


FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL
MISSOURI SYNOD • KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE



First Hearts January 2026

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From the Pastor

Marked by the Cross for Life

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The Christian life begins with these words. Spoke at Baptism, they are not to be put aside. Rather, they name us, claim us, and place our lives within God’s gifting and saving work.

In Holy Baptism, the sign of the holy cross is marked upon the forehead and the heart. This is a claim. This is a marking of belonging to another. The Greek word is sphragis, which refers to branding. Jesus brands us as a Shepherd brands his sheep on the forehead. Jesus' brand on our foreheads is the cross.

In January, a new calendar year begins. We make resolutions and create expectations for ourselves — promises to be better, to act better, to start fresh. The Christian doesn't begin on January 1. It began when God placed His mark upon you. That marked name does not fade due to weakness, sin, or fear.

The cross is the shape of our life because it is the shape of Christ's life for us. He reveals Himself through weakness, suffering, mercy, and self-giving love. To be marked by Jesus' cross is to belong to the Crucified and Risen One.

Luther encourages us to begin and end each day with the sign of the cross and saying "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Doing so, we return to the promised place upon us in Baptism. Doing so, we remember to whom we belong.

In the season of Epiphany, Jesus reveals Himself to the world as its Savior. He has revealed Himself to you at the altar, and the cross continues to mark us. Marked by the cross for life, we freely live and die confidently knowing that we belong to Jesus, the Light of the world.

Pastor Ed Maanum

Weekly Events

Sunday - Divine Service 9:30 am; Sunday School & Bible Study following

Board Happenings

1/13 - School Board 6:00pm

1/20 - Planning Council 6:30pm

Other Church Activities

1/10 - Men's Bible Study 8:30am

1/11 - Young Adult Bible Study 12:00pm

1/14 - Ladies' Bible Study 5:45pm

1/18 - Youth 12:00pm

1/22 - School Open House 5:30pm - 7:30pm

1/24 - Men's Bible Study 8:30am

1/28 - Ladies' Bible Study 5:45pm

<u>A.D. 2026</u>	Jan. 1	Circumcision and Name of Jesus (New Year's Day)	Num. 6:22-27	Psalm 8	Gal. 3:23-29	Luke 2:21
	Jan. 4	Second S. after Christmas	1 Kings 3:4-15	Psalm 119:97-104	Eph. 1:3-14	Luke 2:40-52
EPIPHANY	Jan. 6	The Epiphany of Our Lord	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 72:1-11 (12-15)	Eph. 3:1-12	Matt. 2:1-12
	Jan. 11	The Baptism of Our Lord	Isaiah 42:1-9	Psalm 29	Rom. 6:1-11	Matt. 3:13-17
	Jan. 18	Second S. after the Epiphany	Isaiah 49:1-7	Psalm 40:1-11	1 Cor. 1:1-9	John 1:29-42a
	<i>or</i>	The Confession of St. Peter	Acts 4:8-13	Psalm 118:19-29	2 Peter 1:1-15	Mark 8:27-35 (36-9:1)
	Jan. 25	Third S. after the Epiphany	Isaiah 9:1-4	Psalm 27:1-9 (10-14)	1 Cor. 1:10-18	Matt. 4:12-25
	<i>or</i>	The Conversion of St. Paul	Acts 9:1-22	Psalm 67	Gal. 1:11-24	Matt. 19:27-30

In Other News

Stewardship

“And he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new. Also, He said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true” (Revelation 21:5).

In January there is a great deal of “new” talk. Parties are held to ring in the “new” year. “New” year’s resolutions are made to set a “new” course of life in the “new” year. There is date forgetfulness as checks and other forms are filled out without using the “new” year on the dateline.

We use all this “new” talk because there is very often so much wrong with the old in us. We think back to the “new” resolutions from the previous year that only lasted a few weeks. That “new” person did not shed any pounds and instead, picked up a few. The “new” habits of going to the gym were soon replaced by even more time on the couch binging on Netflix. The “new” person who does not lose their temper, use sarcasm as a lethal weapon and spend more money than necessary, but who worships, prays and serves the Lord and the neighbor, never seemed to stick around. We need “new” talk because the Old Adam is alive and well within every one of us.

But this promise of “new” is a matter of stewardship. It is the Lord Himself who makes the promise of all things being new. These words recorded by St. John are not pious wishes or hopeless promises. They do what they say. YOU, that one baptized into Jesus’ death and resurrection, are NEW! These words are indeed trustworthy and true. This “new” comes to you in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It comes free of charge, even without our prayer.

This stewardship of “new” is not a vague, someday kind of stewardship either. You are NEW now! Forgiven. Reborn from above. The old is gone, nailed to Calvary’s cross and buried and rotting in a tomb that was only borrowed by Jesus for His resurrection rest. The Gospel is

what makes us NEW every morning. Remembering your baptism, you are new. Confessing your sins and receiving absolution makes you new. Hearing the Gospel filling your ears makes you new. Feasting on Christ's body and blood in the Holy Supper makes you new.

These mercies, totally undeserved as they are, are entrusted to us to steward TODAY even as we long for the Last Day. But we know how often we fail in this stewardship. We hoard God's creation as if it belongs to us. We belittle and devalue our neighbor because they look or sound or act in a way that we do not like. We seek to make the Holy Word of God softer and more palatable for those, or even ourselves, who refuse to confess sin as sin and repent. We value our comfort over truth, our reputation over faithfulness and our treasure over making sure that people get to hear of the Jesus who has done so much for the world and us.

We, as stewards of the Gospel, need to be made new every day. This is exactly what the Lord does. We failed in stewardship of the Gospel last year, so He gives us a new year. We failed in stewardship of the Gospel yesterday, and He gives us a new day. We failed in stewardship of the Gospel in the last few minutes, and yet in mercy our newness comes with each tick of the clock! Because that is how the Lord works.

As we see this working of all new things in us, it then calls us to be stewards of this newness to the world. This starts right in our own homes. It radiates out to our neighbors. It beams out from our congregations. This newness is teamed at the circuit, district and Synod levels all to shine the newness of the Gospel to those who need it.

Your new talk starts in the newness of the Gospel. Steward this treasure in this new year and this new day. It starts with a new you in Jesus. This is indeed trustworthy and true.

Sunday School - Just a reminder that we have Sunday School available from Pre-School through High School. We look forward to having you!

Young Adult Bible Study - please join us on the second Sunday of every month.

Youth! Mark your calendars, join in fun and fellowship after Sunday School on the third Sunday of every month.

Online Services: Please visit the church website www.firstknoxville.org to view our worship services and to participate in worship at your home. There are also links for Bible study and other resources.

Facebook Page: Follow First Lutheran on Facebook for all the latest updates:
<https://www.facebook.com/KnoxFirstLutheran/>

are all equally loved by God—despite our strengths and weaknesses—and seeing that same value in others.

And of course, at First Lutheran, we are hardworking. We know that without effort, even the most talented individuals can struggle. Through hard work and determination, we nurture the gifts and talents God has given each of us.

We invite you to share the story of First Lutheran School with others—friends, neighbors, and families who may be seeking a Christ-centered community where children are known, loved, and encouraged to grow. Furthermore, they are welcome to come and see first hand a school where people are loving, kind, hardworking, and humble at our Open House on January 22 at 5:30 p.m. At the open house people can meet our teachers, tour our campus, and experience firsthand what it means to be part of the First Lutheran family.



Birthdays:

Jan. 3: Jim & Linda Perrine
Jan. 6: Bob & Kara Sircy
Jan 14: Jeff & Stephanie McKenzie

Anniversaries:

Jan. 6: Julie Killian
Jan. 10: Anna Broyles
Jan. 13: William Wade
Jan. 14: Sarah Appleton; Mark Fetting
Jan. 15: Steve Byrd
Jan. 17: Ellie Chrapliwy
Jan. 18: Josh Blomenberg; Andy Busch
Jan. 19: Clinton Gross; Shirley Watson
Jan. 25: Nathaniel Davis; Karen Spaid
Jan. 27: Bob Eisold; Doug Slifka
Jan. 30: Adam Breeden; Shirley Eimmerman
Jan. 31: Sean Bales