

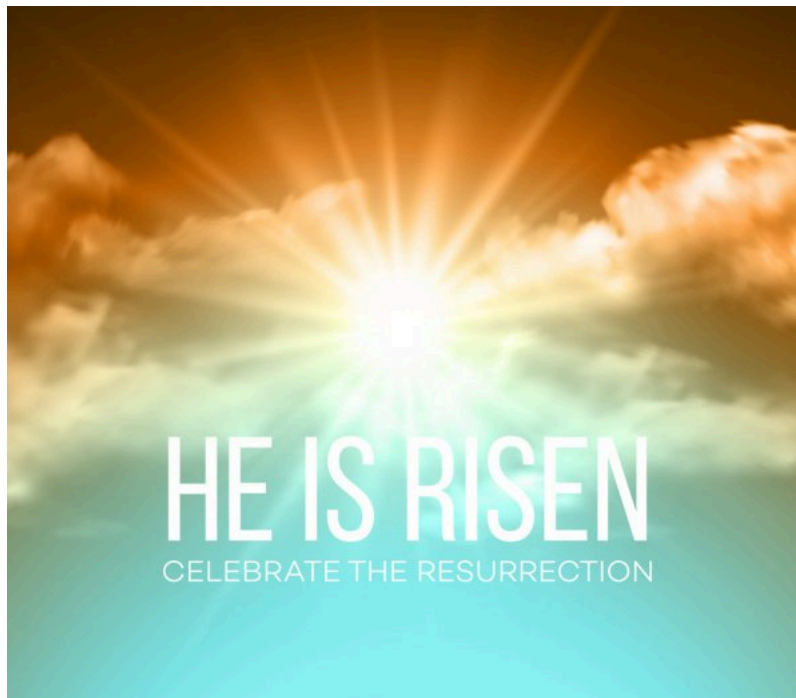

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL
MISSOURI SYNOD • KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE



First Hearts April 2026

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From the Pastor

“You Can’t Outgive Jesus”

He is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Our Lenten disciplines of fasting, prayer, and giving of tithes and alms have prepared us. Through them, we were reminded that our bodies, our time, and even our wallets are not our gods. It was not always easy. It was, at times, painful. Yet through it, we have grown. Now we are all the more joyful.

Now is the time to feast. Now is the time to celebrate. Why? Because, as St. Paul writes: **“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich.”**

Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, we are joyful, generous, and giving. Jesus has given us everything. He is the initiator; we are the receivers. So it is in the Divine Service, and so it is in daily life: from Him to us. Then, in response, we give joyfully and cheerfully—not out of self-interest, but for Christ. His love flows through us to others.

We were once in need, and Jesus came to us and rescued us. Now we see that our neighbors are in need. Our sanctuary has needs. Our school and faculty have needs. And Christ is using us to care for them.

So let us repent of our miserliness. Nothing is ever solved by clinging tightly to what we have.

So where do we begin? Begin simply. Begin intentionally. Set aside a first portion for the Lord. Make giving a regular rhythm, just as receiving His gifts is a regular rhythm. Not because you must, but because you get to.

Remember, the Law has been fulfilled. We now live under grace. And sometimes, living in grace means embracing what we *get* to do. Faithful stewardship is not a burden—it is a gift. Giving is something God is inviting you into.

And here is the best news of all: you cannot outgive Jesus. He always has more for you than you could ever imagine.

Amen.

Weekly Events

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

Evening Services

4/2 - Maundy Thursday Service 6:30pm

4/3 - Good Friday Service 6:30pm

4/4 - Easter Vigil Service 6:30pm

Board Happenings

4/14 - School Board 6:00pm

4/21 - Planning Council 6:30pm

Other Church Activities

4/4 - Men's Bible Study 8:30am

4/4 - Easter Egg Hunt 10:00am

4/5 - Easter Breakfast 8:00am

4/12 - Voter's Meeting 10:45am

4/12 - Young Adult Bible Study 12:00pm

4/18 - Men's Bible Study 8:30am

4/19 - Youth Group 12:00pm

	April 2	Holy (Maundy) Thursday	Ex. 24:3–11	Psalm 116:12–19	Heb. 9:11–22	Matt. 26:17–30
	April 3	Good Friday	Isaiah 52:13–53:12	Psalm 22 or Psalm 31	Heb. 4:14–16; 5:7–9	John 18:1–19:42 or John 19:17–30
EASTER	April 5	The Resurrection of Our Lord <i>(Sunrise)</i>	Ex. 14:10–15:1	Psalm 118:15–29 or The Song of Moses and Israel	1 Cor. 15:1–11	John 20:1–18
		The Resurrection of Our Lord	Acts 10:34–43 or Jer. 31:1–6	Psalm 16	Col. 3:1–4	Matt. 28:1–10
	April 12	Second S. of Easter	Acts 5:29–42	Psalm 148	1 Peter 1:3–9	John 20:19–31
	April 19	Third S. of Easter	Acts 2:14a, 36–41	Psalm 116:1–14	1 Peter 1:17–25	Luke 24:13–35
	April 26	Fourth S. of Easter	Acts 2:42–47	Psalm 23	1 Peter 2:19–25	John 10:1–10



In Other News

Stewardship

A Better Way

Originally published in April 2023

The most common question about stewardship is not whether a Christian should give to their church. Of course Christians should give to their church. Everyone knows this. Rather, the question asked most is, “How much should I give?” But this question really means, “Should Christians give a tenth of their income to their local congregation?”

Here are some common reasons against tithing. Some say tithing isn’t necessary because it isn’t expressly commanded in the New Testament. There is no “Thus saith the Lord,” or “should” concerning tithing. Others say that Christians give to their congregation in ways much broader than money. They give of their time and their talents, and these together with treasures (money) add up to more than a tithe. Still others say that they give of their treasures to other things besides their congregation, and they want to support those things alongside their church. And then there are those who think Christians shouldn’t tithe because of some fear. They are afraid that if they tithe, their gift will be misused, or that after tithing, there won’t be enough left over to get the things that they use, want or need.

Here are some reasons why Christians should tithe. Even though the New Testament doesn’t specifically command Christians to tithe, the Old Testament people were commanded to. And on top of this, St. Paul often describes giving a regular and generous proportion of the first fruits of one’s income — terms similar to a tithe (2 Cor. 8:7–23; 2 Cor. 9:2–7).

But here’s another way to think about it. What was the point of the tithe in the Old Testament? Where did it go? This tithe was intended to support the ministry of the Levites. They were not given any land because they had no time to farm; their full-time job was the ministry. What does it say in the New Testament? “The Lord

commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14). This is the verse that Luther used in the Small Catechism’s Table of Duties to explain what Christians owe to the support of the ministry.

It seems clear from both the Old and the New Testaments that the tithe is the goal of Christians in their giving. But what if we’re not there yet? How should we handle this? What are we to do?

Let’s answer this by asking a different question. What would you say to your adult children who only attended church quarterly or once a month? After all, there is no passage in the New Testament that requires Christians to go to church weekly. Hebrews 10:25 is the closest verse we have, and it states simply that Christians should not neglect gathering together. And even though there is no passage that commands Christians to gather weekly, that is the implicit expectation throughout the Old and New Testaments.

So, what would you say to that son or daughter? The conversation might go something like this. I’m glad you’re still going to church. It is a wonderful blessing to hear God’s promises of forgiveness, life and salvation, and to receive His gifts in Word and Sacrament. But you can do better, and it will only be a blessing to you. There is a better way, and I’d really like you to try to attain it.

We should approach the topic of tithing with a similar conversation. The tithe is not specifically commanded in the New Testament, but it sure seems like the implicit expectation of both the Old and New Testaments. So, we’re ecstatic that you’re giving, and that you’re giving in all these various ways – time, talents and treasures. But there is a better way. And that will only be a blessing to you, just as the Word of God – Old and New Testament alike – promises. Can you try increasing your gifts over the coming weeks, months and years? Can you put your trust in the God who sent His Son to take away your sin and give you everlasting life? And if He did this for you, if He did not spare His only Son, how will He not give you all things? He will not disappoint.

Stewardship

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We will meet on Sunday, April 12, to vote on securing a loan to cover operating expenses for First Lutheran Church and School. While we anticipated a shortfall this fiscal year, we have been working to minimize the required loan amount. The Planning Council will meet between Easter and our congregational meeting to project the final amount and develop long- and short-term plans to improve our financial position.

Our current year-to-date financial status is as follows:

Offering

Actual: \$263,765.31

Needed: \$288,750.00

Super Abundant

Actual: \$31,486.59

Needed: \$80,000.00

On a celebratory note, our work day in March was amazing! Thanks to 35 people who came, including several school families, our facilities have been revitalized. We enjoyed wonderful intergenerational fellowship while dusting, polishing, weeding, and planting. These relationships make First Lutheran special and are a gift from God that sustains us.

I am truly grateful to worship and serve alongside such an amazing church family.

In Christ,

Melanie

Voter's Meeting - There will be a Voter's Meeting following Divine Service on Sunday, April 12th.

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.

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!

You are invited to a Hymn Festival featuring Rev. Dr. Stephen Starke on May 17, 2026 at 3pm at Praise Lutheran Church (315 Southdowne Dr., Maryville, TN 37801). Refreshments will be available afterward at a meet-and-greet with Pastor Starke. Mr. Caleb Hesse, Director of Worship Arts at Praise, will serve as the hymn festival organist.

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

Service, Learning, and Giving in Action

The mission of First Lutheran School is:

Faithfully learning and serving since 1869, First Lutheran School partners with families and the community to educate and care for students.

Strengthened by God's grace, we learn. Sharing Christ's love, we grow. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we serve.

Learning and growing often feel obvious in an educational setting. Lately, however, the generous spirit of our students and families has truly shone through.

In March, the Kids Heart Challenge was a tremendous success! Together, we raised over \$4,000, with more than half of our K–8 students participating. Beyond fundraising, students gained valuable, life-saving knowledge by learning CPR and how to use an AED. In celebration of their efforts, participants will enjoy some extra fun opportunities at Field Day—details coming soon!

Our quarterly offerings are a wonderful reflection of our students' servant hearts and commitment to caring for others, both in our community and beyond:

- **Trinity Hope:** Purchased meals for students in Christian schools. Students also learned from organization representatives about what life is like for the children served.
- **Lutheran Heritage Foundation:** We made a joyful noise by helping purchase church songbooks for students in Africa.
- **Love Kitchen:** In addition to raising funds for those in need in Knoxville, our students created 300 Valentine's cards to be delivered with meals.
- **Compassion Closet:** Our most recent offering will support foster youth and families.

In addition, our students have led and participated in several servant-hearted projects:

- Collected over 100 pairs of socks for Care Cuts
- Middle School hosted a bake sale to support our offerings
- Second Grade organized a plant sale to give back to those in need
- First Grade spread joy through Valentine's flower deliveries benefiting Love Kitchen
- Third and Fourth Grade, along with the church's LWML, assembled care packages for Lutheran World Relief

Having a servant's heart is about more than collections and donations. Within our school walls, service is lived out daily in meaningful ways. Whether it's helping a friend up after a fall, holding the door for others, or simply asking a teacher about their weekend, our students practice respect, kindness, and empathy in their everyday interactions.

We are so proud of the ways our students continue to learn, grow, and serve with joyful hearts. Their actions are a powerful reminder that even small acts of kindness can make a big impact and that the Holy Spirit truly inspires us to serve.

**Anniversaries:**

April 1: Steve & Shellia Byrd
April 5: Carlyle & Dolly Roth
April 6: Bill & Rosie Rosen
April 15: Barry & Melissa Lyke
April 24: Doug & Wendy Slifka
April 29: David & Susan Rodenbeck

Birthdays:

April 4: Sawyer Huffman
April 5: Becky Hodson; Caleb Klingerman
April 6: Stanzie Heine
April 7: Mike Anderson; Louise Hodson; Bob Sircy
April 10: Chuck Baum; Jackson Killian; Ephraim Maanum
April 12: Ingrid Capparelli
April 15: Ed Niedens
April 16: Jennifer Hodson
April 18: Mary McKenzie
April 19: Rebekah Parrott; Judy Testerman
April 22: Kelsie Reed
April 23: Alexandre Blais; Ayden Laing; Stephanie McKenzie
April 25: Larry Farris; Cheyenne Tillman
April 26: Jeff McKenzie
April 28: Isaac Davis; Shannon Milbourn
April 30: Lois Blais; Jeremiah Davis; Kathleen Holliday; Brittany Johnson; Michaela Johnson; Kamden Kreger