


First News First

Volume 60, Issue 12

December 2025



As we enter the season of Advent, we once again prepare our hearts to welcome the Christ child — the One who comes to bring light into our darkness and hope into our uncertainty. Advent invites us to wait, to watch, and to trust that God is still at work among us, even when the path ahead is not yet clear.

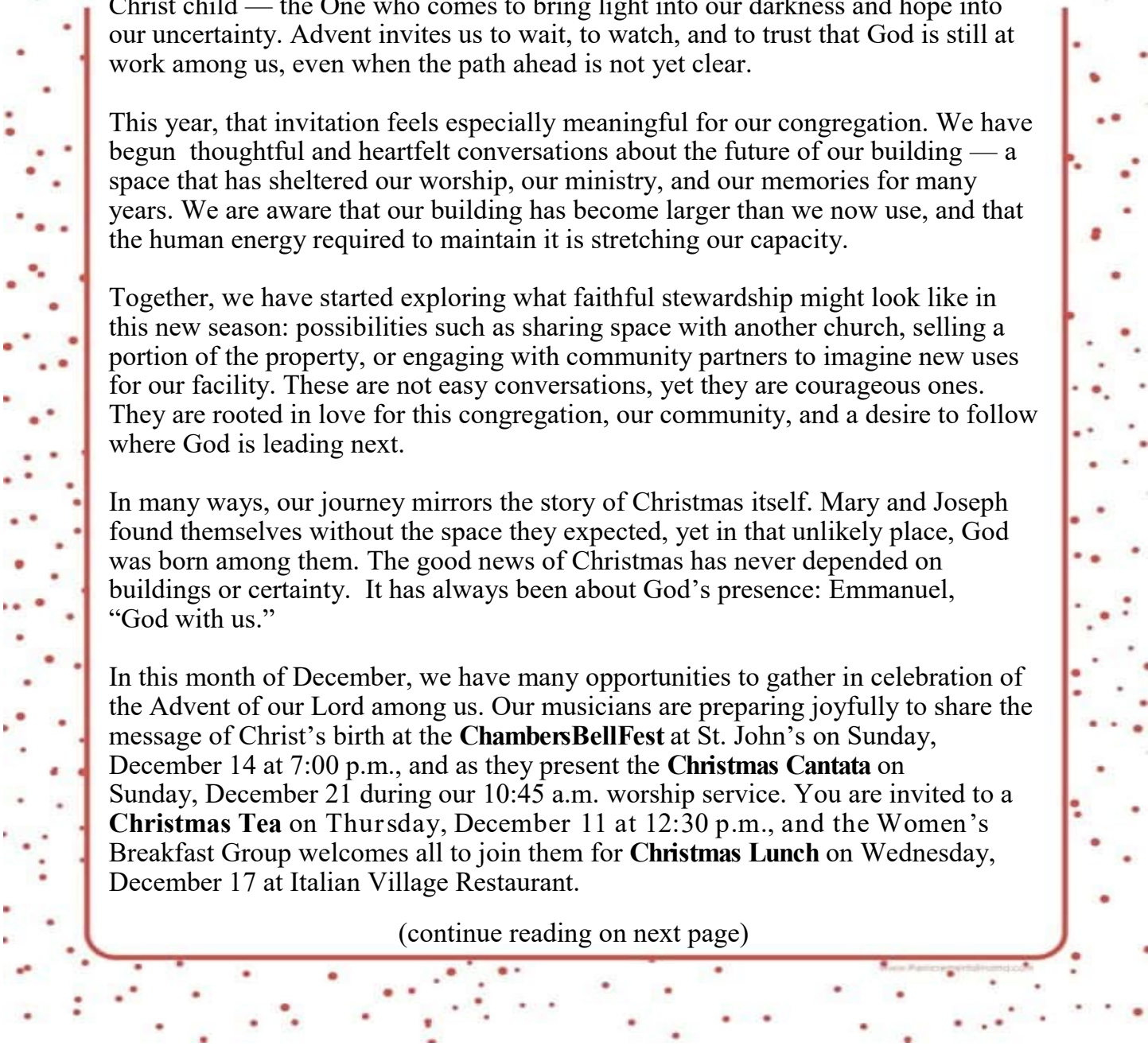

This year, that invitation feels especially meaningful for our congregation. We have begun thoughtful and heartfelt conversations about the future of our building — a space that has sheltered our worship, our ministry, and our memories for many years. We are aware that our building has become larger than we now use, and that the human energy required to maintain it is stretching our capacity.

Together, we have started exploring what faithful stewardship might look like in this new season: possibilities such as sharing space with another church, selling a portion of the property, or engaging with community partners to imagine new uses for our facility. These are not easy conversations, yet they are courageous ones. They are rooted in love for this congregation, our community, and a desire to follow where God is leading next.

In many ways, our journey mirrors the story of Christmas itself. Mary and Joseph found themselves without the space they expected, yet in that unlikely place, God was born among them. The good news of Christmas has never depended on buildings or certainty. It has always been about God's presence: Emmanuel, "God with us."

In this month of December, we have many opportunities to gather in celebration of the Advent of our Lord among us. Our musicians are preparing joyfully to share the message of Christ's birth at the **ChambersBellFest** at St. John's on Sunday, December 14 at 7:00 p.m., and as they present the **Christmas Cantata** on Sunday, December 21 during our 10:45 a.m. worship service. You are invited to a **Christmas Tea** on Thursday, December 11 at 12:30 p.m., and the Women's Breakfast Group welcomes all to join them for **Christmas Lunch** on Wednesday, December 17 at Italian Village Restaurant.

(continue reading on next page)



This is also the season for bringing light and warmth to our neighbors. If you are able to help, there are many ways to serve:

- Serve lunch at **St. Seraphim** on a Saturday in December (contact Mary Gotwald)
- **Laundry Day** on Saturday, December 6 at 11:45 a.m. at Spot Laundry (contact Joyce Ray)
- **Hats, scarves, and mittens** will be hung on our fence on Sunday, December 7 (contact Mary Beth Warne)
- **Christmas gifts for First Responders** in the Borough — please drop off by December 7
- Contributions to the **Discretionary Fund** are also greatly appreciated, as many are in need of financial assistance this month

Christmas Day Meal at the Salvation Army (contact at Salvation Army is Lynne Newman)

As we light the candles of Advent and move toward Christmas, may we be reminded that God meets us wherever we are... in the beauty of our sanctuary, in borrowed spaces, at Free Christmas Dinners, at the Laundromat, at St Seraphim, at Bell Concerts, and in every conversation where hope takes root. Let us continue to listen together for where Christ is being born anew among us now. It may be in new partnerships, in fresh forms of ministry, and in the deepening of our relationships as we walk this road together.

May the light of Christ guide our steps, warm our hearts, and remind us that no matter where we gather, Emmanuel, “God with us,” is already there.

With hope and blessing,

Pastor Jane Nicholson



Advent and Christmas Season Worship Schedule

November 30	10:45 a.m.	The First Sunday of Advent Worship with the Lighting of the Advent Wreath, the first episode of “The Christmas Story” Supply preaching will be The Rev. Angela Zimmann
December 7	10:45 a.m.	The Second Sunday of Advent Worship with the Lighting of the Advent Wreath, the second episode of “The Christmas Story” and Holy Communion
December 14	10:45 a.m.	The Third Sunday of Advent Worship with the Lighting of the Advent Wreath, the third episode of “The Christmas Story”
	7:00 p.m.	The Chambers Bell Fest at St. John
December 21	10:45 a.m.	The Fourth Sunday of Advent Worship with the Lighting of the Advent Wreath, the fourth episode of “The Christmas Story” and the Cantata presented by our choirs
December 24	3:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Worship with Candlelight, Festive Music and Holy Communion
	7:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Worship with Candlelight, Festive Music and Holy Communion
December 28	10:45 a.m.	The first Sunday after Christmas
January 4	10:45 a.m.	Epiphany Service with Holy Communion

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

Advent begins on Sunday, November 30. It is our hope that you will be able to participate in these ministries of preparation. More details can be found in other portions of the newsletter.

THE ADVENT WREATH will be lit at worship each Sunday leading up to Christmas. In our congregation we traditionally use blue candles as that is the color of hope.

FIRST LUTHERAN'S CHRISTMAS PROJECT First Lutheran is collecting financial donations and snack items for our first responders.



CHAMBERBELLFEST You are invited to attend the ChamberBellFest at St. John UCC, 1811 East Lincoln Highway. First Lutheran Bells will be ringing in the season for us on Sunday evening, December 14. The concert begins at 7:00 p.m.



CHRISTMAS TEA is taking place on Thursday, December 11 at 12:30 p.m. in the Parlor. All women are invited to join us. Please bring a small gift for exchange with one another.

CANTATA **The Gift of Christmas** created by Stephen DeCesare will be presented by the choirs and musicians of First Lutheran as our main message at worship on Sunday, December 21. Please invite your neighbors.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH The Ladies' Breakfast Group will be having lunch together this month. We will gather together on Wednesday December 17 at Italian Village Restaurant, 5267 Philadelphia Ave. Chambersburg, at noon. Contact Janet Friend for details and to reserve your seat! This lunch is open to all women.

CHRISTMAS CAROLING Join us on Sunday, December 21 following worship to deliver poinsettias and Christmas Carol to our homebound members. Please be in touch with Mary or Tim Gotwald if you would be willing to brighten people's spirits. Willingness to have fun and bring joy is much more important than musical ability.



POINSETTIAS FOR WORSHIP If you would like to donate red or white poinsettia for Christmas worship, please turn a form with money to the church office by Sunday, November 30.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP— will be at 3:00 and 7:00 on Wednesday, December 24. We will have Holy Communion and Special Music as we come together to hear the story of the Birth of our Lord in a stable and light our candles while singing glorious Christmas Carols of worship and praise. We hope you will be able to join us.



The Church Office will be closed December 24 & 25 as well as January 1 for the Christmas and New Year holidays.



ADVENT & CHRISTMAS



Our sanctuary choir will present the cantata

"The Gift of Christmas"

by Stephen DeCesare on Dec. 21 during our 10:45am worship. This will highlight the gift of Jesus in story and song. Featured will be several choir anthems, a song by our youth, and a few solo's and duets. Thanks to our talented musicians for working on a morning of wonderful music.

Annual Chambersbellfest

Our annual Chambersbellfest will be held on Dec. 14 at 7pm. Location is St. John's United Church of Christ located at 1811 Lincoln Way East. We have 4 bell choirs to celebrate the season: St. John's UCC, Park Avenue Methodist Church, Messiah United Methodist Church in Shippensburg, and our own Rose Ringers from First. We will have some string players join in the festive evening.

COMMUNITY

SpiriTrust Lutheran Auxiliary

is selling discount cards for \$5 each. Money raised will help The Inn. The card is active now through 9/1/26 and may be used for discounts at various area businesses. Please see Mary Beth Warne to purchase.



COOKIES FOR INMATES

Franklin County Jail Ministries Annual Cookies for Inmates project is requesting homemade cookies to help bring Christmas joy to the Franklin County Jail Inmates who are separated from their homes and families during the holiday season. Cookies are being collected December 8 to 12. Call Salem United Brethren Church 717-263-4123 to help.

CHRISTMAS DAY DINNER

Will be served at the Salvation Army from 12:30 to 2:00 p.m. It is provided with love by the Sons of Israel Congregation. If you would like to volunteer or donate for this event, contact Lynne Newman at the Salvation Army.

LONG RANGE PLANNING

CONGREGATION MEETING First Lutheran Church held a congregation meeting on Sunday, November 16. Lori Palmer and Mary Beth McGraw Warne were elected to a three year term beginning January 1, 2026. Thank you to Martha Carbaugh and Joyce Ray as they complete their terms on the congregation council. We appreciate their service.

DISCERNMENT CONVERSATION On November 16 First Lutheran had a conversation with the congregation regarding the future use of our building. Many ideas were presented by leaders and participants alike.

It was recognized that our facility has been well maintained through the years. Our church is deeply rooted in the life of Chambersburg. We are also aware that with our aging congregation we are beginning to have less human energy to maintain such a facility and less need for such a large facility.

The Long Range Planning Team has had conversations with:

- Vern McKissick who specializes in historic restoration and adaptive reuse.
- Dave Keller, executive director of Luminest for potential reuse as affordable low-income housing.

On December 2 the Long Range Planning Team will meet with Derek Henson of Pinnacle Services out of Hagerstown to discuss other possible sustainable solutions for our historic church. We will also be looking carefully at the input received from the congregation.

Our leaders are entertaining many ideas that vary from renting out space, hiring a company to maintain our facility, selling a portion of the facility, selling the entire facility, or any combination there-of. We are hoping to begin conversation with Trinity Lutheran. We have been made aware that they have unused space in their building and they are attempting to be good stewards and see what options are available for them.

Other pieces still needing exploration include:

- Rose rent – and the deed that accompanies this.
- The cemetery – would it behoove us to incorporate that property separately?
- Are we needing to proceed with the stained glass window renovation?

Depending upon decisions that are made, we will need to take Scouting, Meals on Wheels, Music, Sunday School, and Quilting Groups into consideration.

The Holy Spirit works through each of us. We encourage you to have continued conversations with the 2026 Council and the Long Range Planning Committee and its members. These committees include: Joyce Ray, Rose Wilson, Gerry Wilson, Nancy Hamilton, Mike Ross, Mary Beth McGraw-Warne, Sally Herritt, Jeff Dorand, Freda Dorand, Tim Gotwald, Marianne Kennedy, Gary Kennedy, Lori Palmer, and Pastor Nicholson.

These people are dedicated to transparency and communication to keep everyone informed as to what we are exploring and how we are moving forward. Long Range Planning meetings as well as Council Meetings are open to all members of our congregation.

Above all we remember that God is leading us and guiding us through faith into the future. In Jeremiah 29:11 we read: “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

Please keep the congregation, the leaders, and the staff of First Lutheran in prayer as we discern together God’s calling for our ministry and our church.

FAITH FORMATION

YOUTH and FAMILY EVENTS

Registration for **Winterfest 2026** is now open! January 2-4 at the Wyndham Resort in Lancaster, Winterfest is our annual **Sr. High & Young Adult Retreat** for the Lower Susquehanna Synod and gathers youth in grades 9 to12, college students on winter break, and their congregational advisors for a weekend immersion in Christian community, focused around a central theme. Large group gatherings feature keynote speakers and live music that introduce the theme and help inspire youth and young adult attendees to think critically about how the theme intersects their daily lives. Small group conversations allow participants to explore the ways God may be speaking to them through the theme and the surrounding Christian community. Visit www.bit.ly/winterfestlss to learn more! If you have an interest in attending, please let pastor Nicholson know by December 7. We will also need adults to accompany the youth.

Service Retreat - Weekend of Martin Luther King Jr. at Nawakwa

Come together as God's community to serve one another and the surrounding community of Nawakwa for a weekend of service! We will be serving camp and local organizations. Working could include making blankets, packing care kits, and cleaning camp facilities. There will also be games, a winter hike, and worship. This retreat is for **adults, families, youth, and even youth groups!** Put your faith into action this weekend through service work with Nawakwa. Friday, January 16th from 5-7pm is check-in and the retreat ends Monday, January 19th at 1:00pm. All meals on Saturday and Sunday and Monday brunch are included in the price of \$210 per person! More information and registration details at this link:

<https://www.lutherancamping.org/event/mlk-work-weekend/>

YOUTH PLANNING

Following Worship on **January 11** there will be a **pizza lunch and meeting** to discuss what we would have an interest in doing with the young people in the future. Would a couple of parents be willing to take care of ordering and serving pizza and drinks? Turn in the receipts to church for reimbursement.

Topics of conversation will include:

ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis

Youth Fundraising

NEIGHBORHOOD TASK TEAM

Sharing God's love in our community



CHRISTMAS PROJECT



This year for our Christmas Project, First Lutheran is working with the Chamber of Commerce to collect items for the appreciation of our First Responders in the Borough. Below is a list of items that would be welcome contributions. Please place your thank you notes and gifts in the Box in Memorial Hall by Sunday, December 7.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Make a thank you card to include in our care packages.

Donate any of the following items:

Snacks/beverages that are individually wrapped such as: Granola/protein bars, gum, nuts/trail mix, mints, cheese and peanut butter crackers, beef jerky, candy, donuts, chips, drink powder packets, sports drinks, microwave popcorn.

Supplies for the station such as large cans of coffee, k-cups, hand sanitizer, little memo books, sticky notes, highlighters, black ink pens, lip balm.

Monetary donations labeled "Christmas Project" or "First Responders" may be placed in the offering plate.



HATS, SCARVES, AND MITTENS

We hang items on our fence that will help our neighbors stay warm. Volunteer to hang items on the fence on December 7, and January 17-19.

Contact: Mary Beth Warne at 717-372-8282.

DISCRETIONARY FUNDS

Thank you to everyone who donates money to the discretionary fund throughout the year. Our fund is quite low at this time. If you would be willing to give money to help people with their heat bill, rent, get gas for their vehicle, or to help them acquire a government ID please place your gift in the offering and label it "discretionary fund."

Thank you!



CHRISTMAS TEA

All women of First Lutheran are invited to the annual Women of the ELCA Christmas Tea on Thursday, December 11 at 12:30 p.m. in the church Parlor. Enjoy tea and cookies, sandwiches and snacks. There will be a "Pick a Number" gift exchange (\$10 limit) and special entertainment. Join us for a fun time!



WOMEN'S CHRISTMAS LUNCH

The Women's Breakfast Fellowship will be having a Christmas lunch on December 17 at 12:00 p.m. at the Italian Village Restaurant located at 5267 Philadelphia Avenue in Chambersburg. Please RSVP to Janet Friend (717-360-1977) if you are able to attend. All ladies of the church are invited for lunch and fellowship with one another.



Thank You

Dear Pastor Jane and First Luther Family,

Words cannot express my gratitude for all the visits, text messages, cards and prayers we received. Our family was blessed with all your kindness during Linus' illness. Linus is now without pain but missed by family and friends. Thank you all!

Love, Cheryl and Family

I want to thank Pastor Jane for doing my daughters graveside service. I also want to thank everyone for the beautiful cards and the many hugs. Thank you so much.

Love, Marilyn Yaukey

My heartfelt thanks to Pastor Nicholson for her visits when I was in the hospital. My thanks to Nancy Hamilton for her visit, the rose vase from the church, and for the phone calls and cards. I truly feel blessed.

Love Peggy Stout

HELPING HANDS

2025 Council

President: Joyce Ray
Vice President: Mike Ross
Secretary: Gerry Wilson
Treasurer: Sally Herritt
Pastor: Jane Nicholson
Deacon: Freda Dorand
Martha Carbaugh
Jeff Dorand
Gary Kennedy
Marianne Kennedy
Financial Secretary: Carol McCoy

PRAYER CHAIN

May we include you in our prayers? Do you have a prayer need that we can help you with? If so, please call our prayer chain group leader:

Marcia Hunt @
717-263-0781

Names are kept on the prayer chain for 1 month. After that month, please contact the office again if you would like to have a name on for another month.

END OF YEAR GIVING

Please present any offerings you would like to have credited to the 2025 giving year by Sunday, December 28.

HOLIDAY BREAKS

There will not be Sunday School or Coffee and Donuts on Sunday, November 30 (Thanksgiving break) or Sunday, December 28 (Christmas break).

ANNUAL REPORTS

Annual Reports from the committees and staff are due to the church office by Sunday, January 4, 2026.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

David Burkholder	12/06	Doris Burdick	12/20
Freda Dorand	12/07	Loren Wenger	12/21
Kayla Rotz	12/07	Janice Holbrook	12/23
Mike Ross	12/09	James Landeras	12/24
Warren Heintzelman	12/11	Jane Nicholson	12/26
Beth Yaukey	12/12	Marcia Hunt	12/30
Brett Boock	12/12	Scott Carbaugh	12/30
Marlin Maclay	12/14	Emma Coy	12/31
Connie Wilkins	12/15	Sullivan Wenger	12/31



TRANSPORTATION

Need a Ride?

Our church provides transportation to church on Sundays!

Please call if you need a ride. Church office: 717-264-2015



Deadline for
the January
Newsletter
will be
December 8



FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

43 W. Washington Street

Chambersburg, PA 17201

E-mail: felccoffice@gmail.com

Website: www.felcc.org



@FirstEvangelicalLutheranChurch

@felccyouth



Church Office Hours

Monday-Thursday

9 a.m.-1 p.m.

CHURCH OFFICE	717-264-2015
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Parish Administrator	ext. 1
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Director of Music	ext. 3
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Pastor	ext. 4
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Christmas Eve Worship

December 24 at 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Includes Special Music, Holy Communion, and Candlelight

