



# First Things ~ February 2025

Dear Congregation,

I have been here as your new pastor for a few months now, and over these few months, I've been blessed to offer to you many of the good things that God wants you to have in a pastor. This month, I'll be starting a series where I share with you some of the things that God gives you through a pastor or simply by being a member of a Christian congregation.

We'll start with the most important thing that God gives you through a congregation and a pastor: access to God's gospel, which is the good news that you are forgiven for your sins, that Christ is for you. Whenever you feel the burden of your sin, you get to know that in your church and through your pastor, God is going to lift that burden of guilt and grant you freedom from sin, death, and hell.

Part of giving you the gospel means that I will heed Jesus' words from Matthew 16:19, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Part of our service each week includes confession and absolution, where I tell you, "I forgive you all your sins."

Of course, it's wonderful to be absolved in a crowd. However, one benefit of having a pastor is to know that you can also come to me privately and confess a specific sin or sins, and I will absolve you there as well. Keep in mind that whatever you tell me in such a place, I will never speak a word of to anyone else. It's not my place to share what you tell me in private, and when I absolve you, it is treated as though it never happened. For when you confess to me, it is as though you were confessing to Christ himself, and just as he will keep your sin silent, I will do the same.

From your church, you also get access to the gospel in Holy Baptism. I am called to baptize for our congregation, and so I will carry out the baptisms for us. This is done for the sake of good order, as 1 Corinthians 14:40 states. Of course, in emergencies, any Christian has the right to perform a baptism using the words Christ gave us. The one baptizing will apply water and say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

As the baptized, through your congregation, you also get to have what we might call "baptismal formation." That's simply the ongoing blessings of baptism: baptism is a daily drowning of the sinful nature and a daily raising to life of the new person whom the Holy Spirit has made you to be through faith. With this daily dying

and rising, you get to approach each day with the confidence of forgiveness and the enlivening power of your baptism to carry out your daily tasks, which the Lord has given you.

Finally, those who are confirmed members of our congregation also get to receive the blessing of the Lord's body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine of Holy Communion. Our schedule is to regularly offer Communion on 1st and 3rd Sundays. We also offer the sacrament at the high festivals of the church year so that you have regular access to the precious gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation in this meal. If you should be sick and cannot receive the sacrament at one of the regular services, please let me know, and I will be happy to bring Communion to you. Sickness or infirmity is not a reason that you should be denied your Savior's gifts, and so they will not be denied to you.

I have so enjoyed our first few months together, and I look forward to the continued work that we will share in gospel ministry. I also look forward to my service to you as your shepherd.

In Christ,

Pastor Pilarski

## Fellowship Opportunities and Events

**Monday, Feb. 3**

Camp Phillip Sign-Up: Summer Camp Registration opens!! From Sonshine and Specialty Camps to Fledglings and Pee-Wees, Camp Phillip has summer camp programs for every child. You can begin signing up for Summer Camps at **noon**. For more information about dates, fees, and overall helpful information you can visit their Summer Registration page [here](#) or type this address into your browser <https://www.campphillip.com/summer-programs>.



**Feb. 7 & Feb. 10**

Church Office Closed

**Saturday, Feb. 15**

Women of First: Fellowship with guest speaker, Jared Justman, from WELS Lutheran's for Life- Women of First invite *all members* to attend **Saturday, February 15 at 10 AM** for a special guest speaker from WELS Lutherans for Life. *Lunch is provided!*



**Wednesday, Feb. 19**

A Musical Passport: LHS Winter Band Concert – Join the Luther High and Elementary school bands selections from around the world! Concert begins **at 6:30 PM**. (Please note that originally this Concert was scheduled for Sunday, February 23.)

**Sunday, Feb. 23**

First Steps Early Learning Center preschool room sings!

### Door Offering for Camp Phillip

In January our congregation had a door offering for Camp Phillip. The monies collected go to support the ministry of Camp Phillip and our church's annual "dues". This membership provides all First Lutheran- La Crescent members with a 10% discount toward any Summer Camp Programs.

Together we collected: \$192.00

## Member Meet-ups with Pastor

Pastor Pilarski is excited to meet with each family in our congregation! Preferred meeting locations are at your homes, though other arrangements can be made if absolutely necessary. Please sign up using the calendar and sign-up sheet located on the table in the entry.

## Weist-Pieper Scholarship Fund Applications

We are blessed to have two educational scholarship funds available to our three WELS churches in La Crescent and Hokah. They are the Weist Fund and the Pieper Fund. The *Weist Fund* was generously given by William F. Weist. William Weist bestowed a trust to three churches: First Evangelical Lutheran of La Crescent, Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran, South Ridge and Zion Evangelical Lutheran, Hokah. This trust is being used to help provide for any level of education that will enhance our school-age children's academic and religious well-being.

The *Pieper Fund* was generously given to the members of First Evangelical Lutheran of La Crescent by Edith Pieper as part of her last will and testament. It was Edith's wish that this part of her estate be used to assist the members of First Evangelical Lutheran of La Crescent in two ways: to assist members with the cost of high school education in a Lutheran high school, and to assist members with the cost of a college education if the applicant was studying for the ministry at colleges such as Martin Luther College or Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Applications for tuition assistance through the Weist-Pieper Scholarship will be available on the peg board in the Narthex soon. Please complete and return by March 31.

## Meet the new Board for Lay Ministry Members!



**ELC Elder**  
Dan Buchholz

**Encouragement Elder**  
Kyle Schroeder



**Vice-Chairman**  
Dave Wendt

# Fellowship Hall Floor Update

Beginning Monday, February 3, the fellowship hall flooring project will begin downstairs. Currently it is projected that the project will take about a weeks' time. Help would be appreciated Sunday, February 2, to move all items in that space to alternate locations. Thank you in advance for those that can assist after worship on Sunday. For additional information regarding this project, please speak with Tim Welke, Elder of Property & Grounds.

## December

### Summary of Financial Information 2024

Financial Summary				
	YTD		Difference	Comments
	Actual	Budget		
Net Income (Loss) Church	\$31,927	(\$30,505)	\$62,432	
Net Income (Loss) ELC	\$10,716	\$677	\$10,039	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$42,643</b>	<b>(\$29,828)</b>	<b>\$72,471</b>	
Grants (net)	(\$19,316)	(\$11,830)	(\$7,486)	
Without Grants	\$23,327	(\$41,658)	\$64,985	

Total Deficit of ELC	
2018	(\$17,051)
2019	(\$23,087)
2020	(\$2,544)
2021	\$39,832
2022	(\$10,484)
2023	(\$8,202)
2024	\$10,716
	<u>(\$10,820)</u>

Giving Summary				
	YTD		Difference	Comments
	Actual	Budget		
Offerings	\$208,667	\$200,000	\$8,667	104.3%
Debt Reduction	\$17,515	\$0	\$17,515	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$226,182</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>	<b>\$26,182</b>	

Assets					
	2023		2024		Comments
	December	December	December	Change	
Checking Account	\$78,454	\$61,664	\$16,790	(\$16,789)	
Money Market	\$0	\$51,540	\$51,540	\$51,540	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$78,454</b>	<b>\$113,204</b>	<b>\$34,750</b>	<b>\$34,750</b>	Net increase in cash balance

Liabilities & Equity					
	2023		2024		Comments
	December	December	December	Change	
Dedicated Funds Total	\$90,965	\$87,041	(\$3,924)	(\$3,924)	
Other Liabilities	\$5,799	\$1,830	(\$3,969)	(\$3,969)	
<b>Assets less Liabilities</b>	<b>(\$18,310)</b>	<b>\$24,334</b>	<b>\$42,644</b>	<b>\$42,643</b>	Net increase in equity
Mortgage Balance	\$270,227		Interest Rate	6.34%	
Balloon Payment Due	11/1/2027				

Required Offerings		
January Offerings Needed	24,194	
January Offerings Received	22,890	
February Offerings Needed	16,288	