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Our next  
 property council  
 meeting will be  
 Wednesday,  
 February, 4th, at  
 6:30pm.



Mid-February we will enter the season of Lent, a season of reflection in preparation to celebrate, and receive anew, what Jesus accomplished for us through dying and rising. A season to perceive and embrace the lives that can be ours in, and on account of, God's love for each of us, "Just as We Are". Love not content leave us in the mess we know to well, rather holds open the path for us to move and see beyond our personal troubles, secure our hearts again in God's promises, and put God's gifts to work for the sake of all creation. Perhaps embrace God's gifts in new ways, appropriate for the present season of your lives.

God is constant, but on the earthly side of reality, resist it as we may, modernity continues to change the reference points which formerly characterized our lives. For example, social media is an ale Carte menu of bite-size significance. Week to week, hour by hour we observe people define and redefine their reality on the basis of what others have posted, or the news cycle. Yet will social media ever be able to define the deep significance of what is true about ourselves and God? Might we focus on the blessings God provides?

God who speaks love and worth to us through Creation, merciful redemption, and comforting voice of truth and love in the Holy Spirit calls us to keep in our hearts a vision of the beauty and peace our Creator not only wants for us, also provides if we will humble ourselves to receive in the ways God provides. Which include thinking of others and willingness to employ time, talents, and resources in participation with the good God desires be worked in the world. As appropriate for the season of your life. It is hard to accept, yet some who have been movers and shakers now find themselves receiving from those influenced by their good examples. By some new acquaintances.

The witness of your church life may be more significant, while underrated, than we imagine in these uncertain times because faith is a source of strength and confidence that exceeds what any temporal earthbound entity can provide.

The witness of your church, and your participation, is a light for others to notice in you the source of your hope and strength.

In a time and place where many quietly despair as they encounter the limits of social networks, self-help, and age related limitations; we discover deeper meaning in our fellowship opportunities, worship habits, and quiet time.

Priorities need to be adjusted and reordered toward the changes in our community's and our personal needs.

The Lord has been your reliable companion in all the seasons of your life; even when you look back and see only one set of footprints in the sand.

So may you embrace this upcoming season of Lenten preparation as a time to draw nearer to the one who has brought the kingdom of God near to you.

The Journey to the Cross, and the light of Easter which lay on the other side, leads us to ask a variety of questions about the meaning of Jesus life as well as faith's influence on our own. The one constant answer is, "because God's love for you is greater".

Please pray for me as I plan and prepare our worship in the season of Lent.

*Pastor Hart*

**Please get all Annual Reports for 2025  
turned in ASAP!**

### **Prayer for February**

*Lord, teach us to walk in kindness this month and beyond. May our actions reflect your love, and may others see your heart through each of us. "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32, ESV).*

*Merciful God, as we begin this journey of Lent, remind us of your grace and renew the Holy Spirit within us. "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10, ESV).*

*Help us, O Lord, to be still and patient before you as we wait for the touch of your hand upon our hearts.*

**Amen.**



**It is that time of year again!  
We are calling on your help  
for our annual  
"Bury the Altar" food drive to  
support the Newton Food  
Pantry.**

**Please help us bless the  
community with an abundance of  
food. We welcome any and all non  
-perishable food items, and we  
look forward to watching the altar**

**disappear behind a wall of your generous donations.  
Monetary donations are also welcomed, as we can use those funds to shop for needed  
items on your behalf. If you choose to donate money, please indicate clearly on your do-  
nation that it is for the "Bury the Altar" food drive.**

**Thank you for your generosity!**

## Breaking News from Chihoni!

The Chihoni Medical Center is opening its doors and will be serving patients starting Tuesday, February 3, 2026!

After years of planning, praying, working, and jumping through innumerable bureaucratic hoops, the eagerly awaited day is finally here! Selemani Shabani and his team have built a beautiful facility, and our medical team, headed by Dr. Charles Powell, Dr. Bonaventura Mazezele, and Director of Nursing Miriam Mugo, have made sure quality medical equipment is in place throughout.

In her segment in the January IHP Update, available online at [ihptz.org](http://ihptz.org), Paula lists the many steps it has taken to get this far, thanking all who have so generously supported this vital project. As she points out, thanks to the well-equipped surgical suite, which First Lutheran helped furnish through Choices in Mission, the Chihoni Medical Center is prepared to do an emergency C-section from day one.



Chihoni Medical center staff



The first staff meeting, January 15.

The newly hired staff is excited and ready to go to work! January 15 saw the first staff meeting of the Chihoni Medical Center. And starting Tuesday, February 3, these dedicated workers will bring quality medical care to the people of Chihoni and neighboring communities.

**Thanks be to God!**

**Calling all soup makers, there will be six opportunities for you to share your talent with your church family this year.**

For reasons unforeseen to us we will not be rotating Lenten service locations this year. We will gather at First for the Wednesday Lenten worship and fellowship beginning on Ash Wednesday, February 18th. Please consider when and how you will be able to contribute to this seasonal fellowship. It takes a community, and we are one in Christ ~ by our Lord's power and love.

Pastor Kurt

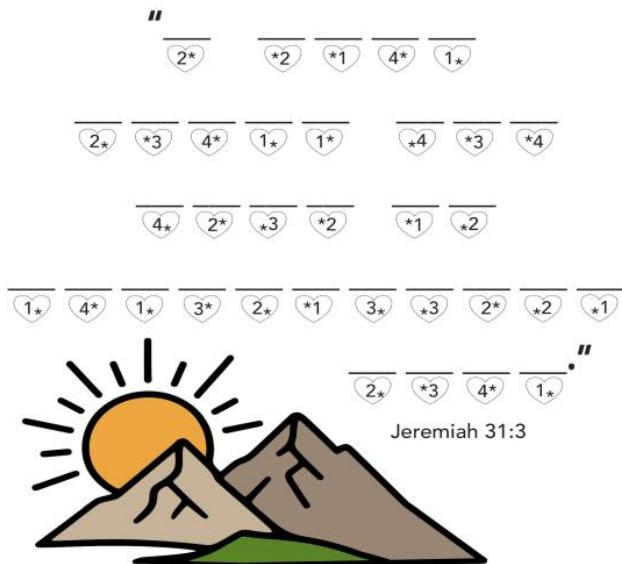
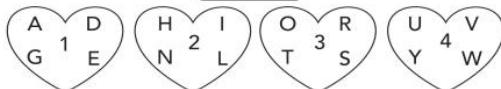


# Puzzle!

We see hearts everywhere and love sharing cards and greetings with friends and family.

Use the code to discover a special message from God — perfect for any day, any month.

CODE:



Answer: "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

## Coming soon-

The Joint Council, which is the working group between UCC and First Lutheran, has selected a service project for the two congregations to work on together this year. Details coming soon!

## Bible Quiz

The New Testament uses several Greek words to describe love. Which of the following best represents the selfless, sacrificial love that God shows to humanity?

- A. Eros
- B. Phileo
- C. Agape
- D. Storge

Answer on pg. 2



## Online worship service are always available!

At any time if you would like to watch our online service that is streamed live every Sunday, please use the link below

<https://www.facebook.com/lstlutherannewton>

Also, follow us on facebook at First Lutheran Church-Newton

2026

## Church Council Officers

President: Jim Lammey

Vice President: Evelyn George

Secretary: Deb Rose

Arthur III Greve 02/05

Jane Johnson 02/10

Katie Cantu 02/12

Bryan Friedman 02/23

Alex Anderson 02/27

Evelyn George 02/27

Ashlyn Karsten 02/27

Kurt Hoover 02/28



## Special Dates

- \* Black History Month, February 1-28, 2026
- \* Groundhog Day, February 2, 2026
- \* Valentine's Day, February 14, 2026
- Shrove Pancake Breakfast February 15, 2026
- \* Presidents Day, February 16, 2026
- \* Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026



## February Encouragement

*February can feel long and cold... but God's love is warm and steady.*

*"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases"*  
*(Lamentations 3:22, ESV).*

*If you need prayer or a friendly conversation, send us a message — we're here for you.*

*#YouAreLoved  
#ChurchFamily*

## Christian symbol

### CORNERSTONE —

The cornerstone is a symbol for Christ. It has Old Testament roots in Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 28:16). In the New Testament, Christ is called the cornerstone in Ephesians 2:20. The IHC and XP on the stone's sides are abbreviations for "Jesus" and "Christ" in Greek.



## The Upside-Down Blessing

The Beatitudes are more than poetic lines from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. They're a radical redefinition of what it means to be blessed. The Greek word *makarios* doesn't just mean "happy." It describes a deep, untouchable joy that pain, loss or hardship cannot erase. As scholar William Barclay wrote, it is "the joy which shines through tears."

Jesus flips the world's idea of success upside down. The "blessed" aren't the powerful or prosperous, but the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek and the merciful. Imagine reading them as "Congratulations, you who feel broken, God's kingdom belongs to you!" His words assure us that, even in suffering, we stand in God's favor.

Real blessing isn't about shiny possessions or smooth sailing. It's the steady, saving presence of God — a life preserver tossed to us when we're struggling to stay afloat. And it's not just an individual promise. Jesus spoke these blessings to a community, a we more than a me. Together, as the body of Christ, we find comfort, strength and the courage to live with joy that nothing in life or death can take away.



— Adapted from HomileticsOnline.com

## Mountain-Top Moments

In Matthew 17, we read a remarkable story about Jesus taking Peter, James and John up a high mountain. What seemed like an ordinary hike turned into a moment that changed their understanding of who Jesus really is. Matthew writes, “And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light” (Matthew 17:2, NASB). The disciples saw Jesus in a brilliant, heavenly glory — a glimpse of his true identity as the Son of God.

But that wasn’t all. A voice from the cloud declared, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!” (Matthew 17:5, NASB). Imagine the awe and holy fear those disciples felt. Just like many of us would, they fell to the ground, overwhelmed by God’s presence. Yet Jesus didn’t leave them trembling. He came close, touched them and said those comforting words we all long to hear: “Do not be afraid.”

After the moment passed, Jesus led them back down the mountain and into everyday life again. This powerful encounter reminds us that Jesus is truly the Son of God — radiant, holy and worthy of our worship. But it also shows us his heart: gentle, reassuring and near to us when we are afraid.

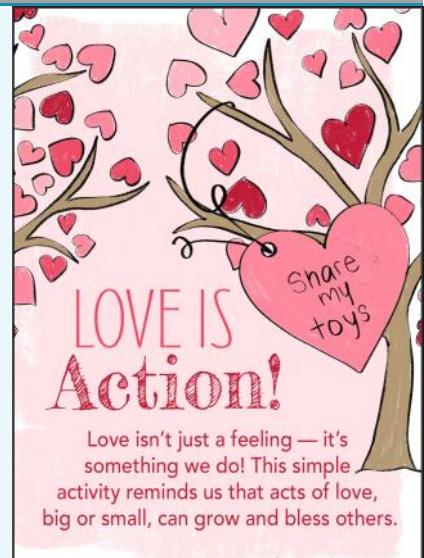
We may not stand on that mountain, but we can still experience our own “mountain-top moments” — times in worship, prayer or Scripture when we glimpse God’s glory in a fresh way. And just like the disciples, we are invited to rise up, follow Jesus and listen to him every step of the journey.

## **A Vision Rooted in Faith and Freedom**

Washington's wisdom has been an inspiration for large numbers of our leading men and women in every decade since his time. He had the uncanny foresight of seeking to build a nation upon the bedrock of strong patriotism, unquestioned integrity, opportunities for all, high ideals and love of God.

May our great land, conceived in prayer for peace, bring new concepts of living to all the peoples of the world.

— James Francis Cook, in *The Etude*



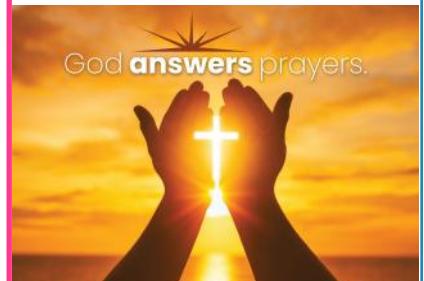
### **What you need:**

- Construction paper (brown for the trunk, pinks and reds for hearts)
- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- Markers or crayons



### **What you do:**

1. Cut a large tree trunk and branches out of brown paper and glue it onto a sheet of paper or poster board.
2. Use colorful paper to cut several hearts — these will be your “leaves.”
3. On each heart, write loving actions like “share my toys,” “pray for others,” or “help clean up.”
4. Glue the hearts onto the branches to create a full, love-filled tree.
5. Hang it somewhere visible as a reminder to put love into action every day!



God **answers** prayers.

# FEBRUARY

2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 <b>Worship Service</b> 9:30 am	2 Groundhog Day	3 NO Property Meeting this month.	4 Dorcas 9:30 Am.	5 13	6 20 Valentine's Day	7
8 <b>Worship Service</b> 9:30 am	9 10	11 17 Lois Cr. 9:30 Am.	12 19 Ash Wednesday & Soup Supper 6:00 Pm.	13 19 Council Meeting 6:00 Pm.	14 21	
15 <b>Pancake Breakfast</b>	16 <b>Worship Service</b> 9:30 am	17 Presidents Day	18 24 25 Last day for Bury the Altar	19 26 27 28 Lenten Service & Soup Supper 6:00 Pm.	20 27 28	
22 <b>Worship Service</b> 9:30 am						

Bury The Altar Jan. 18<sup>th</sup> -Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>

FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
309 EAST THIRD STREET  
NORTH  
NEWTON, IOWA  
50208

Watch Past and Live  
services !

[newtonfirstlutheran.org](http://newtonfirstlutheran.org)  
&  
(on Facebook at)  
First Lutheran Church-  
Newton

*Join Us*

Sunday Morning Worship

9:30 Am.

Coffee Hour

10:30 Am.

Wednesday Lenten Service

6:00 Pm.

