



First Hearts September 2026

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From the Pastor

“We Are Not Trying to Survive”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.” — 2

Corinthians 9:8 (ESV)

Last month we took a break from our stewardship-themed letters. It was important that everyone could see why Campfirmation is so important to us at First Lutheran. It's important not just for our youth, but also for the adults who attend.

We're back in the thick of things. School is going full speed ahead. Germanfest was a smashing success by any metric you want to measure it by. The updated combined Church and School budget is ready to guide us.

That's what a budget is: a guide. As a guide, the budget supports the ministry at First just as a budget supports what's important at home. You plan. You decide how much to allocate to needs versus wants. Needs like food, shelter, utilities, and medical care get allocated first because of their importance to our survival.

The same is true with our combined budget. The budget helps us identify our priorities and make sure that the things necessary for the ministry of the congregation are provided for. Sometimes really important opportunities don't fit neatly within the budget.

Maybe a better way to think about it is maintenance and opportunity. There are things that must be provided for so that the ministry of the congregation can continue. But there are also opportunities that arise beyond the baseline—opportunities to serve, to give, to teach, to support, and to proclaim Christ.

The budget serves the ministry; the ministry does not exist to serve the budget. Our first concern is the proclamation of Christ crucified and risen and the administration of His Sacraments. He gives to us. We receive. We gather together. Here, He forms us as His people. He then sends us out to serve others with the resources that He provides for us.

From that foundation flows our life together as Christians and our vocation to love and serve our neighbors. This is because the mission isn't something we only think about after the budget is funded. Faithfulness doesn't come after maintenance.

We are not merely trying to survive. We are here to proclaim Christ, to raise up the next generation of Christians and church workers, care for our neighbors, and make the Gospel known in Knoxville and beyond. The question before us isn't simply, "Can we afford this?" It is also, "What opportunities has God placed before us?" What is beyond the baseline?

What might this look like? Financially support students going to full-time ministry as pastor, teacher, DCE, deaconess, and beyond. We could start a monthly giving of diapers, baby clothes, and food to local mothers. We could support the grocery store that The Point is starting to serve a food-desert area of Knoxville. These are just a few of the opportunities that might be before us.

So let us think beyond survival. Let us look for the opportunities God has placed before us. Let us pray for wisdom to use faithfully what He has entrusted to us, courage to attempt things that serve our neighbors, and trust that our Lord will continue to provide for His Church.

Amen.

Weekly Events

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

Board Happenings

9/8 - School Board 6:00pm

9/15 - Planning Council 6:30pm

Other Church Activities

9/5 - Men's Bible Study 8:30am

9/13 - Young Adult Bible Study 12:00pm

9/19 - Men's Bible Study 8:30am

9/20 - Youth group 12:00pm

	Sept. 6 (Prop. 18)	Fifteenth S. after Pentecost	Ezek. 33:7-9	Psalms 32:1-7	Rom. 13:1-10	Matt. 18:1-20
	Sept. 13 (Prop. 19)	Sixteenth S. after Pentecost	Gen. 50:15-21	Psalms 103:1-12	Rom. 14:1-12	Matt. 18:21-35
	Sept. 20 (Prop. 20)	Seventeenth S. after Pentecost	Isaiah 55:6-9	Psalms 27:1-9	Phil. 1:12-14, 19-30	Matt. 20:1-16
	Sept. 27 (Prop. 21)	Eighteenth S. after Pentecost	Ezek. 18:1-4, 25-32	Psalms 25:1-10	Phil. 2:1-4 (5-13) 14-18	Matt. 21:23-27 (28-32)
	Sept. 29	St. Michael and All Angels	Daniel 10:10-14; 12:1-3	Psalms 91	Rev. 12:7-12	Matt. 18:1-11 or Luke 10:17-20



From the Principal

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

I could end the newsletter right here, but I want to give a specific thank you to everyone who makes First Lutheran the happening place it is. From our School Board members, who work to ensure we are successful in our mission and vision, to our Trustees, who make sure the lights are on, air filters are replaced, and branches are trimmed—there are so many people working behind the scenes to make First Lutheran thrive.

This month, I am especially thankful to everyone who helped make Germanfest happen. We had multiple families who stepped up and worked for hours, or even all day, to help ensure that Germanfest was a success. I was especially touched by the alumni and alumni families who showed up to work. Even though they are no longer attending First Lutheran, they still view this place as a home away from home, and the people here as family.

I also want to give a shout-out to our middle school students. Middle school sometimes gets a bad rap, but their willingness to do the less-than-glamorous work in the food tent all day or to entertain younger students by leading games in the Kinderzone made me smile.

The third tenet of our mission statement is, “Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we serve.” That has been on full display since the start of school and throughout Germanfest.

So often, we are running in a million directions, and our days seem overscheduled. The fact that so many people choose to make First Lutheran a priority is something for which we should all give thanks to God.

Thank you for serving. Thank you for showing up. Thank you for making First Lutheran a place where people feel at home.

And most of all, thank you for being part of the First Lutheran family.

In Other News

Stewardship

Stewardship in the First Commandment

Originally published in September 2023

The greatest gift that Martin Luther gave to us was his Small Catechism. The word “enchiridion” is part of the original title of this work. This is the Greek word for “handbook.” The Small Catechism is a handbook of the Bible. All the basic knowledge that a Christian needs to understand the faith and live a godly life has been taken from the Bible and distilled into this beautiful little book of Christian piety.

Luther starts with the Ten Commandments.

The First Commandment:

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things. (SC I)

We have a God above us. He is the Lord God and we are not. He is Almighty and in control. He is righteous and good. And therefore, we should fear Him.

This God is also our heavenly Father. He wants us to be saved. He does not want us to suffer His just wrath. He has provided salvation for us in His Son, Jesus Christ. And therefore, we should love Him.

Our heavenly Father will never leave us nor forsake us. He has promised as much — and the Bible shows us that He always keeps His promises. So, we should trust Him.

In the Large Catechism, Luther explains how money and possessions form one of the greatest temptations against the First Commandment:

This I must unfold somewhat more plainly, that it may be understood and perceived by ordinary examples of the contrary. Many a one thinks that he has God and everything in abundance when he has money and possessions; he trusts in them and boasts of them with such firmness and assurance as to care for no one. Lo, such a man also has a god, Mammon by name, i.e., money and possessions, on which he sets all his heart, and which is also the most common idol on earth. He who has money and possessions feels secure, and is joyful and undismayed as though he were sitting in the midst of Paradise. On the other hand, he who has none doubts and is

despondent, as though he knew of no God. For very few are to be found who are of good cheer, and who neither mourn nor complain if they have not Mammon. This [care and desire for money] sticks and clings to our nature, even to the grave. (LC I 5–9)

These words of Dr. Luther should call us to repentance; sometimes, we live and act like we don't have a Father in heaven. We seek our comfort and peace outside of His gracious promises. But we do have a Father in heaven. He does love us. All His promises are true. And the Lord will surely provide. If that is our belief, then our outward lives will reflect this belief in our acts of generosity and mercy. We will see money and possessions not as gods but rather as tools for doing God's work.

Dear First Lutheran Families,

Vielen Dank! We want to extend our deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for your incredible support of GermanFest. We truly appreciate your help in all things related to the festival, and the simple truth is that we could not have done it without you.

We are absolutely thrilled to share that we had over 7,500 people attend! Even with such a massive turnout, everything ran incredibly smoothly, and that is a direct result of your hard work, dedication, and volunteer spirit.

If you enjoyed being part of the event and would like to take on a bigger role in the festivities, we are always looking for enthusiastic people to join our planning committee for next year. It is a wonderful way to get involved, bring our community together, and keep the *Gemütlichkeit* going strong.

If you are interested in joining the committee or just want to learn a little more about what it entails, please ask for more information in the school office.

Sincerely,

GermanFest Committee

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:**

Sept. 8: Rick & Lynda Elmore

Sept. 9: Dave & Tammy Wheat

Sept. 26: Mark & Michelle Tillman

Birthdays:

Sept. 1: Nathan Sanders

Sept. 5: Veronica Bartholomay; Kevin Broyles; Dolly Roth

Sept. 6: Carrington Tillman

Sept. 7: Emaleigh Wadsworth

Sept. 8: Alexis Gibson; Janie Lanham

Sept. 10: Ariane Blais

Sept. 11: James Sullivan

Sept. 13: Emma Brown

Sept. 14: David Bryant; Mary Ann Wheat Miller

Sept. 15: Orville Heine; Josh Swiger

Sept. 16: Melissa Lyke

Sept. 17: Shannon Schell

Sept. 18: Dylan Baum

Sept. 20: Taylor Smith

Sept. 21: Mary Bales

Sept. 23: Jadealynn Flanigan

Sept. 24: Kyizer Fielden (Wheat)

Sept. 25: Cindy Cox

Sept. 26: Alycia Hacker (Wheat)

Sept. 27: Hayden Reed; Robert Wolford

Sept. 29: Beth Buckner; Rebecca Nutter

Sept. 30: Cameron Mabe