

Faith Matters ~ February 2026



Lent



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Pastors' Page

Do you ever associate a movie or song with something that has happened in your life? For me, the movie *Groundhog's Day* will always remind me of a bad date. Obviously, this wasn't a date with my lovely wife, Andrea, but rather with a girl back in high school. To be honest, I don't even remember her name! But I do remember that we went to the movie *Groundhog's Day*, a film about a news reporter who re-lives the same day - Groundhog's Day - over and over again. It's actually a pretty entertaining and funny movie; it's just that it was a bad date!

You might actually be reading this Pastor's Page on Groundhog's Day. Let's pray that everything works out for little Punxsutawney Phil so that we have a shorter winter! But I also wonder if some of you feel like you are re-living the same thing over and over again when you come to worship. Later this month we will enter the season of Lent, when we will journey with Jesus to the cross—again. Before that, we'll hear about Jesus on the mount of Transfiguration—again. We'll hear about the temptation in the wilderness—again. And you'll hear about the forgiveness, grace, mercy, and love that God has for you in Jesus Christ—again.

It might seem redundant. It is, admittedly, repetitive. Why do we need to hear the same thing, over and over again? Does Lent always have to focus on the cross? Why does the main message of every sermon, every Sunday, have to be about forgiveness, grace, mercy, and love?

Indeed, some churches choose to ignore the rhythms of the liturgical calendar, and others use their sermons to teach on certain topics, like marriage or technology. But we, your pastors, have insisted on engaging in the liturgical rhythms and steadfastly holding to our preaching format for one big reason: you need to hear it! We need to hear it!

Like the character from *Groundhog's Day*, who needed to re-live the same day over and over until he finally got the point, so we need to hear the story of the cross and the proclamation of the good news over and over, every day! As sinners, we never really advance beyond the need for forgiveness, grace, mercy, and love. We may hear the story of the cross, over and over, but do we ever really hear it enough? Our sinful minds forget. Our sinful hearts deny. Our sinful nature rejects. The old hymn declares, "I love to tell the story..." but it also could confess, "I love to hear the story," or "I need to hear the story!"

So, my Faith Family, come. Come and hear the story. Come and enter the story. Come and receive the forgiveness. Come and be loved by God and his people. Come, hear it again—or for the first time! It never gets old! It's new every morning!

See you in church!
Pastor Dave

LIVE TV BROADCAST
SUNDAYS AT 8 A.M.
NUVERA & MEDIACOM
ON CH. 7

PRE-RECORDED TV BROADCASTS
SUNDAYS 10 A.M.
AND 5 P.M.
TUESDAYS 5 P.M.
THURSDAYS 10 P.M.
NUVERA CH. 10
MEDIACOM CH. 8

RADIO BROADCAST
SUNDAYS 8 A.M.
KDUZ 1260 AM
(PRE-RECORDED)

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AFTERNOONS

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Inside this issue:

Lent	pg. 2
Finance Update and Missions	pg. 3
Stump the Pastor Seniors Scene	pg. 4
Music	pg. 5
Children Youth and Families Church Calendar	pg. 6 & Insert
Staff Directory Prayer Requests	pg. 7

The Season of Lent Begins Soon

The season of Lent begins on February 18 with two services on Ash Wednesday, and one mid-week Lenten service each following Wednesday until Holy Week. Faith Lutheran will again partner during Lent with area LCMC churches: Christ the King, St. Matthew's in Fernando, St. Paul's in Stewart and Zion Lutheran in Buffalo Lake.

The theme for this year's mid-week services is "Fools and Fiends, Weeds and Workers: Parables for Lent." We will explore seven intriguing parables that Jesus taught as we journey with him to the cross.



We urge the whole family of Faith to attend these mid-week services to enrich your experience of Lent and to help prepare your hearts to celebrate the central good news of our faith, Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Here is the schedule of all the special services during Lent:

- **Ash Wednesday** - February 18, services at 12 noon and 6:30 p.m.
- **Lenten Services** – Wednesdays, February 25-March 25, services at 6:30 p.m.
 - * Confirmation students and families will attend services, then students will meet in their confirmation small groups for about a half hour after each service.
- **Maundy Thursday** - April 2, services at 6:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. (First Communion students will receive the Lord's Supper for the first time)
- **Good Friday** - April 3, joint services at 12 noon at Christ the King and at 6:30 p.m. at Faith Lutheran.
- **Easter Sunday** - April 5, Sunrise service at 6:00 a.m., traditional Easter services at 8:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. and a Foundation-style service at 11:00 a.m.

Prayer Retreat

Saturday, February 7, 8:30 a.m. - 12 noon

Each Tuesday morning a small yet mighty group of prayer warriors meet to spend an hour in intentional prayer. The group prays for specific people and situations along with prayers for our country, our communities, for missions and our church. We never run out of things to pray for; we just run out of time.

On Saturday, February 7, beginning at 8:30 a.m., we invite you to join us in the Faith Center for a morning of fellowship, worship, and prayer as we prepare for the Lenten season beginning on February 18. Our retreat theme is *Be Still*. We

will start the morning off with coffee and treats. At 9:00 a.m., Pastor Dave will lead us in a Matins worship service and a walk through Psalm 46. Pastor Erica Varcoe from the Table Ministries in Sioux Falls, SD, will share her thoughts on the topic of *Be Still* and tell us about her ministry in Sioux Falls. Pastor Erica has a wonderful message and will captivate your attention from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. The final hour of the morning will be spent exploring times of prayer.

This time of fellowship is for all members—men, women, and youth. Bring your relatives, friends, and neighbors.



The Faith Project

Right in the 'heart' of Heart Awareness Month we observe Valentine's Day, a day devoted to love. Deuteronomy 6:5 says "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."

The Faith Project is a monthly gathering for everyone based on the 'Fruits of the Spirit' from Galatians 5:22-23. Each month features a different virtue and a coordinating program, along with fellowship, and refreshments. **Love** was chosen for this month's theme. We hope you will join us on **Saturday, February 28 from 9 – 11 a.m.** in the **Faith Center**. A free will donation will be taken for the Leap of Faith Phase II building project.

Stewardship Matters

Stewardship
A way of living

People often speak gratefully about how richly God has blessed us in our country or our congregation and rightly so, but the last month of 2025 showed just *how* richly God has blessed the family of Faith Lutheran. In the month of December alone, the church received over half a million dollars in offerings! You read that right—over \$500,000 in one month alone! It was an astounding outpouring of support for the ministry that God has entrusted to us here.

That does not mean that Faith Lutheran is now awash in money. Even after the \$230,000(!) given to the General Fund in December, the total given in 2025 exceeded the church's annual expenses by only 0.016 percent. The \$300,000(!) given to the Leap of Faith capital campaign in December pushed the total amount in the fund over \$1 million dollars, but that is still only about 10% of what is needed to complete Phase II of our building. Giving by Faith's members has been remarkably strong, but the vision God keeps putting before us is equally bold, and it calls for ongoing commitment from the whole family of Faith.

The amazing generosity of last December's offerings, however, shows that we are well able to pursue that vision for Faith, for it is living proof that God has blessed and continues to bless all of us with so many resources. It is easy, even natural, to approach the church's mission from a fear of scarcity, that there is no way we have enough resources for everything Faith Lutheran is called to do. But the last month of 2025 proves that we can approach Faith's mission in a conviction of abundance, instead, in recognition of just how incredibly richly God has blessed us as individuals and as a congregation. With such a generous God who provides for us so steadfastly, what do we suppose the Faith family could accomplish in 2026? Let's pray and see!



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Lessons from Past Witnesses Still Need to Be Heard

Pastor Paul Knudson

As I write this mission article, I cannot help but lift up some thoughts that may seem to us a message from a past age that has little to say to us now. One of our Digging Deeper options on Sunday morning at present is a look back at the witness of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Re-reading a major biography of this martyr for the faith at the hands of Hitler's forces has drawn me into looking more closely at the challenges in witness today.

We may feel that our witness is met more by being ignored or belittled than any possibility of being called to be a martyr for our understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. At this moment in America that would seem to be the case. Yet most of these disciples of Jesus Christ died at the hands of governmental leaders who demanded their worship or face death. We have mission partners such as Brother Titus in Nigeria who daily are under threat of death. Our close partners in India at present have enemies of our faith that threaten them.

At the very least, we are called to pray for brothers and sisters in Christ whose faith places their lives at risk. We may also want to step back and discern if our faith commitment to Jesus Christ could be more costly than we presently imagine. If we cannot imagine such a cost, we may well need to fall to our knees in prayer that just possibly our faith is more culturally bound than open to suffering and dying as the cost of discipleship.

Attention Snow Birds

As you prepare to head south for the winter, we would love to have your temporary address so that we can keep you in the loop of all things "Faith Lutheran" while you are gone.

We can't forward your giving statements, newsletters, etc. to you if we don't know where you are! Please call the office with your temporary address, the date you plan to leave and when you plan to return. Help us keep you "In the Know!"

Don't forget that you can get your monthly Faith Matters and weekly news via e-mail if you are not already doing so.



STUMP THE PASTOR

Stump the Pastor

Q: When we come forward to take Holy Communion, is there a right or wrong way to receive the bread and wine?

A: There are no rules or laws about how to receive the elements of communion. The only essential issue is that Christians do receive it “as often as you (eat or) drink it in remembrance of me,” as St. Paul urged in I Corinthians 11:25. In the *Small Catechism*, Martin Luther emphasized that Christ’s promises in the Words of Institution “are the chief thing in the Sacrament, and those who believe them have what they say and declare, namely the forgiveness of sins.”

There may be, however, better ways than others to partake of the sacrament. One difference is in the two verbs in the question above. To “take” the bread and wine suggests reaching out to grasp the elements from the server, while to “receive” them has more the sense of having a gift given to you. A posture that reminds us that the Lord’s Supper is a gift of grace freely given to us is a fitting way to accept this blessing.

In that light, it has been recommended (though never required) that an appropriate way to receive the Lord’s Supper is to cup one’s left hand under the right so that the elements can be placed in your hands. There is a two-fold symbolism to that gesture. One is that it is the posture of a beggar, which reminds us that we in no way deserve this gift of grace, but do desperately need it. The evangelist D.T. Niles summed up Christian ministry as “one beggar telling another where to find bread.” As sinners in need of forgiveness, we receive the bread and wine as a sheer gift of God’s grace.



Cupping our hands together also symbolizes a throne where Christ our King sits as the bread is placed in them. It reminds us that the risen Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18), has claimed us as his children in Holy Baptism and reigns over our lives as our gracious Lord.

Seniors Scene

There is one subject that is important to all of us seniors. That is the subject of “aging.” We are very conscious of it simply because it is happening to us. Yet, while that is true, we may never study aging in depth because it is so close to us and so every day-ish. It’s like one elderly lady said, “I didn’t choose to get old; it just happened. I’m never sure just exactly what to do with it.”

How true, and how honest! But now we have an opportunity. At our **Seniors’ Potluck** meeting on **Thursday, February 26, 12:00 noon**, we are going to take a closer look at the aging process. We’ll raise some questions, seek your impressions, observe some attitudes and maybe even come up with a few answers on how to help aging be a positive experience for each of us.

Don’t miss it! **“See you at Seniors’ Potluck.”** Bring a friend, someone new.



Faith Lutheran Church Support Groups

For more information or to plug into any of the following support groups please call the church office at 320-587-2093 and ask for Pastor Paulus Pilgrim, Jeff Amundson, or Marsha Schmit.



- 1) **FACe Cancer Support Group** This group is open to members and non-members of Faith alike. Those with cancer, those who are in remission, and family members who are caregivers of those with cancer are encouraged to participate in this support group. The FACe group meets the second and fourth Thursday morning of each month in the third floor conference room at 10 a.m. A Zoom option is available for those who are not able to attend due to health or distance obstacles.
- 2) **Caregiver Support Group** Meets the **THIRD** Thursday of each month September—May at 4 p.m.
- 3) **Grief Support Group** meets as needed throughout the year.

Worship Snapshot: Wondrous Love

As the season of Epiphany draws to a close this month, the church's gaze begins to turn. We have spent weeks beholding the light of Christ—revealed to the nations, proclaimed at the Jordan, shining in word and deed. Now that same light leads us toward the shadowed path of Lent. The glory we glimpse in Epiphany does not disappear; it deepens. It bends toward the cross.

One hymn that helps us make that turn simply and powerfully is the Appalachian folk hymn, "*What Wondrous Love Is This?*" LBW #385. When our choir sings it on Ash Wednesday, we will hear again words that refuse to hurry past the mystery at the heart of our faith: "*What wondrous love is this, O my soul, that caused the Lord of life to bear the heavy cross for my soul.*"

The question is the hymn's first gift. *What* wondrous love is this? Not a love we can easily define or explain. Not a love that fits neatly into our logic or our expectations. This is love that causes "the Lord of life" to do the unthinkable; to be obedient to death, even death on a cross, for us and for our salvation.

This month on February 18, Ash Wednesday meets us with honesty. Ashes on our foreheads trace the shape of that same cross and speak the truth about us: "You are dust, and to dust you shall return." Lent does not flatter us. It names our frailty, our sin, our mortality. And yet, right there, in ashes, repentance, and silence, we sing of wondrous love. The contrast is not accidental. It is the gospel.

The Lord of life bears the heavy cross *for my soul*. Not for an abstract humanity, but for you, for me, for sinners who often do not understand the cost of love until we see it hanging before us. Wondrous love is not proven by spectacle or power, but by self-giving mercy. It is revealed not in avoiding suffering, but in entering it for the sake of the beloved.

That is why this hymn belongs so naturally at the threshold of Lent. As Epiphany's light gives way to Lenten honesty, we are invited to look steadily at the cross and ask again what kind of love would go there willingly.

Our upcoming Lenten preaching theme, "*Fools and Fiends, Weeds and Workers: Parables for Lent,*" will invite us to listen closely as Jesus tells stories that unsettle easy assumptions. In those parables, fools squander grace, fiends resist mercy, weeds grow alongside wheat, and workers receive generosity they did not earn. Again and again we encounter a love that does not operate by our sense of fairness or reason, a love that seems foolish, a love that risks being misunderstood, a love that bears a heavy cross.

"What wondrous love is this?" The question will echo through our Lenten journey. It will meet us in ashes and hymns, in parables and prayers. And slowly, by grace, it will shape us—not into people who have all the answers, but into people who trust the love that carries us, even through the valley of the cross, and into the promise of life.



Faith Lutheran Church Leadership - Church Council

Who is your Church Council? The 2026 Faith Lutheran Church Council was elected at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 25 and they will be installed at the February 8 Sanctuary Service.

They are: Scott Glaser (Council President), Jeff Schiller (Council Vice-President), Niki Pokornowski (Secretary), Jon Gelschus (Treasurer), Richard Settergren, McKenzie Smith, Kim Pearson, Connie Stromseth, Monica Schiller, John Olsen, Lori Swift, Donna Eastman, Dave Skaar and Justin Beck.

You can see the list of council members on the church website anytime. You can also find copies of the church council meeting minutes on the website and posted in the hall between the Faith Center and Sanctuary steps. You can also read them via the weekly E-newsletters. (If you don't subscribe to that valuable E-newsletter contact the office to get added to that list.)

These people are a valuable part of the leadership team of Faith Lutheran and generously give of their time and talents to support the staff in a variety of ways. Please keep them in your prayers in this coming year as they lead and guide the business of Faith Lutheran church.

**Church Council meets on the third Tuesday of each month, at 7:30 p.m., in the Faith Center.
These meetings are open to the voting membership of the church.**



Aftershock

This ministry meets on the school early-release days from 1:15 p.m.—4:30 p.m., and is for children in kindergarten—5th grade. Children get picked up from school, have a snack, make crafts, play games, have a Bible story time and worship.

NEXT DAY: April 1.

If you are able to volunteer for Aftershock, please reach out to Laura Stowman. Thank you!

56er's

56er's is an after-school program on Wednesdays for ANYONE in 5th and 6th grade. Our time is filled with hang time, snack, lesson, and games. This group meets right after school until 5:15 p.m. Go to our church website to register your child.

NO 56ER'S ON March 11.

Sunday School

This month Sunday School children are learning about the many miracles Jesus has done.

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL March 8.

First Communion Instruction

The 6th-grade students began their communion instruction on February 1. They are learning about the importance and reason behind communion. Then they will receive their first communion during the Maundy Thursday worship services.

Mark your 2026 Summer Calendars!



Mystery Bus
5th—7th grade
June 9—11

Vacation Bible School
Preschool—4th grade
June 29—July 2

Day Camp
Kindergarten—5th grade
August 3—6

Sign-ups are live!

**Go to the children's page on our website.
faithlc.com**



FLY Night

Faith Lutheran Youth night continues for all high school students on Wednesdays from 7:00—9:30 p.m.

HELP SERVE FREE LUNCH!

Faith serves Free Lunch on Thursday, February 12, and we need your help. Commitment is 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Contact Kristen if you have more questions!

Questions? Prayer Requests? Contact us!

Laura Stowman—Director of Children and Family Ministries—lauras@faithlc.com
Kristen Durst—Director of Youth and Family Ministries—kristend@faithlc.com



Each school year, we take our Confirmation students on a retreat. The topics switch off from year to year. One year we talk about Martin Luther and the history of the church. The other, which happens to be this year, we talk about love, identity, and relationships. I love these weekends away because it's a saturated amount of time that I get with my youth with whom I otherwise don't spend a ton of time during the week.

One of my favorite lessons that Pastor Dave teaches is on the different words for love in the Bible that are being used and were used in their culture. For example, our word for love encompasses loving in multiple types of ways whereas the Greek brings so much richness to the language.



Words for Love:

1. **Eros** - Romantic Love
2. **Storgae** - Parental love
3. **Philia** - Brotherly/friendship love
This is where Philadelphia gets the nickname the "city of brotherly love"
4. **Agape** - unconditional, Godly love.


There is a passage in John where Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him. Peter answers him each time with a yes and Jesus responds with, "Feed my sheep." The language for love and which words Jesus is using when asking Peter if he loves him changes from agape to philia. It adds a richness to the scripture that maybe didn't exist before for you and for me.

Now, why would the youth director be writing an article in the Faith Matters about love? Great question. My heart has been heavy with the unrest in our state. I have watched as violence, misinformation, and fear have spread ferociously. It's called me to cling to what I believe Jesus would ask of me in this moment, and what keeps coming up is to love my neighbor. The Greek word used in the Bible is "agape," meaning Jesus calls us to love our neighbors *unconditionally*. In a world of consistent division and hurt, the call of our Savior in regards to our neighbors is to love them, to love those that disagree with you or disappoint you, which is far easier said than done. You might be thinking how challenging that may feel for you, and as we head into Lent and look to the cross where Jesus died, I want to remind you that Jesus loves you. And that word is agape. There have been times when I have disappointed my Savior, yet he still unconditionally loves me when I do not deserve it. Jesus at the Last Supper, calls upon his disciples and says in John 13, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." I pray that the month of February is a reminder for you that God loves you so much, and because of that, we get to love our neighbors, too.

Kristen Durst,
Director of Youth and Family Ministry



**We love because
He first loved us!
*1 John 4:19***



Please Remember in Prayer



Remember our Faith members in nursing homes and health care centers:

Please remember those who are serving our country through active duty:

LtCdr. Brett Stadsklev (Navy, San Diego, CA-son-in-law of Judy and Tom Felber)
Spc. Jones R. Reid (Space Force, Patrick, FL - son of Melissa Straka, grandson of Sherry Schuetz)

Please contact the church office to make any changes or additions to this list.



Faith Lutheran Church INFORMATION & STAFF DIRECTORY

335 Main St. S. 320-587-2093 FaithLC.com

Buffalo Lake Nursing Home

Kathy Fabel

Cedar Crest – Silver Lake

Patricia Lambert

Cokato Nursing Home

Clara Betker

GlenFields— Glencoe

Barb Helland

Harmony River

Shirley Holtz
Wilbur Johnson

Prairie Senior Cottages

Lorallen (Smudge) Schmeling

Prince of Peace

Maynard Holtz

Oaks

Phyllis Blum
Helen Kieper
Deloris Olson
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DuWayne Peterson
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Woodstone

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You can support the mission and ministry of Faith Lutheran Church by using this QR code or go to the FLC online giving page at Faithlc.com/give-2/



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It saves the church postage and printing costs, and you get to see it in color every month!
You can request a change to e-mailed newsletters by sending a request to office@faithlc.com
or calling Wendy at 320-587-2093.



OUR MISSION IS:
BUILDING FAITH
"EQUIP THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY,
FOR BUILDING UP THE BODY OF CHRIST"
EPHESIANS 4:12

TO LIVE OUT THAT MISSION, GOD CALLS US TO:

FOLLOW JESUS
ANNOUNCE THE GOSPEL
INVITE ALL PEOPLE
TEACH CHRISTIAN TRUTH
HELP ALL WHO ARE IN NEED

