



First Hearts July 2026

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From the Pastor

“The Budget is not the mission”

Dear Saints of First,

July is a month of new beginnings. Families plan vacations, children head to camp, and many of us review our household budgets for the months ahead. As one season begins and another ends.

For us, July means a new budget, new activities, and an updated curriculum to understand and properly implement come August. We have summer camp running. And there's the question of how we can move families from camp life to school life?

To do this, we have a budget. It's a tight budget. Our staff does amazing things with the budget that is provided to them. But that's the budget. It's a baseline. A budget is an important tool. It tells us what we currently have to work with. But it should never define the limits of Christ's mission. God's work has always depended upon the generous hearts of His people. Everything we have is a gift received from our Father's hand, entrusted to us for the good of our neighbor and the proclamation of the Gospel.

Everything we have is a gift received from our Father's hand, entrusted to us for the good of our neighbor and the proclamation of the Gospel. As King David confessed, **"All things come from You, and of Your own have we given You."** (1 Chron. 29:14). A budget tells us what we can afford today. It should never determine what Christ's mission deserves.

We should view the budget as the start. This is where we begin. The mission goes far beyond that. The mission of preaching and teaching Christ crucified to every generation isn't a bare-minimum endeavor. Imagine what additional opportunities would be possible if financial limitations became less of a concern. How much more boldly could we serve our neighbors if we weren't concerned about how we're gonna cover the bills this month? How much healthier would we be if we moved beyond last-second maintenance to being prepared for ten or fifteen years down the road?

I know money is tight everywhere. Wallets are getting thinner and thinner. Inflation is eating away at your grocery and utilities bills. So it goes with all of us. So, I want you to pray and create a budget. Have the difficult conversation at home and ask, “What is required and what is extra?” Then take some of that extra and add it to your giving. A little bit from everyone goes a very long way.

We give because Christ first gave Himself for us. We are not purchasing God's favor or keeping the lights on. We are participating in His mission of bringing the forgiveness of sins to our neighbors and to future generations. Thank you for your faithful generosity, and may God continue to bless both your household and our congregation.

Amen.

Weekly Events

Sunday - Divine Service 9:30 am; Bible Study/Sunday School 10:45am

Board Happenings

7/14 - School Board 6:00pm

7/21 - Planning Council 6:30pm

Other Church Activities

7/12 - Young Adult Bible Study 12:00pm

7/18 - Men's Bible Study 8:30am

7/18 - Work Day 9:00am - 12:00pm

7/19 - Youth group 12:00pm

	July 5 (Prop. 9)	Sixth S. after Pentecost	Zech. 9:9–12	Psalm 145:1– 14	Rom. 7:14–25a	Matt. 11:25– 30
	July 12 (Prop. 10)	Seventh S. after Pentecost	Isaiah 55:10– 13	Psalm 65:(1–8) 9–13	Rom. 8:12–17	Matt. 13:1–9, 18–23
	July 19 (Prop. 11)	Eighth S. after Pentecost	Isaiah 44:6–8	Psalm 119:57– 64	Rom. 8:18–27	Matt. 13:24– 30, 36–43
	July 26 (Prop. 12)	Ninth S. after Pentecost	Deut. 7:6–9	Psalm 125	Rom. 8:28–39	Matt. 13:44– 52



From the Principal

Our Summer Day Camp is in full swing, and each year the staff selects a theme that guides many of the activities and learning experiences throughout the summer. This

year's theme focuses on America and its history. So far, campers have made cookies with molasses and currants similar to those George Washington may have enjoyed, and they have learned about important American symbols such as the Liberty Bell, the bald eagle, and the Statue of Liberty. Alongside these patriotic lessons, campers are still enjoying all the favorite summer activities, including Water Day, special field trips, games, and time spent with friends.

As our campers explore our nation's history and prepare to celebrate Independence Day, I find myself reflecting on tradition and the role it plays in shaping our memories. Traditions help us remember where we came from, connect us to those who came before us, and remind us why we value the institutions and communities that are important to us.

On Independence Day, families celebrate in countless ways. Whether it's fireworks, barbecues, concerts, parades, or gatherings with loved ones, each family develops its own traditions for honoring our nation's history. In much the same way, First Lutheran School has developed traditions of its own throughout the years.

One of my favorite traditions is our graduation ceremony, where we celebrate our kindergarten and eighth-grade graduates together. I have always appreciated this tradition, but I did not realize until recently just how far back it goes. Earlier this summer, former First Lutheran student Anne Galloway mailed the school a collection of old class photos along with a copy of the 1959 graduation program. Produced on a mimeograph machine, the program follows much the same format as our graduation ceremony today, including the recognition of both kindergarten and eighth-grade graduates together. Personally, I especially enjoyed the doodles scattered throughout the program—likely the work of an older sibling who became distracted while watching a younger sister graduate, but the prams filled with the names of alumni and even silly doodles is a reminder that we are a part of a larger community that goes beyond a single year or lone tradition.

Whether it's lighting sparklers on the Fourth of July or participating in a special graduation ceremony, traditions remind us that we are part of something larger than ourselves. They connect generations, provide a sense of belonging, and offer the comfort of knowing that others have walked the same path before us. At First Lutheran School, we are grateful for the traditions that have shaped our community for more than 150 years and for the opportunity to continue them for future generations. Ultimately, while we are grateful for the traditions and freedoms we celebrate, we are part of something far greater than any school or nation. As members of God's family, united through Christ, we look forward with joy to the day when we will gather together in heaven and celebrate His love, grace, and victory for all eternity.

In Other News

Stewardship

Go ... Sell All You Have?

Originally published July 2023

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” asked the rich young ruler. Jesus said, “You know the commandments.” And he replied, “All these I have kept from my youth.” And Jesus said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (Luke 18:18–22).

When we hear this story, this question comes to mind: is Jesus speaking to us also, or only to the rich young ruler? In other words, is Jesus telling us to sell all that we have and give it to the poor?

As good Lutherans, we answer, “No!” But why? Why should we not sell all that we have and distribute it to the poor? The simplest explanation is this: if we sold everything we have, our wife and our children would be neglected. In other words, to sell everything we have and give it to the poor would ignore, even abandon, those whom God has placed in our care. Our money, everything we have, is not to be used solely for the church. But that doesn’t excuse us from using our money for the purpose God intends.

Everyone has three stations in life, three spheres in which we live and are to be of service to our neighbors. These stations are the church, the family and society. We are members of all three of these by birth. We are born into the church by water and the Word of God, and our duties to others in the church arise from our Baptism into the church. We are born into a family, and our duties to others stem from our birth into that family. Finally, we are born into society, which is simply a further extension of our birth into our family. The duties we have toward other members of society come from either our own birth or the birth of others into the same society.

All that we have and all that we are ought to be pressed into service for the church, the family and society. If we were to sell all we have and give only to one, the other two would be neglected, and we would falter in fulfilling our duties.

So, consider your life and all that you have in light of these three stations. You pay taxes to support and help those in society. You save for college for your children, and provide food, clothing and shelter for the members of your family.

But the station that is usually thought of last is the church. Since the needs of the

family and society are more immediate, the church is often given what is left over. This is not how it should be. Rather, we are to give of our first fruits, from off the top, the best, even as Abel gave the best of his flock.

This requires forethought. It means that you sit down and make a plan of what you will give from the beginning. It means sticking to it even when it seems that there are other more immediate and pressing things.

And this is all the more necessary now as we enter into periods of time where giving is low due to high unemployment or where restrictions on meeting in church limit opportunities to give. If we love God and His gifts of forgiveness given through the Means of Grace, which we receive at church and only at church, then we will support it, just as we love our country and our family. For all that we have and all that we are is given to us by our gracious God. He spared no expense for us and our salvation. He gave up His Son to death so that our sins are forgiven, and we will live. What's more, He provides for all that we need for this body and life. And our lives in this world, among these three spheres of church, family and society are to mirror the generosity of the one who gave us life in all three at birth.

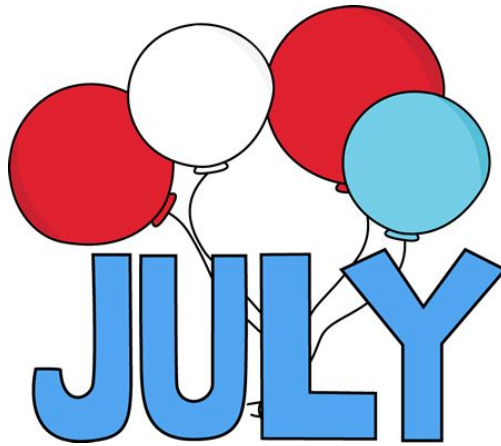
Don't let the church, your divine family, be an afterthought or even ignored. It is nurturing you, bringing you up in salvation through Word and Sacrament.

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/>

**Anniversaries:**

July 10: Jered & Christine Sprecher

July 12: Kevin & Kathleen Holliday; Scott & Karen Spaid

July 16: Seth & Rebecca Nutter

July 21: Fred & Melissa Schell

July 23: Greg & Beth Buckner; John & Lindsey Hofman

July 31: Mark & Debbie Fettig

Birthdays:

July 1: Holly Flanigan

July 2: Trevor Anderson; Tabi Maanum

July 3: Steve Wheat

July 4: Brett Anthonijs

July 6: Jim Perrine

July 8: Bobby Eisold

July 9: Cameron Brown

July 11: Greta Heine; Pastor Ed Maanum

July 12: Zachary Mueller; Melissa Sanders

July 13: Michleen Jones

July 16: Avery Anderson

July 19: Tara Chrapliwy; Karen DeArmond; Brittany Huffman; Sheila Wolford

July 20: Martin Slomski; Nathan Wade

July 21: Ella Hofman

July 22: Melissa Schell

July 23: Theo Anthonijs; Kim Smith

July 26: Jonathan Boatman; Greg Swanson

July 29: Jayda Turner; Lisa Wade

July 30: Wendy Slifka; Drew Slomski

July 31: Karl Heine; Abby Sanderson