

LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE CROSS

# CROSSWORDS



February/March 2026



## Ash Wednesday

FEBRUARY 18TH: 5:30PM & 7:00PM

*No church school, confirmation or supper on Ash Wednesday*

## Weekly Worship

WEDNESDAYS 6:30PM

SUNDAYS 9:30AM

*Digital Ministry options available at [www.lcc-wf.com](http://www.lcc-wf.com)*

### In This Issue:

- Council Update
- Coming Up In Faith Formation
- High School Ministry
- Women's Bible Study
- Men's Bible Study
- West Fargo Eats Update

# PASTOR'S MESSAGE

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Dear LCC Family and Friends,

Thank you for taking a moment to connect with your faith community.

We are all on a spiritual journey, a story of influences, experiences, information, feelings, and pressures on our sacred and inner life with God and others. Think of the people you've encountered in the last day. Take a moment, remember who you saw, spoke with, emailed, live with...everyone. Picture them in your mind, consider their names.

Everyone has a spiritual journey. Some among those you encounter are in a period of spiritual calm. There's nothing acute happening in their inner or outer lives that is causing waves, that is bringing storm clouds, that is calling into question who they believe themselves to be or what their purpose and role in the world is. Smooth sailing, as it were.

Others you encounter are on rough seas. You may not see it manifest outwardly, but they are caught in an inner storm of life. The waves crashing upon them can call into question if God is real, if God cares, if their life matters. All the while, they are going to work, getting their kids to their activities, smiling and saying, "I'm great. How are you?" On the inside, however, they may be looking into the abyss on a regular basis feeling alone, lost, or despairing.

Spiritual life is tricky and it leaves us feeling vulnerable. Conversation with another about how the spiritual waters are for you is even harder. Yet, connecting with others and sharing our spiritual journeys, not only in word but also in the sense of getting in the boat with another, is a powerful gift God has given us to connect on a level so many are longing for in life.

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# PASTOR'S MESSAGE

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So, what might it look like for you to risk opening a spiritual conversation? Many I encounter haven't experienced a spiritual conversation themselves, so it's hard to imagine what it would look like to initiate with another. Some of my favorite entry questions are: How's your walk with God these days? How's your spirit doing? How's your soul business?

A faith community is a place of public worship, classes, fellowship, study and so much more. It is also intended by God to be a place where people might practice those vulnerable conversations. In addition to talk of weather, comparing whose calendar is fuller, or commiserating over physical ailments, a faith community is a place to connect in different and deeper ways than you might with the person in the grocery checkout aisle or a passerby on your street. They have spiritual journeys too, of course!

But, in building familiarity with the subject and confidence in God's presence in the midst of going deeper with others in a faith community, we might dare to open the door in other places and spaces to be human together, spiritual beings woven together in the image of God. As we approach this Lenten season, I have a challenge for the LCC community. Let us think of "living and loving like Jesus" this holy season of a cross-journey as an opportunity to connect with people on a deeper level, a more vulnerable level, on a spiritual level.

Start small and see how it goes! I would love to hear stories of how this goes for you. Feel free to email, call or visit with me when you are at church.

You are a spiritual being. We all are.

Peace & Joy, PJ



# COUNCIL UPDATE

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Greetings LCC,

As we turn the page into a new calendar year, I am filled with gratitude for the ways God continues to move within our congregation. We closed 2025 with strong giving and remarkable support, which places LCC in a healthy and hopeful position as we enter 2026.

Thank you for your generosity, faithfulness, and commitment to sustaining our shared mission. WF Eats continues to thrive, touching lives in our community in meaningful and tangible ways. Your ongoing support, whether through time, gifts, or prayer, makes this possible.

I also want to extend my heartfelt thanks for the trust you have placed in our council and leadership team, especially in the passing of the recent loan resolutions. Your confidence is not taken for granted. We are committed to approaching every decision with care, transparency, and a deep desire to lead in the best interest of LCC and its future.

As we prepare to enter the season of Lent, I invite you to join me in making space for reflection, prayer, and intentional self-discipline. May this be a season of renewal and spiritual grounding for each of us.

Thank you for your continued support, encouragement, and prayers.

God Bless,  
Mitch Wolden  
LCC Church Council President



# FINANCIAL UPDATE

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## Finance Report

At the Annual Meeting in January, the congregation approved a budget of \$957,500. This represents a 6% increase over last year's budget and a 9% increase over last year's actual offerings received.

In January 2026, we received additional funds from December's Love Offering, which resulted in worship offerings exceeding the monthly budget. You will also notice other income coming in over budget. Gate City accelerated the grant they had pledged to us—rather than providing \$25,000 in January 2026 and \$25,000 in January 2027, they instead provided the full \$50,000 in January 2026. These funds will be invested alongside our other savings in the Mission Sustainability Fund. Notable expenses that were budgeted and paid in January include property insurance and special assessment taxes.

In light of recent allegations of embezzlement at a church in our community, we wanted to take the opportunity to acknowledge the level of trust and responsibility entrusted to the Finance Committee and Church Council. We want to assure you that procedures and internal controls are in place to help identify potential fraud and to protect your contributions.

For example, there are established policies and procedures governing the collection and deposit of offerings, as well as the approval and disbursement of payments. In addition, members of the Finance Committee have initiated an internal audit this winter, which includes a review and testing of these policies and controls to confirm compliance and identify any potential weaknesses.

# FINANCIAL UPDATE

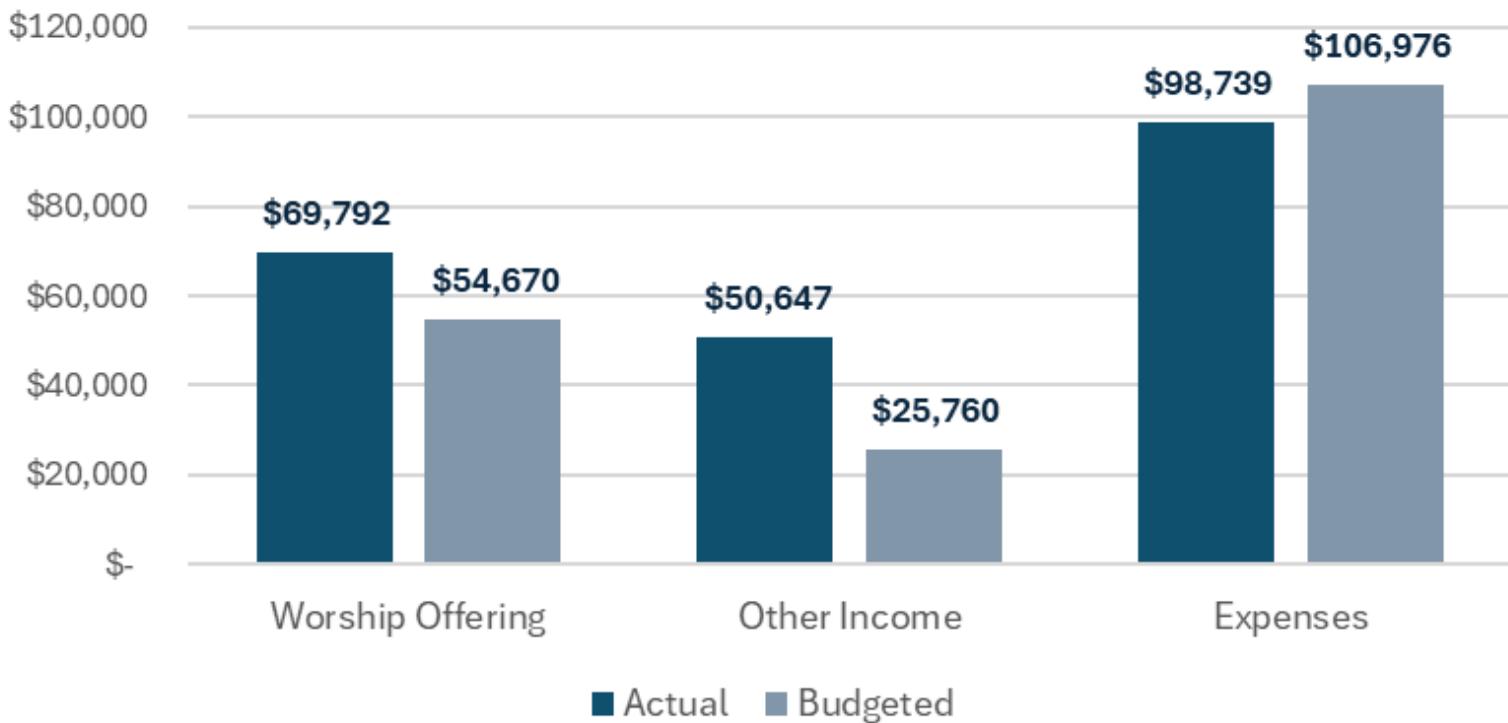


Ongoing financial oversight includes a monthly review of financial results by the Finance Committee and Executive Committee, as well as a quarterly review by Church Council. Financial summaries are also shared with the congregation through this newsletter and through our annual report and meetings. We encourage you to review this information and to ask questions.

We appreciate your continued trust and support. The Finance Committee and Church Council remain committed to transparency, accountability, and faithful stewardship, and we welcome your questions at any time.

Angie Roy - Church Treasurer

## General Operating - January 2026



# PROPERTY UPDATE

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## Property Happenings

The biggest property projects at the church involve the Crossway Center, CWC, ceiling and the West Fargo Eats, WFE, storage area. You may have heard Pastor Joel mention the investigation into the water damage that can be seen in the ceiling of the CWC. The investigation found some issues, but additional testing will be performed when the weather warms up. Is the water damage from condensation or water seepage or both? That's what the testing will determine. The objective is to fix the correct problem and ALL of it.

Plans have been finalized for restructuring the storage WFE uses on the southeast section of the CWC which consists of several small rooms. These were previously classrooms. WFE uses this area for food receiving and storage. The small rooms are inefficient and are not the best use of building space for this purpose. This is especially true as WFE mission expands. Opening up the rooms will solve both problems.

Larger projects like the CWC ceiling and WFE storage require congregational approval. When the time is right, you will be asked to consider the value of these projects to our faith community. Timing is TBD, but it will be sometime this year.

The 2026 budget has been finalized, and I'll be working with the Property Committee to allocate those funds to a prioritized list of maintenance projects. If you notice something that could use attention, please bring it to my attention. I'll add it to the list! Just like Rome wasn't built in a day, maintenance projects can't all be completed in one year. But knowing about them allows for prudent prioritization so that deferred maintenance doesn't become costly maintenance. And our custodian, Alfredo, is always there to help make attending services and participating in activities a pleasant experience. He's a vital member of the property team.

Karl Gunderson  
Property Manager

# HOLY WEEK & EASTER SCHEDULE

Passion Wednesday  
March 25th  
Worship at 6:30pm

Palm Sunday  
March 29th  
Worship at 9:30 am  
Brunch at 10:30AM

Maundy Thursday  
April 2nd  
Worship at 6:30 pm  
Celebration of First Communion

Good Friday  
April 3rd  
Prayer Around the Cross at 7:30pm

Easter Sunday  
April 5th  
Worship at 6:30, 8:00, 9:30 & 11:00 am  
Communion served at all services.



## Easter Garden

Printed Easter Lily forms are available in the narthex OR click the image for the online form. The cost of each plant is \$15.



**Deadline is April 3rd  
Questions?  
Contact [office@lcc-wf.com](mailto:office@lcc-wf.com)**

# Special MEALS

March 4<sup>th</sup> - Pulled Pork &  
Mac & Cheese

April 15<sup>th</sup> - Ham & Cheese Sliders

**\$5** PER PERSON  
(max \$20 per family)

Lutheran Church of the Cross



## Palm Sunday BRUNCH



Free will  
donation



Join us for food & fellowship  
after Worship on Palm Sunday!



**MARCH 29TH  
10:30-11:30AM**

LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE CROSS

Join us for  
**NEW MEMBER**  
*Orientation*

**Wednesday, April 15th 7:20pm**  
OR  
**Sunday, April 19th 10:45am**

RSVP  
by emailing  
[office@lcc-wf.com](mailto:office@lcc-wf.com)

# CHURCH SCHOOL & MILESTONES @ LCC

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CHURCH SCHOOL!?

In January, our Church School students explored several meaningful moments from Jesus' life and ministry. They learned about Jesus as a young boy in the temple, discovered the significance of his baptism, heard the story of the calling of the first disciples, and reflected on the powerful message of love and forgiveness in the parable of the prodigal son. Through these stories, students grew in their understanding of who Jesus is and what it means to follow him in their own lives.



## MILESTONE MINISTRIES @LCC

2<sup>nd</sup> Grade- First Communion Will be held at LCC on Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>. RSVP by the 10<sup>th</sup> to [adrianna@lcc-wf.com](mailto:adrianna@lcc-wf.com)

While this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade milestone students of all ages are welcome to attend if they would like to know more about communion!



**SAVE THE DATE FOR VBS 2026**  
**MAY 26TH- 29TH**



## INTERESED IN JOING THE EDUCATION BOARD?

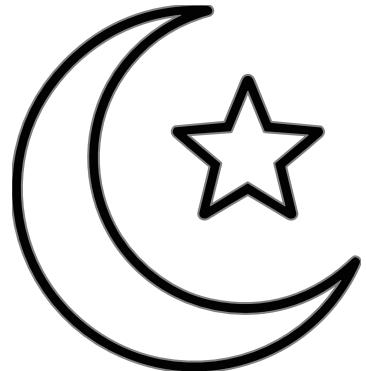
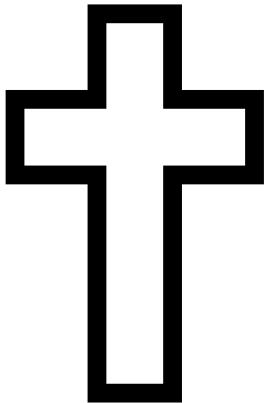
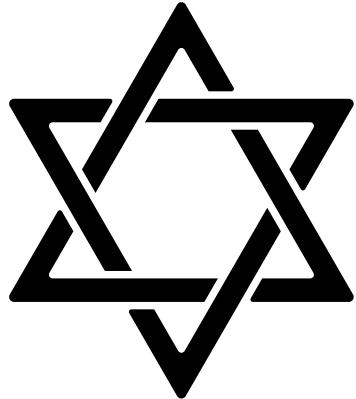
We are seeking parents interested in supporting faith formation at LCC by serving on the Education Board. This group meets 3-4 times per year with Education & Youth Director Adrianna to discuss current programming, share ideas, and explore ways to grow and strengthen faith formation in our church community.

## IMPORTANT DATES IN FEBRUARY & MARCH:

- Mar. 10<sup>th</sup> - 1st Communion RSVP Due
- Mar. 15<sup>th</sup> - First Communion Learning (2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Milestone)
- Mar. 18<sup>th</sup> - No Church School - Break
- Mar. 22<sup>nd</sup> No Church School - Break
- Mar. 29<sup>th</sup> - Church School in Worship (Palm Sunday)

# CONFIRMATION @LCC

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## Interfaith Community Dialogue

As part of our confirmation program, we periodically have leaders from the Jewish and Muslim communities coming to talk about their faith traditions. This interfaith dialogue helps us to learn more about what it means to be part of the Abrahamic faiths, and deepens our understanding of our neighbors.

This event is open to all, so if you are interested, please join us on Wednesday, March 4th, from 7:20–8:05 in the sanctuary.

# CONFIRMATION @LCC

## What's Happening in Confirmation?

Students just attended the Middle School Retreat at Luther Crest Bible Camp in Alexandria, MN. They had an awesome time growing in their faith and making new friends while in God's beautiful creation!



## UPCOMING EVENTS & DATES

February 18th - No Confirmation - Ash Wednesday

March 4th - Interfaith Community Dialouge

March 18th - No Confirmation - School Spring Break



# UPDATES

## Novel Ideas

**February 19th @ 10am**

***The Water Keeper*  
by Charles Martin**



**March 19th @ 10am**

***James*  
by Percival Everett**

**April 16th @ 10am**

***Beautiful Ugly*  
by Alice Feeney**

Anyone is welcome to attend; even if you just want to come once in a while to enjoy the discussion of the book-of-the-month if that's what interests you.

## Piecemaker Quilting Group

The Piecemaker Quilting Group will meet on the following dates:

- **February 26th - 9:30 am**
- **March 12th - 9:30 am**
- **March 26th - 9:30 am**
- **April 9th - 9:30 am**
- **April 23rd - 9:30 am**



**Everyone is welcome!**  
Contact Pat Maas at  
[pkmaas@yahoo.com](mailto:pkmaas@yahoo.com)  
with any questions.



# UPDATES

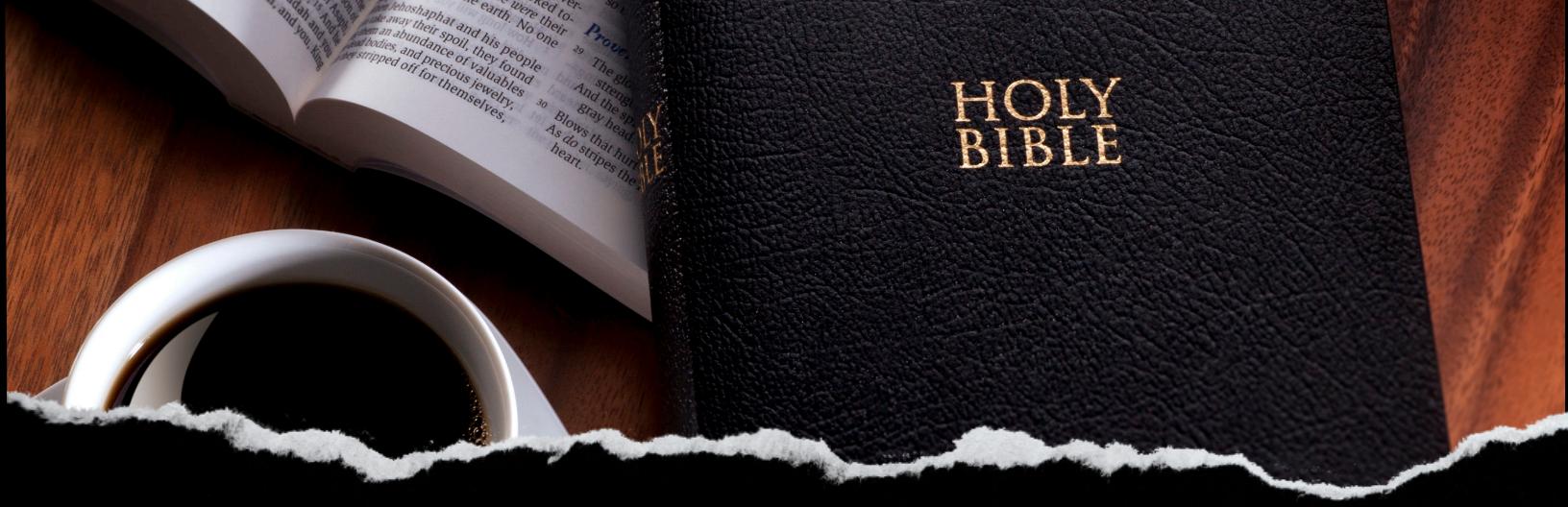
## **Coffee Bar Volunteers Needed!**

Beannediction coffee Bar is looking for Sunday morning volunteers! If you love coffee or a fru-fru drink, then we want you! Kristi, our coffee bar leader, is also happy to train anyone in. Please let the church office know at [office@lcc-wf.com](mailto:office@lcc-wf.com). Cheers!



How Does Moses  
Make Coffee?  
He-brews it.





HOLY  
BIBLE

# MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

TUESDAYS 6:30AM-7:30AM

Gentlemen, start your Bibles! Men's Bible Study meets weekly from 6:30am-7:30am or whenever you need to leave. To get on the email list or with questions, reach out to Pastor Joel ([jbaranko@lcc-wf.com](mailto:jbaranko@lcc-wf.com)).

# WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Tuesdays from 12:00-1:00pm

All women are invited to gather for Women's Bible Study in the Hospitality Room (found across the hallway from the sanctuary). We begin with coffee and fellowship before spending time looking more closely at the Bible. You are welcome to attend any Tuesday.

Questions?

Reach out to Pastor Erick ([pastorerick@lcc-wf.com](mailto:pastorerick@lcc-wf.com))



## West Fargo Eats Updates

### January Momentum & Giving Hearts Day Highlights

The new year is off to an incredible start at West Fargo Eats – and we are feeling the momentum!

In January alone, we served:

- 241 household visits
- 588 individuals
  - 158 children
  - 247 adults
  - 183 seniors

We Distributed:

- 7,046 pounds of food
- 204 pounds shared with partner agencies

That's a powerful start to 2026!





## Giving Hearts Day Energy!



Along with a very busy pantry season, Giving Hearts Day early giving kicked off on January 13th, keeping us moving and inspired.

We were also fortunate to participate in the Red River Market Charity Expo on February 7th, giving us even more visibility and community exposure as we shared the mission of West Fargo Eats with new friends and supporters.

Giving Hearts Day was held on February 12th, and we were so close to reaching our \$50,000 goal – coming in at: \$43,442  
We are incredibly grateful for the overwhelming support from our congregation and community. Every gift makes a direct impact on the families walking through our doors.

We were also blessed by a wonderful partnership with Lundy's in West Fargo, who hosted a food drive and pledged to donate 20% of their sales from February 12th to West Fargo Eats. We will share that final total in a future newsletter – but we are already so thankful for their generosity and community spirit!





West Fargo Eats continues to focus on strengthening community connections and finding new ways to expand our impact. We are truly blessed by our volunteers, partners, donors, and the faithful support of the LCC congregation.

**With Thanks and Blessings,**

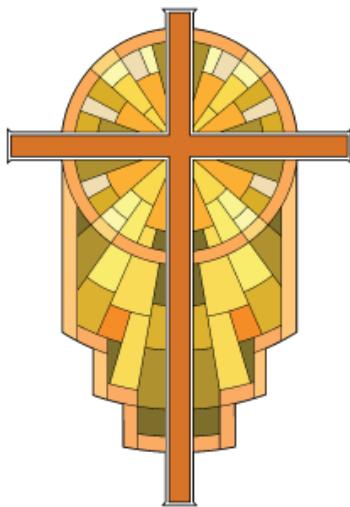
**Chelsie Bormann  
Director West Fargo Eats.**



# LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE CROSS

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(701) 282-0514



## Contact Us:

**Pastor Joel Baranko:** [jbaranko@lcc-wf.com](mailto:jbaranko@lcc-wf.com)

**Pastor Erick Thompson:** [pastorerick@lcc-wf.com](mailto:pastorerick@lcc-wf.com)

**Adrianna Carlson, Christian Ed & Youth Director:** [adrianna@lcc-wf.com](mailto:adrianna@lcc-wf.com)

**Chad Svenby, Dir. of Music & Arts Ministry:** [csvenby@lcc-wf.com](mailto:csvenby@lcc-wf.com)

**Bianca McCullum, Bell Choir & Choir Director:** [mccullumbianca@gmail.com](mailto:mccullumbianca@gmail.com)

**Alanna Rerick - Choir Accompanist**

**Chelsie Bormann, West Fargo Eats Director:** [chelsie@lcc-wf.com](mailto:chelsie@lcc-wf.com)

**Jes Splichal, Office Manager:** [office@lcc-wf.com](mailto:office@lcc-wf.com)