First Things

FEBRUARY 2026

The Newsletter of First Evangelical Lutheran Church
561 Chestnut Street | Taylors Falls, MN 55084-1110
651-465-5265 www.tflutheran.org

There are a lot of ways to measure the health of a church. Attendance. Giving. Volunteer lists. Committees that actually meet. But one of the simplest and most telling signs of a healthy congregation is this:

Do we eat together?

Not because it's trendy. Not because it's efficient. And definitely not because it's good for our waistlines. But because shared meals do something deeper. They feed us emotionally and spiritually. They create connection. They make room for stories. They turn strangers into neighbors and neighbors into friends. In a world that keeps getting faster and more isolated, sitting at a table with other people is a quiet, sacred act.

That's why I'm grateful for the meals we share together, especially this month.

Community Dinners: A Free Meal, and Something More

Our Community Dinners at Immanuel are outreach in one of the most faithful forms we know: hospitality. No charge. No pressure. Just a warm meal and a place to belong for an hour.

And here's the truth: connection is just as important as the food. A person can be full and still feel alone. But when someone is welcomed, listened to, and treated like they matter that can be the start of healing. Community dinners say, without preaching a sermon, *"You are welcome here. You have a place."*

Progressive Dinner: Hospitality as a Spiritual Practice

A Progressive Dinner is more than a fun night. It's an exercise in Christian hospitality. We're not just eating, we're practicing discipleship. We're entering one another's homes, being guests and hosts, learning to receive and to give. That's a spiritual skill.

Opening your home isn't about having the perfect furniture or the cleanest kitchen. It's about making space for people. And when we do that when we step

Continued on page two

Continued from cover page

into each other's lives, we strengthen the fabric of our shared ministry in a way that programs alone never can.

Lenten Meals: Come as You Are, and Stay to Reflect

Everything is prepared. All you have to do is come. Come hungry. Come tired. Come as you are. Sit down, share your day, and enjoy a meal with people who are walking this season alongside you.

And then stay to reflect in the afternoon. In a real way, this becomes a gentle bridge from the pace of the week into the deeper rhythm of Lent: a pause to breathe, to pray, to listen, and to remember that we don't walk toward the cross alone.

Coffee, Bars, and Fellowship: Worship Continues at the Table

Our fellowship time with coffee and bars might seem small, but it's not. It's a continuation of worship, communion with donuts and cookies instead of wafers. It's where conversations happen. It's where newcomers get noticed. It's where burdens get shared and joys get celebrated.

Sometimes the most meaningful ministry of a Sunday morning happens not in the pews, but around a table with a paper napkin and a cup of coffee.

Game Night: Simple Joy, Real Connection

I also want to name how grateful I am for Game Night. It was such a wonderful time, nothing complicated, nothing fancy, just people gathering, playing games, sharing a meal, and enjoying the gift of being together. There's something holy about that kind of simple joy. Laughter around tables. Friendly competition. Kids and adults side by side. Conversations that happen naturally when hands are busy and hearts are relaxed.

That night reminded me again: community doesn't always require a big program. Sometimes it's as simple as making space, pulling up a chair, and saying, *"Come join us."*

Don't Miss the Table This Month

I want to encourage you: please don't neglect these offerings this month. They are part of how we stay connected, how we remain a church that feels like family.

And I also want you to know: these meals don't happen by accident. It takes volunteers to plan, cook, set tables, pour coffee, clean up, and open the doors. And it's all worthwhile, every time, when we get to see you when the room fills up, when laughter returns, when someone walks out a little lighter than they walked in.

So come. Bring a friend. Bring your kids. Bring your appetite. Bring your story.

Blessing Pastor Justin

New Members **Welcome!**

If you are interested in becoming a member, please talk with Pr. Justin or contact the office at 651-465-5265.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Worship every Sunday at 11am. Recorded services from Sunday morning worship are available Sunday afternoons on our website www.tflutheran.org and can also be found on our YouTube Channel: First Evangelical Lutheran Church of TF - 2nd.

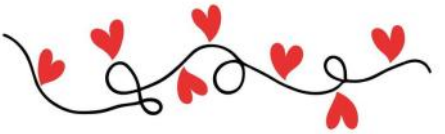
COUNCIL MEETING

Council will meet in February 8th at 12:15pm.

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

02/03 Miriam Flysjo
02/03 Gail Gustafson
02/07 Wendy Parks
02/12 Orval Curry
02/21 Cheryl Moberg
02/21 Shawn Valez
02/22 Joyce Robinson
02/24 Marilyn Tangen
02/26 Michelle Lynch
02/27 Cullen Luschen
02/28 Randy Valez

Please contact the church office if there are any errors or omissions. Thank you.



MONTHLY GIVING REPORT

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. —2 Cor. 9:7 (NIV)

Budgeted Weekly Expenses: $2771.60

12/24 Giving:	$3,991.00
12/28 Giving:	$ 550.00
01/04 Giving:	$2,701.01
01/11 Giving:	$2,238.00
01/18 Giving:	$3,422.50

Thank you for your faithful giving. Please contact FELC Treasurer, Craig Loen with any questions or concerns at: 715-553-0519 or cloen@federatedcoops.com

Shared Ministry

First Lutheran Evangelical Church

Taylors Falls, MN
Fellowship at 10am
followed by Worship at 11am

SundaySCHOOL

Monthly Sunday school class for children elementary age right after children's message.

Next Date: February 15th

Quilting

9:30am - 11:00am
First and Third Wednesdays of the month. No experience needed! New quilters welcome!

WISDOM SEEKERS

THURSDAYS AT 9:00AM

First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Youth Room, 1st floor

CHOIR

Choir will meet for practice every Tuesday at 5pm, rotating locations. No experience is needed to join us!

CRAFTING

CRAFTING ON SATURDAYS

NO CRAFTING SATURDAY IN FEBRUARY

Prayer Shawl Ministry

If you'd like to be part of this ministry or have any questions, please talk with Becky Hulden.

Maple Syrup Commitment Meeting

Sunday, March 1st | 10am
Peace Lutheran Church
Dresser, MN

Better Together

Immanuel Lutheran Church

Almelund, MN
Worship at 9am
followed by Fellowship at 10am

FAITH CONVERSATIONS

HOLY SMOKES!
February 26th at 6:30pm
Jakes on the Lakes
Center City, MN

Are we living in the last days—or just beginning again? Join us to explore biblical prophecy, popular myths, and hopeful visions of renewal.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Do you have a 6th-12th grader who is interested in youth group? Talk with Pr. Justin or Angie

Tune in our Daily Texts with Pastor Justin

Monday - Saturday: Immanuel Lutheran Church of Almelund Facebook Page.
A daily devotional time.

February 13th

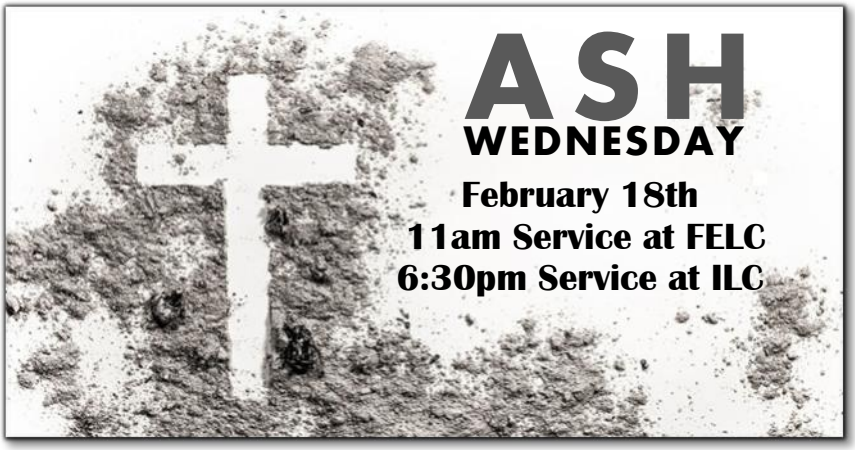
Community Dinner

Free!
Everyone Welcome!
Great Fellowship!
Meet your friends & neighbors!

Immanuel Lutheran Church
Almelund
Come & Bring a Friend!
2nd Friday Each Month 4:30—6:30 pm

Friday, February 6th. from 5pm - 9pm
A no cost, **Semi-Progressive Dinner** starting at Immanuel with appetizers, break into groups to head out to the Host homes for dinner. Afterwards, the groups return to Immanuel for dessert, conversation and music. Childcare available! Sign up at church if you are interested in participating!

FELC - First Evang. Lutheran Church in Taylors Falls
ILC - Immanuel Lutheran Church in Almelund



Holy Week

Palm Sunday Worship - March 29th
9am Worship at ILC
10am Breakfast at FELC
11am Worship at FELC

Maundy Thursday - April 2nd
6pm Service at ILC

Good Friday - April 3rd
6pm Service at FELC

Saturday Night Vigil - April 4th
6pm-7pm Nelson/Hulden Farm

Easter Sunday - April 5th
6:30am Sunrise Service at ILC
9am Worship at ILC
11am Worship at FELC

EASTER FLOWERS

If you are interested in purchasing a lily or mum in memory or honor of someone for Easter, please fill out an order form on a Sunday.

Orders must be in by
Sunday, March 10th.
Lily $25.00
Mum $20.00

EASTER FOOD DRIVE

Family Pathways is prepping to assemble Easter Meal Boxes! The goal is putting together 150 boxes. Each church in our Chisago Lakes area have been asked to contribute an item for the meal kits. Our church has been asked to collect 150 quick bread mixes. Please bring in food items now through March 8th and place them in the Easter Food Drive bin in the room across from the office!!

Palm Sunday Pancake Breakfast!

Sunday, March 29th

10:00am

Worship to follow at 11:00am

If you are able to volunteer your time to set up, cook, serve and clean, there is a sign up sheet at the church! Thank you!

Summer 2026

Each day we will be focusing on a different way we can "wear love" through: Kindness, Humbleness, Calmness, Steadfastness and Forgiveness! Join us for another great summer at Luther Point Bible Camp!

So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Lord forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it." —Colossians 3:12–14

Member Church Discounts

This discount applies if you are a member of one of Luther Point's 75 member congregations and your congregation contributed their full per-baptized member assessment in 2025. $55 Member Discount

Luther Point
BIBLE CAMP

Applications are OPEN for

Summer 2026 Staff

Looking for:

- Junior Counselors
- Senior Counselors
- Camp Connect Counselors
- Team Leaders
- Support Staff
- Medic & Waterfront Team Leader

AMAZING PEOPLE DOING AMAZING THINGS!

Thank you to Pr. Justin for providing us amazing worship services every Sunday! Your messages are always heart-felt and meaningful!!

A big thank you goes out to Toni Brekke ~ each Sunday, you provide beautiful organ music and we appreciate you!!

A big thank you goes out to Tim Nelson ~ it does not go unnoticed that our church is clean and ready each week for worship, choir, and other activities. You do a great job, Tim! Thank you for assisting with building projects!!

Thank you to Joe & Wendy Szczepanski who donate their time and equipment to take care of our lawn during the summer and shovel sidewalks and stairs in the winter!

Thank you to Bruce Carlsted for faithfully plowing our parking lot each time it snows!! And a shout out to ALL the work he's put in on our basement! Thank you for the beautiful new tables in our Fellowship Hall!

Thank you to Arne & Miriam Lagus for bringing seasonal planter flowers for the front and back of our church!

Thank you to Carol Nelson & Becky Hulden for planting up the flower beds each Spring!!!

Thank you to Don Hansen for providing syrup for new visitors on Sundays as a welcome gift. It's a beautiful gift to say "We are glad you are here."

There are so many people that make our church…..well, our church!!! There is a area where YOU can say thank you at our church for the month of February! Check it out ~ it's on the bulletin board across from the upstairs bathroom!!!

My mother Lucille Hansen lives at The Lodge in TF. She is so appreciative of all the kindness & gifts your congregation gives to the residents. She speaks often of the lovely ladies who to share activities & the pastor services. Thank you for all you do!

God Bless you all.

Kathryn Wick

Thank you to Deb Rhoads for crocheting angel blankets going to FV hospital to be given to parents who have suffered the loss of their baby.

Thank you for your generosity and support for students and families with needs we observe everyday. Many families we assisted would not have been able to have a Christmas. Thank you for brightening their holiday!

Jason Riebe, Principal

(full letter on bulletin board)

FEBRUARY

Sun	Mon	Tue
1 9am Worship at Immanuel 10am Fellowship at FELC 11am Worship at FELC	2 8:30am Counters Meet	3 5:30pm Choir Practice -TF
8 9am Worship at Immanuel 10am Fellowship at FELC 11am Worship at FELC FELC Choir Sings 12:15pm Council Meeting	9 8:30am Counters Meet	10 5:30pm Choir Practice-ILC
15 9am Worship at Immanuel 10am Fellowship at FELC 11am Worship at FELC w/ Sunday School Women's Retreat	16 8:30am Counters Meet 	17 5:30pm Choir Practice -TF
22 9am Worship at Immanuel 10am Fellowship at FELC 11am Worship at FELC Joint Choir Sings	23 8:30am Counters Meet	24 5:30pm Choir Practice -ILC

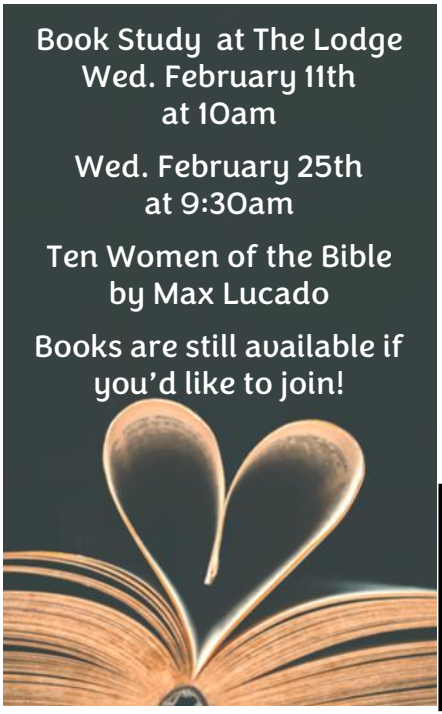
Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
4 9:30am Quilting	5 9am Wisdom Seekers 2:30pm Community Coffee at The Lodge	6	7
11 10am Book Study at The Lodge 1:30pm Lefse Making at The Lodge	12 9am Wisdom Seekers 2:30pm Community Coffee at The Lodge	13 4:30pm Community Meal at Immanuel Luth.	14 NO Crafting Saturday Women's Retreat
18 9:30am Quilting 1:30pm Worship The Lodge Ash Wednesday Services 11am Service at FELC 6:30pm Service at ILC	19 9am Wisdom Seekers 10am Staff Meeting 2:30pm Community Coffee at The Lodge 4:30pm Supper & Game Night at FELC	20	21
25 9:30am Book Study at The Lodge Lent Services 11am Service at FELC 12pm Lunch at FELC 5:30pm Supper at ILC 6:30pm Service at ILC	26 9am Wisdom Seekers 2:30pm Community Coffee at The Lodge 6:30pm Holy Smokes!	27	28

WHAT'S HAPPENING

IN OUR COMMUNITY

Guests can enjoy snowshoeing, hiking, and skiing along candlelit routes, or gather around a warming fire to relax and visit. Inside the Ice Age Center, we'll have entertainment, along with food and refreshments provided throughout the evening.

Bundle up, bring your sense of adventure, and join us for a memorable winter night at Interstate Park!



THE LODGE OF TAYLORS FALLS

Join the residents at The Lodge in Taylors Falls!

Every Thurs at 2:30pm for their free Community Coffee Hour!

Book Study
Feb. 11th at 10am
Feb. 25th at 9:30am

Make Lefse
Wed. Feb. 11th at 1:30pm

Winter Storytime
Every Wednesday
Jan. 7th - Mar. 11th
10:15am - 11:15am
St Croix Falls Library

Taylors Falls

Farmers & Crafters Indoor Market

Saturday, February 21st
11am - 3pm

Taylors Falls Community Center

Variety of vendors, food and music from your local vendors!

Thurs, February 19th

4:30pm - 6:30pm

First Evang. Lutheran

Come enjoy a delicious supper and have some fun playing games out of the cold winter!! Bring your favorite or play what is available at the church!

Ice Fishing, Ice Racing, Food Tasting, Murder Mystery, Vendor Fair, Bingo, Snowga (Yoga), Lake Golf are some of the fun activities planned. Check out their facebook page: Celebration of the Lakes or the Chisago Chamber of Commerce website.

CHISAGO LAKES
COMMUNITY MEAL

Monday Evenings
4pm - 6pm
Zion Lutheran Church in Chisago City. All are welcome!

Minutes of the Church Council of
First Evangelical Lutheran Church
Sunday, January 11, 2026, 12:15pm
Next meeting: February 8, 2026, 12:15pm

Council Members Present: Rose Anderson, Kathy Carlsted, Angie Dahlstrom, Don Hansen, Becky Hulden, Julie Valez, Pastor Justin Fenger

A. Opening Devotions – Don
January-Rose

B. Sharing Stories of God's Love in our Lives –

C. Pastor Justin's Report –

1. Technology upgrades and changes-Matt will stop in this week for training with Carli
2. Joint Council
1. Meeting Thursday January 15 th at 8:00 AM here at FELC-Pastor Justin to prepare agenda
3. Staff meetings at FELC
4. Proof reading of paper bulletins to match the digital screen-Angie Dahlstrom is willing to be the proofreader.
5. Pastor Requested to pay 2026 budgeted amount expense for Luther Point in one lump sum in January instead of quarterly. Don made a motion to pay the lump sum in January 2026, Kathy seconded

D. Treasurer's Report – Craig-see attached report
Angie made a motion and Rose seconded to approve Treasurer's report.

E. Building and Grounds Committee Projects – Don

1. Bathroom remodel almost done—painting needed—Angie and Carli may need help
2. Three new fellowship hall tables completed by Bruce Carlsted—three old tables available to anyone free to take
3. Salting the parking lot and driveways—City of Taylors Falls did it for $180

F. Library Report – Julie

1. Apply for Little Free Library status—meet with Angie in January

G. Sunday School – no report

H. Vision Group -> Mission and Outreach Committee

1. Leadership will be Rita and Wendy. The hope is to evolve into the Mission and Outreach committee. Declined to lead Community Meals

I. Shared Ministry – Better Together with Immanuel

1. A combined council made up of a few members from each congregation will meet quarterly to monitor the ongoing relationship – Craig, Don, Kathy, and Becky have volunteered to serve on this group
2. Music and Worship Coordination – Becky continues to attend weekly meetings with Immanuel staff. FELC coordination is happening at the monthly staff meeting.

J. Personnel

a. Momoh Freeman is getting married June 2026. Congratulations!

b. Extra hours for Carli to create screen presentation weekly (up to 3 hrs/wk) This cost will be shared with Immanuel. Immanuel will reimburse FELC for Carli's hours quarterly.

K. Sunday Morning - Council Person on Duty (CPOD)

a. Security Training with CCSD – Angie and Becky will schedule this month

L. Caring Ministry

a. Communion Visitors met this week. Communion kits will be placed on altar on communion Sundays, so that elements are blessed. Angie will order us two copies of the ELW Pastoral Care booklets which contain service words for communion along with psalms and prayers for specific needs.

M. Report on Events

a. Undecorating the church—January 4, thanks to all who helped

b. Christmas Eve attendance exceeded 200

N. Upcoming Events: - leadership?

a. Game Night and Dinner—Thursday, January 15th

b. Holy Smokes! is scheduled for January 22 at Jakes on the Lakes

c. Women's Retreat—February 13-15

O. Motion to Adjourn-Rose moved and Kathy seconded

How do you make a Resurrection Garden?

Materials needed:

Shallow Pot	Lg Flat Rock	Dirt
Small Clay pot	Small Rocks	Grass Seeds
Sticks	Rope	

1. Gather materials
2. Add potting soil to the bottom of the pot.
3. Create tomb by placing pot on its side, burying it slightly.
4. Plant seeds over the top of the tomb.
5. Make three crosses with sticks & rope. Add to hill.
6. Add pebbles leading up to tomb.
7. Add large stone to opening of the tomb.
8. Water and watch it grow!

First Evangelical
LUTHERAN CHURCH of TAYLORS FALLS

Church Office
651-465-5265
www.tflutheran.org

Pastor Justin Fenger
c: 651-308-7717
pastor@immanuelalmelund.com

Angie Linngren
Ministry Coordinator
felctf@gmail.com

2025-2026 Council/Officers:

Becky Hulden—President
Kathy Carlsted—Vice President
Craig Loen—Treasurer
Don Hansen—Secretary
Julie Valez
Rose Anderson
Angela Dahlstrom
Riley Linngren

Financial Secretary
Jerry Rhoads

Please hold the ministers and council members in your prayers that God would give them the wisdom, strength, courage, patience and perseverance to serve this community of faith as they lead us in our mission for the sake of the world and the glory of God.

Next council meeting will be held on Sunday, February 8, 2026 at 12:15pm

Mission Statement

Proclaim the Gospel and Serve our Neighbors.

(Mission Statement approved 2023)

"Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations." Psalm 90:1

Please send submissions to: felctf@gmail.com
Articles due the 12th of each month.

First Evangelical
LUTHERAN CHURCH

561 Chestnut Street, Taylors Falls, MN 55084-1110

NOT FOR PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US
POSTAGE PAID
TAYLORS FALLS, MN
PERMIT NO. 5