


FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL
MISSOURI SYNOD • KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE



First Hearts March 2026

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From the Pastor

A Joyfully Repentant Lent

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Lent is upon us. It began in earnest on Ash Wednesday. Together, we received the ashes and were called to repent. So often, we view repentance as full of gloom. That's because we've removed repentance from the concept of forgiveness. Doing so, repentance is reduced to a half measure. Repentance, when teamed with forgiveness, is a joy because repentance is never alone. Daily, we repent in the Lord's Prayer. Daily, we are forgiven by Jesus, who has come to have mercy on sinners.

Repentance, true repentance, is a turning away from sin, evil, and temptation toward God. It's trusting in the Jesus who bids us to abide in Him, to stay by His side, and to receive His gifts.

The parables of Luke 15 (lost sheep, lost coin, prodigal son) are all about this joy. Heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents. There is more joy, in fact, than over the righteous who need no repentance. In Psalm 51, David prays, "restore to me the joy of your salvation." When we sin, we hurt ourselves, we hurt others, we destroy our joy. Only Jesus can restore what we have broken. When He declares your forgiveness, that is what He does. He brings us back to His side, and our joy is restored.

Abiding with Jesus, living in His joy, does include some spiritual disciplines. We pray at home, individually, as families, and bring each other's burdens and pains to the altar of God. We ask Jesus to take care of it because we can't. While we pray, we fast. We intentionally deny ourselves pleasures to redirect our hearts to the Father who provides all of our daily bread, even without our prayers. Since we are fasting, we generously open our hands from our wallets and give our monetary gifts to those who need them. When we fail at doing these disciplines, we go to Private Confession. We admit that we like to wander from the side of Jesus. But we don't end there, we end with Jesus reaching in, removing our sins, and placing us by His side once again, basking in His joy.

Joyful repenting prepares us for Easter and the resurrection, which has conquered death for us. Remember, Jesus loves sinners. Sinners are why He came. He came for you. Turn away from evil. Live in the joy that Jesus gives.

I end with a collect that is fitting for today: "Almighty God, in Your mercy guide the course of this world so that Your Church may joyfully serve You in godly peace and quietness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever."

Amen.

Weekly Events

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

Evening Services

3/4 - Lenten Service 6:30pm (Fellowship Meal 5:30pm)

3/11 - Lenten Service 6:30pm (Fellowship Meal 5:30pm)

3/18 - Lenten Service 6:30pm (Fellowship Meal 5:30pm)

3/25 - Lenten Service 6:30pm (Fellowship Meal 5:30pm)

Board Happenings

3/10 - School Board 6:00pm

3/17 - Planning Council 6:30pm

Other Church Activities

3/1 - Chili Cookoff (immediately following service)

3/7 - Men's Bible Study 8:30am

3/8 - Young Adult Bible Study 12:00pm

3/15 - Youth 12:00pm

3/21 - Men's Bible Study

3/28 - Work Day 8:30am - 12:00pm

3/28 - Lenten Tea 3:00pm

	March 1	Second S. in Lent	Gen. 12:1-9	Psalm 121	Rom. 4:1-8, 13-17	John 3:1-17
	March 8	Third S. in Lent	Ex. 17:1-7	Psalm 95:1-9	Rom. 5:1-8	John 4:5-26 (27-30, 39-42)
	March 15	Fourth S. in Lent	Isaiah 42:14-21	Psalm 142	Eph. 5:8-14	John 9:1-41 or John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39
	March 22	Fifth S. in Lent	Ezek. 37:1-14	Psalm 130	Rom. 8:1-11	John 11:1-45 (46-53) or John 11:17-27, 38-53
HOLY WEEK	March 29	Palm Sunday (Palmarum)	Isaiah 50:4-9a	Psalm 118:19-29 or Psalm 31:9-16	Phil. 2:5-11	John 12:12-19 procession ----- Matt. 26:1-27:66 or Matt. 27:11-66 or John 12:20-43

In Other News

Stewardship

As a kid, I remember my Grandma and Grandpa Diepholz' home with extraordinary joy. Family fun. Great food. A legacy of faith. One of my lasting memories of that house was the table that sat between their twin beds. It contained a lamp, a Bible, a catechism and a hymnal. These were well-worn, as Grandpa read to Grandma every night before they went to sleep! What a treasure these tools of faith are! Let us spend some time this month in the hymnal to help us better understand our life as Christian stewards! To do this, we will use *LSB* 785 "We Praise You, O God."

*We Praise You, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
In grateful devotion our tributes we bring.
We lay it before You, and kneel and adore You;
We bless Your holy name, glad praises we sing.*

Stewardship is an act of worship. It flows from the grace and mercy we have received in Jesus! Faithful stewardship can never start with us. Our sinful nature will make us and our desires the center of our worship. Our tributes, our giving and our serving only flow from how the Lord Jesus has given of Himself for our sake! When we have this in clear view, our knees bow and our praises flow freely! All this flows from the Name that has been placed on us in Holy Baptism!

*We worship You, God of our Fathers, we bless You;
Through trial and tempest our guide You have been.
When perils o’ertake us, You will not forsake us,
And with Your help, O Lord, our struggles we win.*

Our stewardship that flows from what God has done for us in Jesus Christ is rooted in history. Passed from one generation to the next, stewards of the Gospel connect God’s provision in the past to His continued care in the present.

So often, the struggles we face are self-inflicted. While there are indeed perils that can shake us from outside of ourselves, we are more likely enduring the suffering that comes because of our own choices that are outside the Word and will of God! But even in these situations, the Lord who loves us will never forsake us. When we become selfish, self-serving and self-destructive, the Lord NEVER abandons! The Lord helps us to overcome the struggles in faith and win the victory the steward rejoices in!

*With voices united our praises we offer
And gladly our songs of thanksgiving we raise.
With You, Lord, beside us, Your strong arm will guide us.
To You, our great redeemer, forever be praise!*

Stewardship is more than just an individual thing. There is a corporate nature to our steward life. We see this in the Divine Service. There, stewards of all ages, all economic strata and all languages are joined in the singular task of praise. This stewardship of praise flows from the altar to us, out into the world and then back to the altar! God’s strong arm leads us in this stewardship 24/7. This makes stewardship, in all times and places, a matter of worship. We praise our Redeemer who has entrusted us with this great stewardship of the Gospel which forgives our

sins, grants us new life and salvation. And this treasure we freely share for God's glory and the benefit of our neighbor!

In this time of Lent, as we think about sacrifice, fasting, and almsgiving, we ask that you prayerfully consider giving above and beyond your regular giving of time, talents and treasure. We will have a work day on Saturday, March 28 at 8:30 AM. Come early, come late, come and eat donuts. We will have inside and outside jobs for all ages and abilities. We are also asking for sacrificing giving of treasure. We are facing a budget shortfall this year and hope that you would give above and beyond. The Super Abundant Fund is for giving above and beyond regular giving. Any budget shortfall will need to be covered with a loan.

Dying Well in Christ. Issues we face at Life's End . Feeding Tubes...Right to Life.... Advanced Directives Euthanasia Is it OK to end life when there is long suffering and no hope of recovery? How can I discover God's blessings in all circumstances at the end of life? The Lutherans for Life Team of Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church in Loudon invite you to this seminar led by Rev Dr Aric Fenske, Executive Director of Lutherans for Life on SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 8:30-1:30 PM WITH WELCOME CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST AND A NOON MEAL. Session will begin at 9:00 AM. Check your heart, be informed and trust God in your decisions. Come to learn how to make informed, God pleasing decisions. To register, call the church office at 865-458-9407. A free-will offering will be received.

LADIES, Please join us on Saturday, March 28 at 3 PM in the meeting room for Lenten Tea. This is a special time set aside for reflection and fellowship. Questions, please contact Melanie Bartholomay at 865-607-1629 or mlbartholomay@gmail.com

Easter Egg Hunt – We will be having our annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday,

April 4th with the schedule as follows:

10:00am – ages 4 and under

10:30am – Kindergarten – 2nd grade

11:00am – Grades 3 and up

If you have any questions, or would like to help please contact Shellia Byrd. We hope to see you there!

Easter lilies. It is time to order Easter lilies to decorate our church sanctuary for the Easter season. The cost is \$15 each. Extra order forms are located in the back of the sanctuary and need to be returned by Monday, March 23rd.

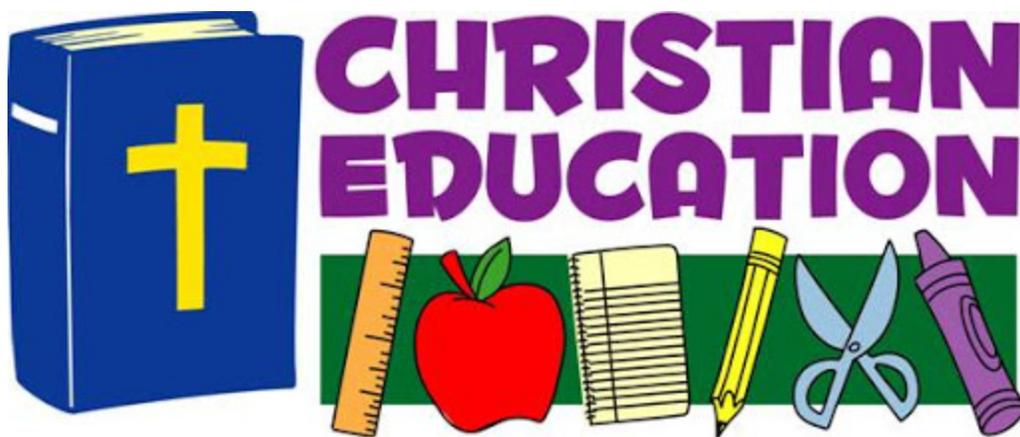
Sunday School - Just a reminder that we have Sunday School available from Pre-School through High School. We look forward to having you!

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.

Website: Please visit the church website www.firstknoxville.org for Bible study and other resources.

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



News from First Lutheran School

Once upon a time, there was a school called First Lutheran.

First Lutheran is an old school. Over the years it has seen so much—students come and go, lessons taught, games played, friendships formed. It has never been a perfect place, but it has always been a joyful one, filled with God’s love and grace.

Our youngest students spend their days learning through play—discovering how to share, listen, follow directions, and be good friends. At just one or two years old, those small steps are big accomplishments. Even when they don’t realize it, they are building foundations that will shape their future.

By preschool, curiosity begins to bloom. Though our 3- and 4-year-old program began in 1981 in the small white house on the property and moved into the main building in 1989, the heart of it has always remained the same. There is nothing sweeter than the sound of children laughing as they learn their letters and numbers, preparing confidently for kindergarten.

Elementary school is where growth seems to happen overnight. Since adding kindergarten in 1943, we have watched generations of students begin as uncertain

learners and grow into confident readers, writers, and problem-solvers. They explore history and science, tackle fractions and novels, and navigate the occasional hurt feelings or skinned knees. Through every success and every challenge, the love of God remains at the center.

In middle school, change is especially visible. Classrooms have shifted from chalkboards and paper to touch screens and Chromebooks. The pace of the world may move faster than ever, but our mission remains steady. After 150 years, First Lutheran is still standing: still growing, still nurturing, still pointing children to Christ. The teachers and staff remain deeply committed to each student who walks through our doors, that calling has never changed.

As we celebrate National Lutheran Schools Week, we pause to reflect on where we have been and where we are now. More importantly, we give thanks for God's faithfulness through every season. The same Lord who guided this school in its earliest days continues to lead us forward. With Christ as our foundation, we trust that the best chapters of our story are still being written.



Anniversaries:

March 2: Rick & Michelle Breeden; Benny & Marion Samuel

March 12: Karl & Stanzie Heine

March 15: Mike & Shawna Anderson

March 25: Roger & Melanie Bartholomay

March 31: Larry & Karen Farris

Birthdays:

March 1: Kris Weaver

March 6: Michelle Breeden

March 7: John Hofman; Andrew Lintz; Mark Spangler

March 10: Harley Cooper; John Schulz, Jr.

March 12: Shelbie Bender

March 14: Matthew Sizemore

March 18: Sharon Lee

March 19: Archie Wolfe
March 20: Christian Eimmerman
March 21: Eleanor Wadsworth
March 22: AnnMarie Cooper
March 25: Riah Mitchell
March 26: Allie Spangler
March 27: Marion Samuel
March 29: Kristin Lintz
March 31: Jon Eimmerman