

FIRST OUT LOUD

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

MARCH 2026 NEWSLETTER

March Newsletter



Siblings in Christ,

As you read this newsletter, we are in the middle of the season of Lent. Lent comes from the Old English/Germanic word “Lencten” which means “Lengthening of Days” or “Springtime.” While the weather certainly does not feel like Spring as I draft this article, I know change is in the air.

I have witnessed a change in attitude and action from many people across Minnesota and around our country. Christians and people of good will are speaking out. We are organizing, networking, rallying, training, marching, and protesting. We protest in response to how our government is treating our neighbors with brown skin who speak Spanish. Many of them are not being treated well, nor according to the US Constitution.

In response, many of you have decided to act. You are bringing groceries to the hungry. We are collecting money for rental assistance to help families whose wage earners have been detained by ICE. We are collecting hygiene products for the St. Peter Food Shelf. We are writing to our elected representatives in government and asking them to treat all people with dignity, respect, and the rights afforded all who reside here in the United States of America.

Lent is a short season, lasting only 40 days. The disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving help us to reflect on our lives and how we are living out our faith. As we make time to spiritually prepare for Holy Week and Easter, I hope we also take action to help our neighbors who are suffering. Write someone a note, letting them know you care. Drop off some food for those who hunger. Make a free-will offering to ensure the heat stays on and people remain in their homes. Be the hands, feet, and heart of Christ caring for our neighbors. For whatever you do to the least of these, that you do unto Christ.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Pastor Christopher Culuris

As I sit down to write this, I keep wondering if I am really “old enough” to serve as church president. I have been assured, I am—and I am truly honored to serve this amazing congregation.

To give you a little background, my name is Kaari Dommer Bly. My husband, Galen, and I both grew up in northern Minnesota. We moved to St. Peter shortly after graduating from college and getting married, which means we have now lived here for almost 25 years. Where did the time go?! We have three boys: Lathe in 12th grade, Laird in 10th grade, and Loic in 6th grade. I have taught kindergarten, first, and second grade at South Elementary and currently work as a Reading Specialist.

Over the past few weeks, there have been countless moments of heaviness with events in St. Peter, our country, and our world. Yet, I have been struck by the “glimmers of light” in my own life, our church, and our community. From sermons and prayers to the courage of resistance and upstanders; from songs and financial support to the kindness of giving safe rides to school and work—the generosity and care for others truly exemplifies who we are. These aren’t just “good deeds”; they are the intentional outpouring of love that defines us as a Christian community. They remind us that even when the world feels heavy, the light of Christ is being reflected through us.

It is with that sense of pride and a strong feeling of gratitude that I step into this role. I feel so fortunate to raise our boys in a place where they are surrounded by such incredible mentors and models of faith.

As I was preparing to write this, this prayer for Ash Wednesday resonated with me: “Gracious God, out of your love and mercy, you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbors. Call forth our prayers and acts of kindness, and strengthen us to face our mortality with confidence in the mercy of your Son, Jesus Christ. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.”

May God’s peace and love be with you,

Kaari

2026_Lent_calendar retrieved from: [ELCA.org/WHLent](https://www.elca.org/WHLent)

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



Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign (aka: “Pack the Pews”)

Once again the annual March food drive is upon us. For several years First Lutheran has participated in this statewide effort, which is designed to help stock local food shelves. Donating to the St. Peter Area Food Shelf is important at all times of the year, of course, but it is especially important during the month of March. In March, and only in March, donations of both food and money receive a proportional match from the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches. That match adds value to our donations and allows the local food shelf staff to purchase items when donations aren't sufficient to keep up with demand.

As you probably know, the need for food assistance remains great for people living within the area that the St. Peter Area Food Shelf serves. During the first six weeks of 2026, there was an increase of 13% in the number of families served and an increase of 28% in the amount of food distributed as compared to the same six weeks last year.

The need is not likely to subside anytime soon. The dates for this year's FoodShare campaign are March 1 through April 6. On Sunday, March 29, we will have our annual “Pack the Pews” event when we will try to fill the back pews of the church with our donations. During all the Sundays of March, you will find a grocery cart and a donation bin in the gathering space waiting to receive your donations. On Wednesdays, the bin will be in the hall leading to the dining room. We will collect our donations and then use them to “pack” the two back pews on March 29. We also anticipate doing a “noisy offering” to benefit the FoodShare Campaign during at least one Wednesday evening meal. Thank you in advance for your generosity in caring for your food-insecure neighbors.

The Food Shelf welcomes most kinds of shelf-stable food items as well as some common household products. A list of preferred items is listed below. **Monetary gifts are also welcomed. Checks should be made out to SPAF and dropped in the offering plate.**

One final note: First Lutheran is one of several area churches that are currently gathering cleaning and personal care items for the Food Shelf to distribute. This effort helps to ensure that the Food Shelf staff can use the monetary donations they receive primarily to purchase much needed food. Each month we will be asked to donate a different category of items, (For example, January and February's requested donations were shampoo and body wash). In March it will be toothpaste. And, just to be clear, this program is different from and separate from the March Food Share Campaign—but it's no less important. Thanks again for all you do to help!

Protein*

Peanut butter, sunflower, and almond butter
 Canned meats and fish packed in water (*chicken, tuna, salmon, sardines*)
 Canned beans
 Dried beans and peas (*black beans, black-eye peas, chickpeas beans, kidney beans, lentils*)
 Nuts and seeds (*almonds, peanuts, sunflower seeds, pecans*)

Personal Items/Baby Items

Shampoo
 Soap
 Deodorant
 Toothpaste/Brushes
 Menstrual Products
 Diapers (Adult and Infant - all sizes)

Grains

Brown or white rice
 Pasta, where first ingredient listed is a whole grain
 Whole-grain and enriched pasta (*without extra seasonings or sauces*)

Other Items*

Vegetable oil
 Condiments
 Herbs and spices
 Dressings, marinades, dip mixes

Dairy

Low-fat or non-fat shelf-stable, powdered, or evaporated milk
 Low-fat soy, almond, or rice milk*

Fruits & Vegetables

Canned vegetables
 Canned or dried fruit*
 100% fruit juice
 Vegetable juice
 Fresh or frozen produce (*check with the food shelf*)





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

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.

Soup Supper Schedule for 2026

March 4– Fellowship, Worship & Arts

March 11– Social Justice, LLL

March 18– B & G, Green, Tech

March 25– Stewardship, Finance, Funds Management



soup

Faith Formation

2nd-4th grades

We've had a very busy start to our new year! After a lovely Christmas Program, we jumped right into learning in 2026! Our class has discussed the Israelites escape from Egypt led by Moses, the Battle of Jericho, David and Goliath (we made slingshots and tried to hit our paper Goliath), and Elijah and the Widow. The week before Ash Wednesday, we baked flat bread.....yum! Lots of crafts, lots of questions, and lots of energy is brought to the classroom by this group each week! They also played bells in church, and are really enjoying learning instruments, along with singing. We are all looking forward to Easter projects. Stay tuned!

5th-6th grades

Our oldest group continues to grow in their faith, through lesson review and questions. We covered Hannah, Solomon, and Naaman after the new year. They had also been asking about Revelation, so we spent a time learning about the second coming of Christ and the "new Heaven and new Earth." Revelation can be scary, but this group handled it so well and were actively engaged in learning! They are ready to move up to Confirmation in the next year. Outside the classroom, they are participating in youth group, choir, and acolyting duties. We are looking forward to "Stump the Pastor" and their Easter skit!

FROM THE DESK OF DEACON BRENDA | 7



From the Desk of Deacon Brenda:

Lenten Greetings First Lutheran Community. How are you doing with observing a Lenten discipline? Historically, the church has encouraged people to renew their faith through repentance and almsgiving. I just read an article by Episcopal priest, Diana Butler Bass on marking Lent. She says the earliest Christians didn't mark this season with ashes or by wallowing in woe but on cleansing. They saw the days before Easter in a different way — their emphasis was not on penance for sin but on preparation for meeting the risen Lord and celebrating Easter. So I have been wondering, how am I preparing to meet my risen Lord? In the midst of all of the parental care-giving, every-day tasks, and the growing needs of our community, can I make a shift in my thinking between woe to wonder? Can I channel some of the curiosity and wonder of the kids we have around FLC into my Lenten practice? It is worth a try.

I am including a Lenten practice calendar that focuses on some different ways to observe Lent. Share it with a family member - it has some ideas that were presented in last month's newsletter for actions that we can do to practice love and connection during these days when life seems so 'not normal'. It isn't just for kids!

Try a few - I am starting with making art (March 15th idea). The world needs more art right now.

+God's peace, Brenda

Sunday School Pics



FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

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St. Peter, MN 56082

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Lenten Daily "Kindness Calendar for Kids"



March/April 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1 Help your parents with chores</p>	<p>2 Give a hug</p>	<p>3 If someone gets hurt, ask if they are "ok"</p>	<p>4 Sing a song to someone</p>	<p>5 When asked to do something, say "ok"</p>	<p>6 Clean up your toys</p>	<p>7 Bake cookies for a neighbor</p>
<p>8 Help with spring yard work</p>	<p>9 Draw a picture of your favorite animal or pet</p>	<p>10 Check in on a friend</p>	<p>11 Choose your own "kind" activity</p>	<p>12 Play with someone who does not have many friends</p>	<p>13 Say "Please" and "Thank You"</p>	<p>14 Help siblings put toys together</p>
<p>15 Make art</p>	<p>16 Talk to/get to know someone new</p>	<p>17 Pray for someone who is sick or lonely</p>	<p>18 Give someone a compliment</p>	<p>19 Say "I'm sorry"</p>	<p>20 Speak kindly to others. Don't yell</p>	<p>21 Relax with friends and family</p>
<p>22 Draw a picture of your family and pray for them</p>	<p>23 Take 3 deep breaths. Thank God for the air we breath</p>	<p>24 Share your smile and laughter!</p>	<p>25 Look and listen for signs of spring!</p>	<p>26 Ask an adult if you can help with anything</p>	<p>27 Pray for someone who is sad. Maybe that is you today.</p>	<p>28 Read your favorite book or ask someone to read to you.</p>
<p>29 Go for a walk with a family member. Talk about God's creation</p>	<p>30 Ask a friend "How are you doing?"</p>	<p>31 Go for a walk with your pet or a friend</p>	<p>1 Make a card or draw a picture for a friend</p>	<p>2 Open doors for others</p>	<p>3 Relax and put your feet up after school</p>	<p>4 Choose your own "kind" activity</p>
<p>5 CHRIST IS RISEN! Sing and dance with all creation!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Congratulations! You made it through an entire Lenten season of doing kind activities! Which was your favorite?</p>					