First Things

OCTOBER 2026

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

Walk into the church on a Monday morning.

It's dark. Quiet. The pews are empty, the fellowship hall is empty, the kitchen's wiped down, and the coffee pots are upside down in the drying rack. And now, as temperatures fall outside, the furnace is running. The floors got cleaned anyway. The Wi-Fi's blinking away in the corner for nobody.

I've been doing the math. Sunday morning, that's an hour, maybe two with coffee. Wednesday evening, a few hours. A committee here, a Bible study there, a funeral lunch when we need one. Add it all up across normal week, and our buildings are in use maybe six, eight hours.

The rest of the time? They sit there. Heated. Lit. Waiting.

That's been rattling around in me. Because we take good care of these places, we fix the roof and patch the parking lot and update the tech, and we should; these are gifts. But a gift that sits in a closet isn't much of a gift; it just becomes something we look past when we open the closet.

"Be hospitable to one another without complaining." (1 Peter 4:9)

The word Peter uses for hospitality literally means love of the stranger. And notice what he doesn't say. He doesn't say start a hospitality program. Form a committee. Put together a five-year plan. He's not talking about a program at all.

He's talking about a posture.

Opening the door. And then not grumbling about the crumbs on the floor afterward. Not sighing about the chairs put back in the wrong spot or the coffee maker left on or the kid who scuffed the wall. Just, the door opened. People came in. Something good happened. Sweep it up and do it again.

Peter's writing to little scattered congregations who didn't have much, and he tells them to treat what they have as grace to be handed out. The very next verse says it: whatever gift each of you has received, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

Continued on the next page...

Continued from the cover....

We are small congregations too. We have what we have. And what we have includes a couple of pretty good buildings.

Here's the thing. We didn't build these for ourselves.

And honestly, this community already knows how to do this with Community Dinners, Game Nights, Together with Friends, Apple Fest, Threshing Show, VBS, Lighting Festival, etc., where a whole bunch of you showed up, volunteered, ran equipment, offered your land and your time and your know-how. Last year we helped put in playground equipment down at Triangle Park before Apple Fest, and this year a few more pieces went in, plus a fence. Over at First we're looking hard at our own little playground and what it could become.

That's hospitality. That's the whole community opening its doors. And we're already in it. We're not starting from scratch. We're just asking whether our own doors can open a little wider, a little more often.

This place has given us so much. Families who built these churches. Neighbors who show up when the casseroles are needed. Four school districts' worth of kids, 4-H, Scouts, ballplayers, all of it. We want to give back.

I want our buildings used. Not six or eight hours a week. Twenty. Thirty-five.

The fellowship hall, for your graduation party, your family reunion, your anniversary, your 4-H meeting, your card club. The kitchen, for the group that needs to cook for a crowd. The Wi-Fi and the tables, for the student who needs a quiet place to study, or the remote worker who needs to get out of the house for an afternoon. The lawn and the playground, for parents who want somewhere safe for the kids to run.

Celebrations, yes. And mourning too. Birthdays and funerals. Big gatherings and small ones. Or no event at all, just a place to sit and be.

If you have an idea, a group, a need, a "would it be okay if…" — call the church office. Chances are the answer is yes. And if you know somebody who'd never think to ask a church for anything, maybe you're the one who tells them they can.

Because in the end this isn't about square footage. It's about Jesus.

Jesus kept ending up at tables. With tax collectors, with fishermen, with people everybody else had written off. And nobody at those tables earned their seat. Nobody passed a membership check at the door. They were just invited. Welcomed. Fed.

That's the table we've been given. That's what these buildings are for.

So let's leave the lights on. Let's open the door. And thanks be to God there are crumbs on the floor.

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

10am Fellowship Hour
11am Worship Service

Services are recorded and can be found on our website: www.tflutheran.org

COUNCIL MEETING

Council meeting will be held on Thur, October 15th at 5:30pm.

Thank you!

Together with Friends Summer Donation

Thank you for your recent donation of $480 and 157 pairs of shoes to the Shoe Away Hunger program through Good in the Hood. We are honored you chose us as your partner ministry for this year's summer day camp. Because of your generosity, many of our neighbors facing food insecurity will receive care and support. Together, we are bringing God's kingdom and ensuring that no one goes unseen.
Sincerely,
L Brooker

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

10/14 Kent Johnson
10/16 Lucy Tverberg
10/20 Kullan Parks
10/23 Kelly Luschen
10/23 Karen Olson
10/24 Dennis Buchholtz
10/29 Bruce Carlsted
10/31 Abraham Belisle

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

I enjoy long walks in the fall, especially if they lead me to a bakery with pumpkin pie

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

08/30 Giving:	$3,233.96
09/06 Giving:	$3,825.00
09/13 Giving:	$3,199.00
09/20 Giving:	$2,624.00

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

Quilting

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

SundaySCHOOL

Third Sunday of the Month
Elementary Age Children
Nov Date: 10-18-26

JOINT CHOIR

Wednesday, October 7th
at Immanuel Lutheran
Time to be determined

WISDOM SEEKERS

THURSDAYS AT 9:00AM
First Evangelical Lutheran Church,
Fireside Family Room

Thursday, October 1st
4:30pm - 6:30pm
Come enjoy a free supper, good friends & have fun playing board games!!

Crafting

Saturday, October 10th
Bring a craft to work on, a dish to share & enjoy some great company!

Better Together

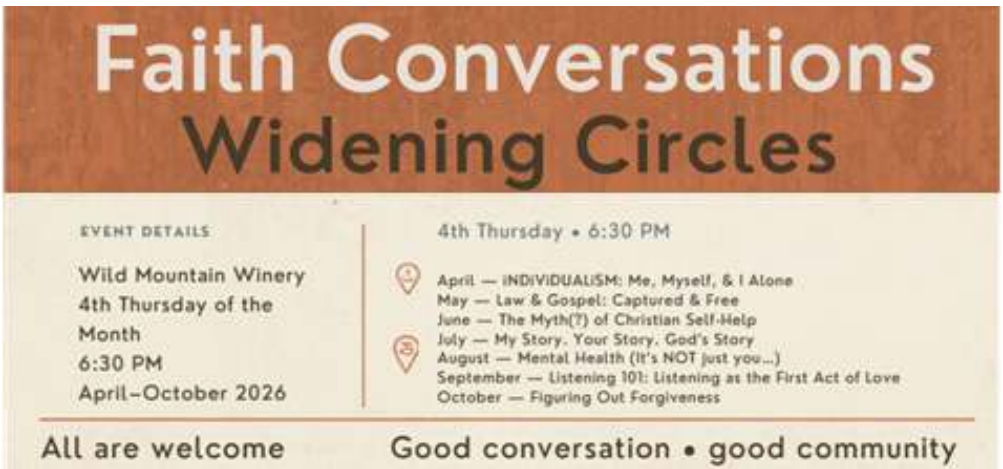
Immanuel Lutheran Church

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

Friday, October 16th
4:30pm-6:30pm

Tune in our Daily Texts with Pastor Justin
Monday - Saturday on our Facebook Page: Immanuel Lutheran Church of Almelund.

YOUTH GROUP
Do you have a 6th-12th grade student interested in joining youth group? If you have questions or need contact into, please talk to Pr. Justin.

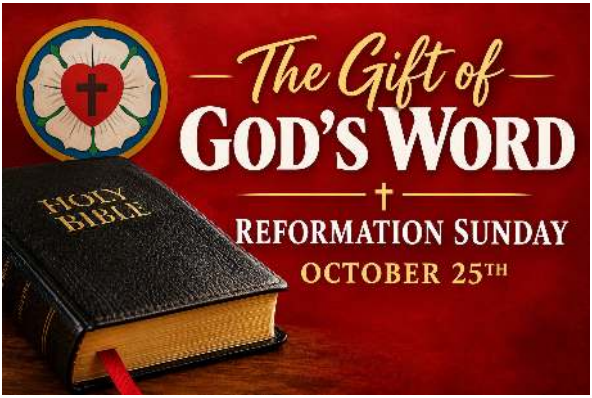


October Happenings!!!!

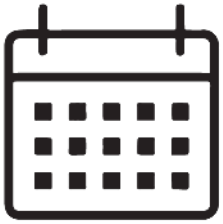
Exciting things are happening!

Luther wanted the Bible in the hands of ordinary people. In their own language. In their own homes. Five centuries later, we're still at it, one kid at a time.

On Reformation Sunday, October 25, during worship, we'll present Bibles to our 3-year-olds, 3rd graders, and 6th graders. A 3-year-old won't read it yet, and that's okay. The promise is the same one spoken over them at the font: this Word is for *you*.



We need volunteers to decorate their vehicle trunks & hand out treats, donate candy, and help with event! Sign up in the narthex at the church! Costumes welcome!! Need ideas or have questions? Come talk with Angie!



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The leaves are changing, temperatures are dropping, we all know what that means - snow and holidays are fast approaching!! Here are some events that are happening over the next few months to put on your calendars!!!

Team Puzzle Competition: Saturday, November 7th
Gather four people for a fun competition and help us raise funds for our annual Taylors Falls Elementary Giving Tree donation. Details coming soon!

Thanksgiving Service: Tuesday, November 24th at 6pm
Immanuel Lutheran Church and Taylors Falls Methodist will join us for a joint service. We will host a pie social following the service and will need volunteers to host fellowship & bring pies! Sign up in the narthex at the church.

Mangers on Display: We would love to have mangers on display for the lighting festival weekend through the Christmas season. More details will be in the upcoming newsletters & bulletins!

Taylors Falls Lighting Festival Weekend
Friday, November 27th - Sunday, November 29th
We are hosting our annual Pancake Breakfast on Saturday from 9am-11am along with a Make and Take Craft. We will need volunteers for this event and a sign up sheet will be available at the church soon!

Sundays in Advent: Starting November 29th, we invite a family to light the Advent candles each Sunday and at our Christmas services. Watch for more details soon!

Make and Take Lefse/Cardamon Buns: Saturday, December 12th

Christmas Program: Sunday, December 20th

Christmas Eve Services: 4pm & 9:30pm at FELC
5:30pm & 11pm at ILC

Watch for more details in future newsletters & bulletins!

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR COMMUNITY

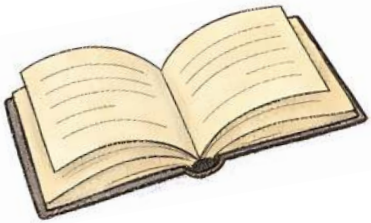
THE LODGE OF TAYLORS FALLS

Join the residents at The Lodge in Taylors Falls!

Free Community Coffee Hour
Every Thurs at 2:30pm

Book Study
October 14th & 28th at 10am

Worship at The Lodge
October 21st at 1:30pm



FRANCONIA sculpture park

Franconia Art & Farmers Market
Sunday, October 4th
10am - 2pm
The first Sunday of each month, May-October from 10am-2pm, local farmers & artists come together to provide a variety of fresh produce & handmade crafts.

CHISAGO LAKES COMMUNITY MEAL

Monday Evenings
4pm - 6pm
Zion Lutheran Church
Chisago City, MN
Everyone is welcome!

JOY LUTHERAN BAZAAR

CENTURIA, WI

10 AM TO 12:30 PM

SATURDAY OCTOBER 10TH

ITEMS FOR SALE!

*BAKED GOODS
*LEFSE
*BASKET RAFFLE
*HOLIDAY / SEASONAL BOUTIQUE
*VINTAGE
*FRESH PRODUCE
*QUILTS & CRAFTS

LUNCH AND COFFEE AVAILABLE!

RAFFLE DRAWING AT 12:30!

Autumn leaves and pumpkin please

FAMILY GAME NIGHT

Thursday, October 15th

THIRD THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH

6 PM - 9 PM

Taylors Falls COMMUNITY CENTER

Bring your friends and favorite board games!

Experience the King like never before. Anthony Shore will be putting on a Gospel Show as Elvis.

October 25, 2026 at 2:00 PM

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Almelund, MN

Come for a fun afternoon show and rock to the Gospel Music of Elvis Presley

FAMILY PATHWAYS

THANKSGIVING FOOD DRIVE

Family Pathways is putting together Thanksgiving Baskets for families in need. Our church has been asked to collect **150 Jarred, Canned or Powdered Turkey Gravy**

There is a collection bin in the Community Room.

The backpack program is in full swing and Family Pathways continues to need our help stocking their shelves!!! The backpack program ensures kiddos have food on the weekends and days where there is not school. Here is a list of the items that kids receive in those bags, any support in restocking their shelves would be greatly appreciated .

Canned Complete Meals like Ravioli, Spaghetti-O's,

Beef-a-Roni, and Chili Mac ~ Macaroni & Cheese

Flavored Oatmeal Packets | Individual Snack Packs

Chicken Noodle and Tomato Soup | Ramen Noodles | Peanut Butter Cereal | Pop Tarts | Canned Vegetables and Fruits

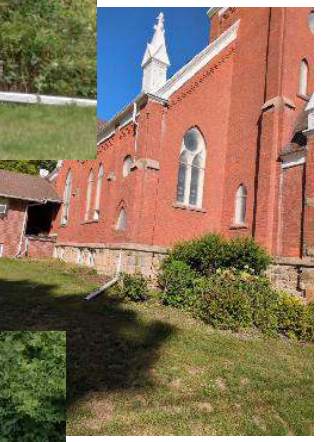
<u>There is a bin at the church to place donations in.</u>

God's work. Our hands.

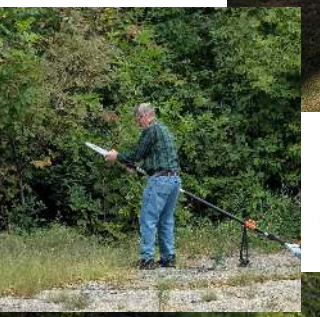
Thank you to all who gave their time and talent on Sunday, September 13th!

Community Room Repainting

Assembling Layettes



Trimmed and stray trees gone!



Parking lot trimmed and property weed-whipped

First Evangelical Lutheran Church
Council Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 17, 2026, 5:30pm
Next meeting: October 15, 2026, 5:30pm

Council Members: Angela Dahlstrom, Don Hansen, Rita Johnson, Craig Loen, Joe Szczepanski, Julie Valez, Pastor Justin Fenger

GATHERING

A. Opening Devotions – Joe Szczepanski
October Devotions: Rita

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

BUSINESS

C. Pastor Justin's Report –
1. Talked with Angie L. on the coordination of draft of communication plan.

D. Council Matters
1. Sunday School to start - 10.18.2026
2. Janitor Position Description will be reviewed and updated by Don and Rita. Pastor Justin will also provide feedback.
3. Damage claim to Ram Truck by lawnmower rock - Don will follow-up with insurance company and submit claim.

E. Treasurer's Report – Craig
1. Our income for August was $11,356.92 is BELOW budget by $544.57 and we are a touch below our budget for income of 3.13%
2. Our expenses for year to date are $35,536.38, which includes the following line items: 6145-Pastor 90 day contract, $6,390.00, 3 months of expense. This is what we pay to Immanuel Lutheran Church $2,015.00 per month. The expenses have staff expenses from September3, 2026 also. Line item 6400 Stew/outreach is $945.00, line item 6500 Care/Hospitality is $1,194.57. Line item 6630 gas &electric is $376.15 higher & Line item 6640 Prop/Liab ins, work comp $688.47 higher than last year. We are above budget, 8.40% or $11,733.40.
3. Motion to approve financial report and 2026-27 budget by Don. Seconded by Joe. Motion carried.

Council Minutes continued next page

Council Minutes Continued....

F. Annual meeting date change to the calendar year was discussed. Decision to defer to October meeting.

G. Building and Grounds

1. Julie Valez reported on activities of the building and grounds committee. Painting is almost complete in the Community Room. Painting ceiling in community room is a priority - Julie will get bids for ceiling.
2. Don reloaded outdoor mouse traps.

PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

H. Music and Worship

1. Weekly Tuesday morning planning meeting with Angie L. at Immanuel.
2. Live stream of First Lutheran worship service was discussed. The equipment cost to live stream is about $1500. Joe made a motion to use $1500 from 6718 account for live stream equipment/camera. Julie seconded, motion carried.

SERVE OUR NEIGHBORS

I. Library Report - Julie - open house set for Sept. 20.

J. Mission and Outreach - Halloween - Trunk and Treat in Parking Lot scheduled for this year. Going door to door to invite families at the apartments north of the church.

K. Motion to Adjourn. Motion by Don and seconded by Julie. Motion carried.

Congratulations to new parents Seth & Michelle (Caneday) Vaneps welcomed their son, Marshall James on July 1st.

Congratulations to Dylan Lynch & Lindsey Mueller on their engagement!

Congratulations to Kayla Donahue & Dominick Raedeke on their engagement!

Congratulations!

Congratulations Annalise (Parks) & Beau Brenizer on their marriage!

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

Jenica Beck
Financial Secretary

2026-2027
Council/Officers:

Angela Dahlstrom
Council President

Joe Szczepanski
Council Vice-Present

Don Hansen
Council Secretary

Craig Loen
Council Treasurer

Rita Johnson

Khrissy Linnerooth

Riley Linngren

Julie Valez

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.

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 are due by September 15th.

First Evangelical
LUTHERAN CHURCH

561 Chestnut Street, Taylors Falls, MN 55084-1110

NOT FOR PROFITORGANIZATION

US POSTAGE PAID

TAYLORS FALLS, MN

PERMIT NO. 5