- **Cancellation Policy** – We are having issues contacting Channel 7 to update our account to the new First English email. Will continue to try to contact them. A policy is in place for the pastor and council president to make the decision to cancel services.
- **Realm Introduction Committees:** At the January 6, 2026 Committee Night, Sharon Hunter will provide an introduction to Realm including downloading the app and creating a profile for all committee members. Step-by-step directions will be provided. After the presentation Committees will meet as usual.

New Business:

- **Annual Report Deadline: January 15, 2026 send electronically** – Committee reports need to be sent to Deb Kluetz electronically. It was suggested that the annual report be put on our Website.

- **Annual Meeting: February 8, 2026.** – The Tech Committee is discussing having a Realm demonstration and help stations to assist people with activating the Realm app. Still being discussed.
- **Committee Reports** – Reports need to be written and turned in to the church council and the office. Deb Kluetz needs to be informed if something needs to be printed in the bulletin.
- **Joint Wausau ELCS Church Housing Assistance Ministry** – St. Stephens and Good Shepherd Churches have been giving assistance to homeless people moving into housing. They help with security deposits and rent. They work with someone who is an employee of the Police Department in charge of low-income housing. They wanted to invite other churches in the community to join in the effort with contributions to help this cause. Pastor Jack from Saint Andrew is working on process and procedures and will share with congregations and presidents.
- **The Neighbors' Place** – The Neighbors' Place expressed their appreciation of our increased contributions in November and December to their food bank.
- **Endowment Disbursement:** Endowment distribution recommendations were reported for the fourth quarter of 2025. The Endowment Committee recommended the fourth quarter distribution of \$9,412.01 to be distributed as follows: 10% reinvested (\$941.20). The Benevolence Disbursements of \$6,250.00 as follows: ELCA Synod (\$1,000.00); ELCA World Hunger (\$800.00); Lutheran Social Services (\$500.00); Crossway Camp (\$500.00); ELCA Missionary (\$900.00); Lutheran Disaster Response (\$400.00); Greater Wausau Christian Services (\$300.00); Homme Home Foundation (\$300.00); and NAOMI (\$250.00); Miscellaneous (\$1,300.00). Michael Vaningan moved and Russ Michalski seconded a motion to accept the endowment distribution as presented.

- Motion passed.
- **Nominating Committee** – Neil Juedes indicated that a good list of names has been put together for council nominations. The committee will begin the calling process.

Next Meeting Date: Monday, January 19, 2026

A motion to adjourn was made by Neil Juedes and seconded by Mike Vaningan. Meeting adjourned.
Closing devotions were provided by Neil Juedes.

Karen Czechowicz, Recording Secretary

A LENTEN PRAYER by Henri Nouwen (1932-1996)

The Lenten season begins. It is a time to be with you, Lord, in a special way, a time to pray, to fast, and thus to follow you on your way to Jerusalem, to Golgotha, and to the final victory over death.

I am still so divided. I truly want to follow you, but I also want to follow my own desires and lend an ear to the voices that speak about prestige, success, pleasure, power, and influence. Help me to become deaf to these voices and more attentive to your voice, which calls me to choose the narrow road to life.

I know that Lent is going to be a very hard time for me. The choice for your way has to be made every moment of my life. I have to choose thoughts that are your thoughts, words that are your words, and actions that are your actions. There are no times or places without choices. And I know how deeply I resist choosing you.

Please, Lord, be with me at every moment and in every place. Give me the strength and the courage to live this season faithfully, so that, when Easter comes, I will be able to taste with joy the new life that you have prepared for me.

Amen.

(Henri Nouwen was a Dutch Catholic priest, professor, and a renowned writer and theologian.)

FAITH'S ROLE IN LOVE



In *It's Okay Not to Be Okay*, Christian author Sheila Walsh looks at the all-encompassing love that Jesus expects of his followers. He commands us to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27, ESV).

But we can't love that way without faith, Walsh writes. “I’m not living by faith if I have an answer to everything. If I understand everything God does or doesn’t do, then all I need to love him with is my mind. We’re called to love him with more.” That “more,” she explains, involves these paradoxes: “We love with all our heart, even when it’s broken. We love with our soul, even when our humanity wrestles against our situation. We love with our strength, even when it’s almost gone. We love with our mind, even when we don’t understand.”

Even if God’s purposes and plans don’t make sense here on earth, we can heed this advice from the great preacher Charles Spurgeon: “When we cannot trace [God’s] hand, we must trust his heart.”



Puzzle!

We see hearts everywhere and love sharing cards and greetings with friends and family.

Use the code to discover a special message from God — perfect for any day, any month.

CODE:

A G	D 1 E	H N	I 2 L	O T	R 3 S	U Y	V 4 W
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2*	*2	*1	4*	1*
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2*	*3	4*	1*	1*	4*	*3	4*
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4*	2*	*3	*2	*1	*2
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1*	4*	1*	3*	2*	*1	3*	*3	2*	*2	*1
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Jeremiah 31:3

Answer: "I have loved you with an everlasting love."



"The heart-shaped communion wafers were a nice touch for Valentine's Day."