

First News First

Volume 61, Issue 1

January 2026



As we step into a new year, many of us feel that familiar mixture of hope and possibility. The calendar turns, the days lengthen bit by bit, and something in us begins to look for new beginnings.

And right in the heart of this season comes Epiphany, the celebration of God's light breaking into the world through Christ. The Magi followed a star, but the deeper truth is that God's light found *them* first. Epiphany is not only a story about a star long ago; it is the ongoing promise that God continues to reveal grace, direction, and surprising clarity in the midst of our ordinary days.

Every new year brings resolutions and plans, but what if this year we simply began by watching for the light? Not the harsh light of our own striving, but the gentle, steady light of God's presence—showing up in conversations that warm our spirits, in moments of clarity during prayer, in the courage to face something difficult, in the generosity we receive or extend. These are our modern-day Epiphany moments: small revelations that remind us we are not walking into the future alone.

As a congregation, let us keep listening for God's guidance. Let us hear and be open to new ways of loving our neighbors well and growing as followers of Jesus. The path isn't always obvious, but Epiphany reminds us that God is always illuminating the next step—even if it's just one step at a time.

My prayer for you in 2026 is simple:

May God's light meet you where you are.

May it surprise you with hope.

May it steady you when the way feels uncertain.

And may it lead us, together, into the new year with faith, curiosity, and joy.

Blessings to you in this season of light,

Pastor Jane Nicholson

WORSHIP

Worship Schedule

Sunday, December 28	10:45 a.m.	Worship with Christmas Hymns
Sunday, January 4	10:45 a.m.	Epiphany Worship with Holy Communion
Sunday, January 11	10:45 a.m.	Baptism of Our Lord Installation of Council Members
Sunday, January 18	10:45 a.m.	Worship with Holy Communion.
Sunday, January 25	10:45 a.m.	The Annual Meeting will follow worship.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



CONGREGATION ANNUAL MEETING will be held on Sunday, January 25 following worship. This meeting will provide us with the opportunity to review the highlights of the past year and approve a ministry spending plan for 2026. We hope you will be able to join us.

THE CHURCH OFFICE will be closed January 1 for the New Year holiday. If you have a pastoral emergency during this time, please call Pastor Nicholson at home. 717-753-3940.

HOLIDAY BREAKS There will not be Sunday School on December 28 (Christmas break). There will be coffee and donuts.

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

ELECTED OFFICERS At the December 8, 2025 council meeting, the following persons were elected officers of our congregation for the 2026 year.

President Mike Ross
Vice President Gary Kennedy
Secretary Marianne Kennedy
Treasurer Sally Herritt
Financial Secretary Carol McCoy



BURIAL PLOTS FOR SALE Kimberly Wright (540-539-8545) has four burial plots available at Parklawn Memorial Gardens. These plots are located in the Gethseman Garden section 43-D lots 1,2,3, and 4. She is selling all four lots for \$4,200.00 or two for \$2,400.00 They can be bought in a group of 2 or 4. Pastor Nicholson has confirmed with Park Lawn that this is legitimate.

LONG RANGE PLANNING

Thank you to everyone who attended the time of conversation on Sunday, November 16 following worship and lunch. It was affirming to know that many people are concerned about the future of our building and the future of our congregation. Your ideas and questions are most valued and we will look into answering them as we move forward.

The following has taken place:

1. Long Range Planning committee met with **Derek Henson, consultant from Pinnserve** in Hagerstown. This organization offers services to help comprehensively evaluate our strengths, challenges, and opportunities. They would provide ideas related to community collaboration and offer administrative guidance. The committee is reading the material given, and will have more conversation in the new year.
2. The council has given approval to **contract with Real Estate Attorney, Mark Ornsdorf**. He will be examining the **deeds to our property**. The original deed is the 'Rose Rent' agreement with Col. Benjamin and Jane Chambers.
3. The council has given permission to **seek an architect or engineer** to give us a **facility analysis** which would provide a timeline for repairs and replacements needed in our building.
4. The finance committee and council have determined that these types of expenses will be paid from the **'Future Fund'** money in the trust account.
5. **Luminest Community Development** works with low income housing and toured the building in early November.
6. **Cumberland Valley School of Music** toured the building in early December.
7. The new executive committee is working to set up a time for conversation with the executive committee of **Trinity Lutheran Church** to share where we are in our process and consider how we may work together.
8. We are having conversations with representatives from **Anglican Fellowship** to explore their group renting space for a prayer service twice a month.

Thank you to our Long Range Planning Committee and Council for your work with this.
Long Range Planning: Tim Gotwald, Nancy Hamilton, Sally Herritt, Joyce Ray, Mike Ross, Mary Beth Warne, Gerry Wilson, Rose Wilson, and Pastor Nicholson



STEWARDSHIP

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

STEWARDSHIP THANK YOU Your response to the annual anticipated giving is greatly appreciated. If you have not yet submitted your giving card, please return it to the church office.



THANK YOU for your gifts to the discretionary fund during the Advent and Christmas Season. These will help our neighbors and are much appreciated.

FAITH FORMATION



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: 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis and Youth Fundraising.

CONGRATULATIONS



Congratulations to Rubens Paul who graduated from YTI Career Institute's HVACR program with Distinguished Honors on November 15, 2025.

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Mary Gotwald who has been named the Citizen of the Year by the Borough of Chambersburg. As we know, Mary has done much to lead the people of First Lutheran in caring for those in our community. She has connected us with Little Daisy's Closet, has left a strong legacy of community service through her example and through her teaching both in the school system and at our church. Through her humble acts of service she is a living witness to her faith. We are blessed to have Mary as part of the Family of God at First Lutheran. Mary received this Mike Waters award on Monday, December 15 at the Borough Council meeting.

THANK YOU

Thank you to First Lutheran Church Members for your most generous contribution to **She's Somebody's Daughter**. Your donation allows us to continue our mission of building communities of love and hope that honor women.

Blessings,
Rose Davis, Interim Director of She's Somebody's Daughter

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for your gift of \$337.00 to **Lutheran World Relief's Quilt and Kit Shipping Fund**. Your generosity today will ensure that these lovingly handmade blessings reach the people who need them most. I am so grateful for our dedication to blanketing the world with the piece of Christ ... until your love reaches every neighbor.

In Christ,
Daniel Speckhard, President and CEO

Dear First Evangelical Lutheran Church,

On behalf of the **Diaper Depot of Central Presbyterian Church**, we would like to thank you in your generous donation of \$500. In November we provided 203 families with diapers, that is over 10,150 diapers. May you be blessed as you have blessed others.

Thanks again for your support!
Alexis Helman, Central Presbyterian Church

Dear Friends at First Evangelical Lutheran Church,

We would like to express our sincere gratitude for the \$750 we've received in support of **Gracie's Place** and the \$750 received in support of **Noah's House**. Your support continues to bless the men and women residing in the stable, peaceful, and supportive environment we have created this is conducive to SUD recovery.

John Lloyd, Executive Director of Noah's House Inc.

Dear First Evangelical Church Parishioners,

Thank you so much for your generous donation to **Wheels For Women!** Thanks to donors like you we have been able to change the lives of 41 women with vehicles in the last 25 years. We have big plans for 2026! Thanks again! Your help means the world to us and our recipients!

Dirk Baumgardner, Founder
Chris Kimmel, Director of Development

Dear First Lutheran,

Thank you so much for your generous support of **Women in Need Victim Services.. Your \$1,000 donation will help us to fund Starter Kits for families transitioning into safe, independent living; legal advocacy for parents fighting to keep custody of their children; counseling to help survivors heal from trauma; educational workshops to reach young people about healthy relationship and online safety.**

With sincere appreciation,
Barb Channing, Executive Director



THANK YOU

THANK YOU

Dear Members of First Lutheran,
Thank you for the Christmas gift of \$150 that you presented to me and each person on staff. It is a blessing to be a part of this People of God.
May your new year be filled with the Glory of our Lord.

In Christ,
Pastor Jane Nicholson.

Thank you all for your prayers and get well soon cards.
I am blessed to have so many people care about my wellbeing.

Mark Nicholson

Thank you to everyone who helped with our special Advent and Christmas Worship Services. The decorations were well done, the music joyful, and the video selection humorous and meaningful for all ages,. Thank you to our audio video crew, ushers, office volunteers, lay readers, those who lead the advent wreath lighting each week, those who cleaned and put out all the candles, the altar guild, and the staff who arranged for these many specialties. God was certainly glorified.

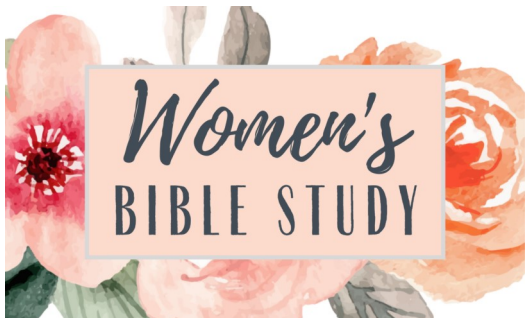
WELCA



The Women of the ELCA (WELCA)

will gather for Bible Study and meeting on Thursday, January 8 at 1:30 p.m. in meeting room 1.

All women of the church are welcome!



The Women's Fellowship Breakfast

will be on Wednesday, January 21 at 8:30 a.m. at Bob Evans.

All Ladies are Welcome!



HELPING HANDS

2026 Council

President: Mike Ross
 Vice President: Gary Kennedy
 Secretary: Marianne Kennedy
 Treasurer: Sally Herritt
 Pastor: Jane Nicholson
 Deacon: Freda Dorand
 Jeff Dorand
 Lori Palmer
 Mary Beth McGraw-Warne
 Gerry Wilson
 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.

Christy Burkholder	01/01	Zackary Peters	01/21
James Feight	01/04	Chuck Evans	01/22
Marilyn Yaukey	01/06	George Hammond	01/23
Matthew McCoy	01/07	Megan Yaukey	01/23
Norman Waltrick	01/08	Nancy Fricke	01/23
Ethan Yaukey	01/09	Janet Friend	01/25
Rosemarie Wilson	01/12	Susan Wingert	01/29
Jeffrey Lensbower	01/15	Barbara Vinson	01/30
Amanda Rankin	01/18	Julie Paul	01/30
Tanya Nitterhouse	01/19	Jim Brown	01/31
Kathleen Getaz	01/20		

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 February
 Newsletter
 will be
January 15



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
Parish Administrator	ext. 1
Director of Music	ext. 3
Pastor	ext. 4

