

FAITH ALIVE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH, LCMC

From Pastor's Heart

Greetings in the name of our precious newborn Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as he sleeps on the hay and Happy New Year! I will also say Merry Christmas, once again, seeing we are in the midst of the Christmas season, which lasts from December 25th to January 5th. As I am writing this, December 11th, the cold has arrived again and hopefully we will get some good snow again as we do need the moisture seeing we had a somewhat dry summer.

It has now been a year since I started serving Faith Lutheran as your Pastor. I would say overall that we have had a good year with maybe some minor bumps along the road as we traveled together as a congregation. For 2026 though my prayer would be that we will become more focused on what we, as a congregation, need to do to spread the Word of God in our community. Therefore, this year I would like to start taking a look at what we, as a congregation, hold near and dear to our heart. In other words, why do we do the things we do? What is our purpose, why are we here? If you would like to become involved in that process, please let me know. The purpose for doing all of these things is to have the whole congregation on the same page; knowing what needs to be done and how God is going to use us to obtain His will for this congregation. To help us with this we are joining Momentum. For more information regarding this please see Colleen Palmer's, our Outreach Coordinator, newsletter article.

With that said, I have one another thing on my mind. Here

it goes: A young man eagerly awaited the next newsletter from his church. Boy, isn't that the wishful thinking of any pastor or congregation? Well, actually, those words are the beginning of an illustration. The young man was indeed eagerly awaiting the next newsletter from his church. He was especially interested in reading the "Pastor's Page." (Boy, this is getting better and better, isn't it?) You see, this person had been, and continued to be, going through some very difficult times and he was really hoping that whatever was written on that page would have a positive impact on his situation and his life.

Now, sometimes I wonder if that is really true. Do people think that way when they receive a mailing from a church? I don't know. Maybe they should! Besides all the general information about what's happening at Faith Lutheran Church, people should expect to get a spiritual lift.

Throughout the years, people, myself included, have tried to speak a message that will relate to where people are at. "How can the message of the day be applicable to my life?" they ask. As we look to a new year, we do so with a lot of anxiety, as well as anticipation. What will the new year bring? Will the economy still be bad or will it finally get better? What will President Trump do to try to turn things around and will Congress agree or not? All of these things are up in the air, but no matter what, we are to believe and trust that God's will, for us and our country, will be done.

But let me tell you or remind

you that there has been only one message that always relates Luke 24:46-47 (ESV): "[Jesus] said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'" Yes, it is true. When all is said and done, no matter what, the only message that stands the test of time and is applicable to every situation is the Good News that Jesus Christ was born, lived, died, and then rose from the dead for us. For us, that is on our behalf.

For us, so that we would never have to face the wrath of God for our failures and sins. Therefore, let me tell you that Easter is on April 5, 2026, this coming year. But for all those who are in Jesus Christ, it is every single day! Each of us can celebrate in the fact that we are blood-bought, loved, and redeemed by Christ the Crucified. If our job on this earth is upsetting; if our families aren't picture perfect; if our personal life isn't what we had hoped it would be; if our social life has hit rock-bottom, you and I can find strength and hope and peace and joy in the fact that for all eternity we will live with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in our heavenly home. We can count it all joy that we have a God who will never leave us nor forsake us, no matter what the circumstance.

Now I suppose there are still a few of those reading this article that are thinking to themselves, "Yea, that's all well and good, but it still doesn't help me in the

here-and-now." To you, I say that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He is your help today! Jesus said, "Call on me and I will deliver you and you shall honor me."

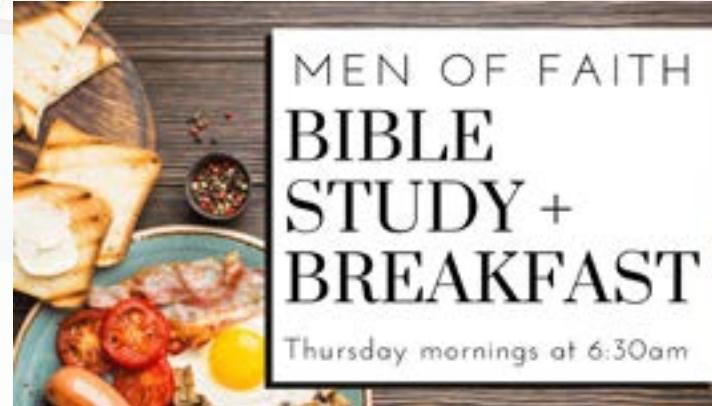
I pray everyone had a joyful and Merry Christmas celebrating our Lord's birth! Have a safe and Happy New Year as we look forward to what the new year has in store for each and every one of us. I am also praying that everyone is feeling fine and healthy. God bless you all as we enter into 2026!

Pastor Alsen



Faith Lutheran set a new record for Christmas Shoeboxes this year - 94 boxes. Thank you to each one who participated in this Christmas event.

Deb Schwandt and Jeanie Thomas



Amusing Music "Tidbits"

From Elaine Tews ☺

Happy 2026 Faith Friends! The "new" Faith Alive articles from me will be things that will make you smile and/or groan!!! These are going to be both from personal (true) experiences as well as ones I've found or heard.

I began my faith music journey when I was 13 years old, learning to play an old "pump organ" in the park back home when we had our outdoor service in the park. One of our families had this organ at home and brought it in since 'electric pianos' weren't out yet! My major instrument was piano and everyone knew I played piano. This little gem did not have 'foot pedals' like a regular organ does. Instead, it had two 'pump pedals' that alternating feet 'pumped' to

push air through it to produce sound. The regular organist just happened to leave town that weekend and since I had been playing piano since I was 2 (My mother said!-by ear of course-lessons started when I was 6!)-they asked if I would play. I didn't get a chance to practice on it till earlier that morning in the park. It had 'pull pistons' to change the sounds. So it was time to begin service. I pumped away awkwardly and unsteady so the sound that came out was pretty awful! That didn't stop them from singing the hymns with the gusto of my "Old German Church"!

They all came up and thanked me, said I did a fine job. Didn't say a word about the awful sound due to my uneven

'pumping'. I was exhausted! When I got home, Mom said she was proud of me. Dad was working at our family restaurant but told me later he had heard about it. God was watching me. I just know it! I thank Him for this gift of music everyday and am very thankful for all the forgiveness for what I thought was an awful sound but in my heart was a joyful noise to the Lord!

So in closing of this first 'memories and beyond', remember God gave us music to praise Him ...so feel confident in raising your voice with joy!

Musically in Christ,
Elaine

Youth and Family News

The youth did an excellent job presenting the Children's Christmas Program, "Tree-Mendous Love...from the Manger...to the Cross," blessing the church through their music and their meaningful presentation of the Christmas story. Thank you to all who helped the youth prepare for this program.

We are still seeking volunteers to serve as Faith Friends for our confirmands. We need just four more willing individuals to serve as secret support friends, as some have already volunteered. If you are interested in volunteering or would like more information about this role, please contact me or Pastor Alsen.

In addition, volunteers are always welcome to assist with any of our family activities and programs. To volunteer, please contact the church office or call me at (406) 590-1061. Your help is always greatly appreciated.

As we begin a new year, we are pleased to share photos from youth and family events that took place in 2025. We hope you enjoy these memories. May God bless the church and each of you in the year ahead.

Annette Hocker, Youth and Family Coordinator



January 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4	5 8:30 am Bible Study 9:30 am Worship Offering: Food Bank 10:45 am Kids SS 11 am Confirmation	6 pm Praise Team A 10 am Staff Meeting 1:30 pm Constitutional 5:30 pm Music/Worship	7 10 am Bible Study 5:30 pm Bell Choir 5:30 pm Men of Faith 6:30 pm Choir Practice	8 9 am Love Day Quilters 10 am LCMC Pastors 1 pm Grief Share	9 6:30 am Men's Bible Study 9 am Love Day Quilters 10 am LCMC Pastors 1 pm Grief Share	10 2 pm Women's Crafting
11	12 8:30 am Bible Study 9:30 am Worship 10:45 am Kids SS 11 am Confirmation	13 10 am Staff Meeting 11:30 am Soul Sisters 1:30 pm Constitutional 5:30 pm Executive 6 pm Personnel 7 pm Youth Ed Team	14 9 am Finance Meeting 11 am Bible Study 4 pm Property Team 5:30 pm Bell Choir 6:30 pm Choir Practice	15 6:30 am Men's Bible Study 1 pm Grief Share	16 6:30 am Men's Bible Study 1 pm Grief Share	17
18	19 9:30 am Worship Offering: LEAP 10:45 am Annual Meeting	20 6 pm Praise Team A 10 am Staff Meeting 1:30 pm Constitutional 5:30 pm Council Meeting	21 10 am Bible Study 5:30 pm Bell Choir 6:30 pm Choir Practice	22 6:30 am Men's Bible Study 1 pm Grief Share	23 6:30 am Men's Bible Study 1 pm Grief Share	24
25	26 9:30 am Worship 10:45 am Kids SS 11 am Confirmation 2 pm Family Movie Matinee	27 6 pm Praise Team A 10 am Staff Meeting 1:30 pm Constitutional	28 10 am Bible Study 5:30 pm Bell Choir 6:30 pm Choir Practice	29 6:30 am Men's Bible Study 1 pm Grief Share	30 6:30 am Men's Bible Study 1 pm Grief Share	31

Your generosity was such a gift and will always be remembered...kind hearts like yours are so rare and precious and will always be appreciated.
Thank you,
Pastor Jeannie Bergstrom of Grace Lutheran Church in Nashua, Montana

I want to thank the Care Team for the delious food brought to my home following recent knee surgery. I am grateful for the many prayers and thoughtfulness of our Faith Family during this time. Rudy Robinson

I would like to thank the following volunteers who worked FISH for the week of December 1-5. Sandy Matthews, Augie Records, Fay & Judy Stokes, Pastor Ken Waag, Pat Fournier, Carol Dawson, Rex & Ann Derr, Dave & Gabe Cunningham, Tom Fundis, Jim Wickens, Mike Abbott, Cheryl Klette, Mary and Ron Pfeifle. I have been abundantly blessed by your willingness to serve in this ministry.

Thank you all!
Sandy Clapshaw.



Thank you to each one who helped with the Christmas decorations this year. The church was both beautiful and festive.

Wednesday Bible Study

REVELATION

Beginning January 7th

at 10 am

**Join Pastor Alsen
in discovering God's Word
for the Church today.**



We were wondering how to make jail Christmas a bit of joy for the 370 some inmates at the jail. Our St. Dismas members chip in to fill a bag of treats and gifts for each of them. But with only six members & reluctance to beg, it was looking meager. But God blesses using the hearts of friends. One church gave us stamps so each inmate gets three cards to send to family. St. Vincent gave us cookies & our monthly stipend. Then Wow - you gave us enough money to make it a very Merry Christmas at the jail & at the juvenile detention. Thank you!



Thank you for donating your time and food to our families. -Longfellow Leadership Students

JANUARY SPECIAL OFFERINGS

First Sunday of the Month

GREAT FALLS FOOD BANK

Third Sunday of the Month

LOW INCOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE

PROGRAM



'BOLDLY APPROACHING THE THRONE OF GRACE'

The faithful beseech their Lord in the Prayer of the Church and in the Lord's Prayer

It happens each time our Lord gathers His people and serves them with His life-giving Word and His Gospel sacraments. As we receive Him and His good gifts, our faith is emboldened, and together we call upon our merciful God. We boldly approach His throne of grace to petition and to extol Him, saying the Prayer of the Church and praying the Lord's Prayer.

THE GIFT OF PRAYER

Corporate prayer has always been a mark of the public worship of the holy and blessed Trinity. According to Gen. 4:26, "men began to call on the name of the Lord" not long after the creation of the world. For centuries before Christ, the tribes of Israel went to the Lord's "house of prayer" in Jerusalem to thank and praise Him (Ps. 122:4). St. Luke informs us that in the days of the New Testament, as the early Christians devoted themselves steadfastly to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship and to the breaking of bread, they also persevered in prayers (Acts 2:42).

Set within the Divine Service, the public prayers of God's holy people are properly viewed as the Spirit-empowered response flowing from Spirit-engendered faith that received Christ and His salvation. One contemporary theologian puts it this way. The prayers offered by the Church during worship are part of her "respiration," what she "exhales" in the power of the Spirit after having first deeply "inhaled" of the Spirit's life-giving breath.

The blessed and glorious privilege that is granted God's children to bring our concerns before Him is exactly that—a privilege. It is not something we've merited. Neither is it an inherent right. Rather, it is totally a gift of divine grace earned by our Lord Jesus Christ. Through His perfect life, sacrificial death and victorious resurrection, the incarnate Son of God has removed the barrier of sin

between us and God and gained for us "access to the Father by one Spirit" (Eph. 2:18). In the waters of Holy Baptism, this sacred privilege is conferred upon us. In the Divine Service it is exercised corporately by the communion of saints.

LINKING WORD AND SACRAMENT

Whether it's titled the Prayer of the Church or simply the Prayers matters little. As the invitation is reverently extended, "Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs", silence settles upon the worshipers and the Church approaches her Lord.

The common practice in Christendom is to position the Prayers between the Service of the Word and the Service of Holy Communion.

The juncture at which the Prayers are said also reminds us of the "rhythm of our worship." Our sacrifice of praise and our petitions to the Lord are offered in view of His tender mercies proclaimed and bestowed upon us in the reading of His Scriptures and in the preaching of His Gospel.

To understand and affirm the connection between the sacramental (God's giving to us, which is always primary) and the sacrificial (our giving back to God, which is secondary) is crucial if the theology and practice of Christian worship is to be Christ-centered and Gospel-oriented. In saying the Prayers, the congregated members of Christ's body carry out their God-given status as a royal priesthood of believers. They glorify the Lord and intercede before Him, serving Him and their neighbors.

Through the ongoing meditation of Jesus Christ, our great high priest, we rightly adore and thank our heavenly Father for all His benefits. Likewise, in union with Christ's intercessions, we implore our God on behalf of the Church and the

world, our own parish and local community, asking in accord with the apostle's directive (1 Tim. 2:1) that all people and circumstances may be brought under the Lord's Word.

That these requests are humbly yet confidently offered to the Lord is confirmed by the manner in which they are concluded: "Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord".

Our certainty is based upon the sure promises of our Savior: "If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven" (Matt. 18:19), and "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours" (Mark 11:24).

THE WORDS CHRIST GAVE US

Along with the Prayers, we further entreat our heavenly Father and request His mercy and aid in the words that His only-begotten Son has given us—the Lord's Prayer.

Early in her history, the Church incorporated the Lord's Prayer in the order of the Divine Service as an integral element. She did this because of the importance and supreme value of the "Our Father." "Since our Lord is the author of this prayer," Martin Luther wrote, "it is without a doubt the most sublime, the loftiest and the most excellent...For every absolution, all needs, all blessings and all men's requirements for body and soul, for life here and beyond, are abundantly contained in that prayer."

It was Christ Himself who took the initiative in His Sermon on the Mount and put into our mouths the very words we are to say. "This then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven..." (Matt. 6:9).

Responding to the request to be taught to pray, the Lord instructed his disciple accordingly. "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your

name..." (Luke 11:2).

In obedience to our Lord, therefore, as the fruit and exercise of faith in Him and His saving Gospel, we pray the very words that He graciously has given us. Led by His Spirit, we unite with our Christian brothers and sisters in the congregation and with the Church across the world and throughout the ages. We present the

seven divine petitions to our heavenly Father "as dear children ask their dear father," concluding with the word of sure and certain faith, "Amen, Amen... it shall be so".

Traditionally, the Lord's Prayer and the Words of Institution are closely bound in the Service of the Sacrament. In praying the Lord's Prayer in connection with the Eucharist, we

humbly request our heavenly Father to sanctify and consecrate us as we eat Christ's body and drink His blood, that in true faith we may receive all the benefits of this heavenly meal and rejoice in the foretaste it gives us of the feast to come.

Love Day Quilters News

Last year we distributed 77 cozy quilts to eight organizations in Great Falls who give them to men, women, and children who need their warmth this winter. We delivered them to the Mercy Home, Great Falls Rescue Mission and Haven of Hope, Grace Home, and Grace Haven. We thank everyone who helped us in this effort.

We have already begun working on our 2026 stash and we invite you to join us on Thursday, January 8th!



SOUL SISTERS

January 13th at 11:30
at Jakers



Women of Faith Birthday Party for Jesus

What a great time of:

- Fellowship
- Devotions that reminded us to look to Jesus not the world around us
- Crafts
- Refreshments
- 55+ birthday kits were donated for Family Promise and the Receiving Home

Thank you to the ladies who made this event a success!

January Anniversaries

2: Gary & Mary Somerfeld
7: Rudy & Judy Tankink

January Birthdays

5: Karl Dorr
6: Susan Adams
7: Becky Bortnem
Marcia Hollandsworth
Bruce Kempf
11: Karlene Schraner
16: Joel Demko
17: Sara Wilson
21: Jim Brown
Gail Morley
Colleen Palmer
Charlene Schaeffer
23: Hillman Fowell
Laura Solberg
24: Tony Hering
Carston Sweeney
25: Jim Graham
26: Glenda Davis
Sharon Knudson
29: Jackson Tarum
Jim Taylor
30: Cody Williams

Outreach News

Strengthening Our Spiritual Gifts for The Great Commission

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. - 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 NIV

As we ring in the new year, staff will begin training with "Momentum a network for church revitalization." The Momentum Network is an initiative of the Institute of Lutheran Theology (ILT), with partnership from Church Doctor Ministries (CDM) through its Church4Today initiative. ILT brings academic depth, training, and resources to equip leaders. CDM brings decades of practical coaching, consulting, and revitalization experience. Together, ILT and CDM combine theological depth and real-world expertise to help churches not only learn but implement change.

Faith Lutheran Church has been accepted to the 12 Church Cohort. This means that we'll receive training, coaching, have access to tools, resource library and part of a network - free of charge. Momentum has already funded this network for the 12 churches. If you'd like to check out their website to give you more information visit: www.momentumnetwork.church. Momentum's seven objectives for churchs are:

1. Face the Facts With Faith – Assess health, leadership, and mission with clear data.
2. Build Sustainable Outreach – Equip churches to engage communities in Gospel-centered and culturally relevant ways.
3. Renew Congregational Life – Revitalize worship, leadership, and spiritual life.
4. Multiply Disciples and Leaders – Train everyday believers to lead and raise up new pastors and planters.
5. Foster a Thriving Network – Link congregations for encouragement, resource sharing, and collaboration.
6. Ignite Entrepreneurial Mission – Release creativity and innovation for new ministries, outreach, and community impact.
7. Measure and Share Impact – Track progress, celebrate wins, and tell stories of transformation.

We have a lot of strengths here at Faith. Momentum will come alongside us to help us grow stronger, reach our neighbors, and multiply disciples to shape our communities for Christ. If you're interested in learning more contact Pastor Alsen Wenzel, Colleen Palmer or the church office.

Let's continue to Love God. Love Others. Serve the World.

Thank you for all you do! Happy New Year!

Colleen Palmer, Outreach Coordinator

Visit our website:

www.FaithLutheranGF.com for our up-to-date Church Calendar.

A Word From Our Music Director

Hello Faith Lutheran!

I just wanted to say thank you to all who have volunteered to bring live music back into this church. I have been overwhelmed with positive feedback regarding the praise teams, bells, choir, and solos. It has been so amazing to see not only the talent, but dedication and worshipful hearts step forward in this call to serve.

As we launch full force into 2026, many of us have a shared thought lingering in the back of our minds: the good ol'-fashioned new year's resolutions. Now, I personally don't like the word resolution regarding the new year for two reasons. First, it comes from an ancient Babylonian tradition of paying debts to their gods. Or, if one were Roman, making resolutions to their god of transitions. Second, resolution implies that something needs to be fixed, needs to be solved,

which leads me to the whole point of this tangent: Jesus has accomplished all that is required for those who believe in Him. This doesn't mean that one should avoid this idea of self improvement. It simply means that instead of having the mindset of fixing, repairing, or even making ourselves a "better person" for our own sake, we can rest in the embrace of Jesus, knowing our value even without setting resolutions.

Perhaps as opposed to spending so much of our energy and attention to resolve our pasts, we can instead call them goals which align with the will of God and focus on what's to come. To spend more time with our God, the Eternal, true God of Israel. To better love our enemies. To sacrifice or fast from something important to us for the sake of our God. Overall, with repentance

and faith, we as believers don't need to fret over this idea of resolutions. Jesus has accomplished all. What we have left is faith, hope, and love to propel us into this new year. Let me clarify, my goal in writing this is not to guilt, or even challenge. My goal is to share what's on my heart. For me, I spend so much of my energy dwelling on my past and what I should have said or should have done. This newsletter is for those of you like me, who just need to hear: let it go. Everything that needs to happen in this life has been done. As Paul puts it, "Forget the past and look forward to what lies ahead. Press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling you." - Philippians 3:13b
Jay Gregg, Music Director

IN NEED OF PRAYER?

If you're in need of prayer, please contact the church office. We can add you or your family members to our prayer chain and/or weekly prayer list.

JANUARY SERVICE GROUP

As a way of serving each other, Faith Lutheran is refreshing our monthly Service Groups. The following are being asked to be available in the month of January. If a need arises for a funeral or wedding we will call you from the church office.

We are also asking the Service Groups to help with set up and clean up for Sunday Fellowships. The treats are provided by the church. You are welcome to bring in treats to share as well.

Thank you to each of you for giving your time and talents to help at Faith Lutheran.

- Mike and Jan Abbott
- Jim and Glenice Brown
- Joel and Dixie Demko
- Hillman and Cindy Fowell
- Jerry and Jessica Gray
- Tom and Ione Gruss
- Rod and Marilyn Thorne



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CHURCH STAFF

Senior Pastor:
Secretary/Office Manager:
Bookkeeper:
Facilities Manager:
Outreach Coordinator:
IT Manager:
Music Director:
Youth & Family Coordinator:

Pastor Alsen Wenzel
Cindy Fowell
Nicole LaMere
Kristina Cochran
Colleen Palmer
John Plank
Jay Gregg
Annette Hocker

OFFICE HOURS:

9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday
Our monthly calendar is on our website!
Phone: (406) 454-1309
Faithlutheran.gtf@gmail.com
www.faithlutherangf.com



THIS IS THE JOURNEY OF FAITH.

CURRENT COUNCIL MEMBERS

President - Fred Burow	
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Jim Brown	Christy Sem
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