

FIRST OUT LOUD

God's Work. Our Hands. To Serve ALL People.

FEBRUARY- 2026 NEWSLETTER



Siblings in Christ,

Generosity begets generosity so the saying goes and yes, it is true! We have been focusing on generosity for a few years now in the life of our congregation. We began by realizing that - in sending Jesus to be born among us, suffer, die, and rise again to eternal life – God has demonstrated the greatest generosity imaginable. In response, we offer our time, talents, and treasure to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God's amazing generosity has prompted many of our members to share stories of how God's generosity has blessed their lives.

This generosity spilled over with an anonymous couple donating \$600,000 to help pay off our building mortgage. To this anonymous couple we say, "Thank you for your generosity!" The stipulation was we would have to raise the remaining \$300,000. We met the challenge. As a congregation, we raised over \$463,000. Our mortgage was officially paid off in full on December 31, 2025. This will enable us to pray, and ponder, and dream about what God might be calling us to do next as a congregation.

Through God's generosity and yours we have paid off a huge debt that was hanging over us as a congregation. Now, that debt is no longer there. Still, God's generosity continues. God inspires and leads us through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in our midst through God's Holy Word and Sacraments. God's Holy Spirit moves in and among us as we gather for prayer, worship, discernment, and service to our neighbor. In response, I pray we will continue to be generous and take what we would have given to the Building Retirement Fund and add it to our regular offering pledge. This way, we can fund the new ministries that God will lay before us in the years to come. Who knows what God will call us to next? Time, prayer, and discernment will tell. I cannot wait to see what happens next!

God bless you all,

Pastor Christopher Culuris

Happy New Year everyone! Although I said last month that I had written my last newsletter article, you'll have to bear with me for yet one more! My tenure as president continued through the January council meeting (which was last night as of the date of this writing). I am super pleased to share that Kaari Bly will be your council president for 2026! She was the vice-President the last two years and will be absolutely awesome in this role! The remainder of your Executive Committee is John Nadeau as Vice-President, Gabriela Roemhildt as Secretary, and Bonnie Pettis will serve another term as Treasurer. These are incredibly talented people who will serve the church superbly.

In other news, we held our annual congregational meeting on January 25. We met to approve the budget and elect members of the nominating committee as well as our delegates to the GAC Association of Congregations, SW Minnesota Synod Assembly, and Minnesota River Valley Conference Assembly.

We also reviewed our progress as stated in our Strategic Plan that was last revised by the church council in March of 2023 and covers the five-year period from 2023 to 2028. In that document, we articulated three strategic priorities and goals: 1) Engaging and Collaborating with the Community, 2) Provide Programs and Services to All Demographics, and 3) Having a Solid Financial Position. In my brief presentation to the congregation, I gave the church a strong "A+" for all three goals! I strongly believe that the church is healthy and set up for success in the years to come. I am honored to have served as the council president this past year and I look forward to what the future holds for us.

Sincerely,

Mark Roemhildt

Music Ministry Corner

There is a place for you here!

The FLC Spring Music Festival is coming! The Music Ministry at FLC is planning an evening of music on **April 26th at 5:00pm**. The Sanctuary Choir, the FLC Children's Choir, the FLC Cherub Choir, the FLC Wind Ensemble, and the FLC Handbell Choir all plan to participate. We'll have a reception following and use this time to celebrate our sixth graders who are growing out of our children's choir ministry. Mark your calendars!

Greet the new year with song. **The FLC Sanctuary Choir** is a wonderfully active group of singers of all ages NOW is the perfect time to join the choir! We practice each Sunday from 9:15 - 9:45 and sing in church around once per month.

The FLC Children's Choir and Cherub Choir is a wonderful place to learn to praise God with song. This is a perfect time to join if you're kiddo didn't come this fall. We play instruments, play games, sing songs, and have a lot of energy. Best of all - rehearsals are already built in to Wednesdays at First! Kids can eat at 5:15 and then 2nd - 6th grade rehearses in the choir room from 5:45 - 6:15, and PK - 1st graders rehearse in the choir room from 6:15 - 6:35. We sing three times per semester.

Let's get the band back together! All in grades 7 and up who play band instruments are invited to play with the FLC Wind Ensemble at our Spring Sing and Ring. Please reach out to Sarah to let her know you are interested!

Special music at FLC is a wonderful part of our worship. If you have talent to share as a soloist, member of a small group or in another way please contact Deacon Brenda at the church or at deacon@flcstp.org.

HELP IS NEEDED: Consider serving the church as a communion server, preparer, or bread baker. See the sign up in the gathering space or contact anyone on Worship & Arts for more info. This is a vital part of our church's ministry and we have had trouble filling needed roles!

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?
music@flcstp.org



Faithful Giving Allows For Generous Benevolence

On behalf of the Stewardship Committee, we want to Thank You for your generosity in 2025. The following is a list of our benevolence giving in 2025. May these gifts be a blessing to both those who give and those who receive:

Southwestern MN Synod and ELCA	\$9,405
Missionary Sponsorship	\$1,000
The Kitchen	\$2,078
World Hunger	\$990
St. Peter Food Shelf	\$3,395
Giving Tree (Pastor's Fund)	\$2,219
Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light	\$500
Global Refuge (Lenten included)	\$2,471
Total	\$22,058



Thank You to the anonymous couple who donated \$600,000 to help us pay off our building mortgage! Your generosity inspired many others and is very appreciated!

**Celebrate our 18th year as a
Reconciling in Christ congregation
Sunday, February 1st
Pastor Oby Ballinger
Welcome Waffles following Worship**

Rev. Oby Ballinger grew up on a family farm near Rochester and went to Concordia College in Moorhead, graduated from Yale Divinity School, then served several Twin Cities congregations in the United Church of Christ. Oby organized UCC communities statewide to support marriage equality in 2012 as part of the Minnesotans United for All Families campaign, and has also been an organizer for racial, social, and economic justice. In January 2025, Oby left parish ministry after fifteen years to launch Prism Organizing Network, a statewide community organizing initiative focused on LGBTQ safety, dignity, and liberation. Prism follows a model of multiracial, multi-faith organizing and develops leaders working for LGBTQ equality all across the state. Through Prism, Oby has led almost twenty LGBTQ listening sessions throughout the state, and in 2026 Prism is starting to organize to address community needs that surfaced from those conversations. Oby lives in Saint Paul with his husband Javen Swanson, their cat Amos, and their dog Ruthi.



FLC will be providing dinner at "The Kitchen" on the following dates:

Monday Feb 23rd

Monday March 23rd

Monday April 27th

If you are looking for a fun volunteer opportunity for the New year, come and join us. Volunteer sign up sheets are on the table in the Gathering Space.

If you have questions please contact Marilyn Kochsiek at 612-695-6270.

Thank You.

Soup Supper Schedule for 2026

Feb 25- CCM, Cemetery

March 4- Fellowship, Worship & Arts

March 11- Social Justice, LLL

March 18- B & G, Green, Tech

March 25- Stewardship, Finance, Funds Management



soup

Volunteer Needed

Sign up to help with Sunday Service

Sign up sheet is located on the table in the Gathering Space.

FROM THE DESK OF DEACON BRENDA | 7



From the desk of Deacon Brenda

How are you doing these days? The present state of life in Minnesota is filled with stress because of the ICE tactics that are being employed all around us. I have noticed in myself my concern for my family members who have brown skin or accents or for my former students who are working in the dairies in Minnesota and South Dakota - some documented and some not. I have moments when I fear for their safety and pray for them daily. Recently I heard an interview with a clinical social worker who had advice for parents, kids and teenagers that is helpful for all of us: Stress can show up in all of us in different ways.

Children may experience separation apprehension, digestive issues, fear of leaving home, and trauma. For adults, we too may be experiencing worry, sadness, nervousness, short tempers and lots of anxiety. These days are a conflicting time for us when we are watching our friends, neighbors and for some of us, family, who are suddenly gone from our lives. In many cases, we don't know if people are in hiding, have left or have been detained. If we have children in our lives who are asking questions it is time to be honest with them and hold space for our kids to express their feelings. We can't pretend that everything is fine these days - our kids are smart and we need to help them make some sense of what is happening. We need to admit we don't have the answers and we need to listen. The way we engage in conversations and hear our kids and others has to be grounded in love, empathy and hope.

Find some **actions or tasks** that help you show and **put in practice a sense of love and connection**.

For kids: Help a child in your life write a letter to someone who they may be missing - a friend or family member - or perhaps someone they don't know, but the Food Shelf delivers food to.

Bake cookies for a friend, create a piece of art, make up a song on an instrument or sing a song and record it and send it to a friend.

High school students gathered some friends and created a Student Action group to address needs of students around them.

Observe a routine - this grounds our nervous system.

Breathe (in through nose and out through the mouth - slowly 3 times) when you feel stressed..

Find others to be with and remember that we are not going through this alone.

Lean into our faith tradition of prayer.

For all of us: pray. Start your running conversation with God. Share this practice with your kids in your life. If you need help getting started, try author Anne LaMott's strategy of "Help, Thanks, Wow" praying. Ask God for help - we don't have this life all figured out, practice the art of gratitude - find something to say thank you for and finally name something that is simply remarkable in your life - the "WOW". You may not feel like doing this last part, but this discipline reminds us that God's creation is good. Lean into your faith and knowledge that God does not leave us to face our perils alone. God walks with us in our darkest and scariest times. We are not alone. Never forget that. God's Peace Deacon Brenda

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

1114 Traverse Rd.
St. Peter, MN 56082

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Peter, MN 56082
Permit #3

Upcoming events and activities:

Agape concert in Hutchinson for Confirmation students - January 28

High School Food packing event - Wednesday, February 11 at FLC

Bowling and Arcade - Wow Zone - 4-6th graders February - date TBD

Stump the Pastor night - Wednesday, February 25

Ash Wednesday - February 18 - worship (no classes)