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Our next  
property council  
meeting will be  
Wednesday,  
January 7th, 2026  
at 6:30pm.



PROPERTY  
Committee

## "Emmanuel for You"

We have just celebrated the greatest gift ever, and are looking toward a new year despite likely being another daunting one marked by conflicting political narratives vying for our trust. Really?

Jesus, God Emmanuel, is the greatest gift ever because through this beloved child, gift upon gift, grace upon grace are offered to us. 14 The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of the Father's only son, full of grace and truth. 16 From His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, yet the world did not know Him. 11 He came to what was His own, and His own people did not accept Him.

What is the problem, we ask? Throughout the generations 'accepted truth' has been associated with worldly amenities that make 'our group' feel comfortable and secure. Safety promoted for us to conform to, by those who benefit from complacency. So we should be shocked and wonder at the humble and vulnerable way God came to relate to, and with us. It was and is radically counter cultural, in contrast to the sentimentalized nativity story. The people were passive, and the powerful were hostile, toward the holy family, and Jesus when He began His ministry. Hostile also to those who followed Him.

12 But to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

This gift of eternal identity as children of God cannot be attained by our will and effort. Rather received as one lays aside worldly ambition and allow the compassionate authority of God more and more influence over our daily lives. Authority we can relate to as Isaiah described:

9:6 A child has been born for us, a Son given to us; authority rests upon His shoulders, and He is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

These names name gifts in which we can find reliable hope and security we need for the uncertainty of the times in which we live, seasons of our lives. Jesus is our first and best friend.

God sent His Son to live in human flesh with divinity, remaining pure and holy. In this way has shown us that all the voids of our heart and mind are best – first – filled with God's divine truth.

*Continued on pg. 2*

Then so equipped, having first sought the peace and glory of God's kingdom to fill and cleanse our hearts and minds, we may live our lives with appreciation of all the abundance our Lord provides for us to enjoy and share. And invite others to also find through the most significant gift of God Emmanuel: salvation from sin's condemnation.

10 And it was only right that God—who made everything and for whom everything was made—should bring his many children into glory. Through the suffering of Jesus, God made Him a perfect leader, one fit to bring them into their salvation.

11 So now Jesus and the ones He makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them His brothers and sisters. 12 For He said to God,

“I will declare the wonder of Your name to my brothers and sisters.

I will praise You among all Your people.” Hebrews 2:10-12 NLT

Jesus is the best brother we could ever have. He came full of truth and love, not to condemn, rather to lift us up with reliable truth and hope so that we may desire to know God our Creator: the Father, and receive redemption from sin, and victory over death the Son accomplished for us. Receiving this truth we have come to appreciate God's love and mercy through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Through the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit illuminating these truths we conform our thoughts and lives to the Light and life that has come to us in Christ.



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 donation that it is for the "Bury the Altar" food drive. Thank you for your generosity!

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

## Chihoni Calling!

The great good news from Chihoni is that the Outpatient Department is nearly ready for inspection by district and regional medical officers and the Ministry of Health. The official grand opening is scheduled for April, when Paula and David will have returned to Chihoni, but a "soft opening," meaning the facility will be able to start serving patients, will take place in January. Dr. Charles Powell will be there when that happens. This early "soft opening" will enable any glitches to be taken care of before the clinic opens in earnest.

Meanwhile, as Paula announces in her monthly Update, our very accomplished and dedicated project manager Selemani "Sele" Shabani has completed an online management course from Harvard University, and after his theological studies is a newly ordained Lutheran pastor. Sele will not have a parish, but will continue as project manager and will preach at various churches as invited.

You can read more about the progress at Chihoni at <https://www.ihptz.org>. Click on IHP Monthly Update and select December 2025.

The progress at Chihoni is truly an answer to prayer. As Paula Lofstrom says, "Trust God and show up for work!" As members of First Lutheran, we continue to lift this work up in prayer, grateful for the faithful workers on the ground.



Pastor Sele and his wife Maria at his graduation

### When All Else Fails—God Reigns

When we deliberate, God reigns;  
 When we decide wisely, God reigns;  
 When we decide foolishly, God reigns;  
 When we serve God in humble loyalty, God reigns;  
 When we serve God self-assertively, God reigns;  
 When we rebel and seek to withhold our service, God reigns —  
 The Alpha and the Omega, which is, and which was and which is to come,  
 the Almighty.

— William Temple  
 at the Lamberth Conference, 1930



### Giving Made Easy

First Lutheran has generated a QR Code to make giving even easier.

*On your iPhone or Android phone or tablet, open the built-in camera app. Point the camera at the QR code. Tap the banner that appears on your Android phone or tablet. Follow the instructions on the screen to finish.*

*All previous forms of giving are still available. This is just 1 more option.*



# PUZZLE

## TRANSLATE GOD'S WORD

The Bible we use is translated into English from other languages.  
"Translate" the verse below using the code.

CODE	E=△	L=□	R=+
G=●	M=✓	S=■	
A=■	H=◀	N=□	SH=●
B=×	I=▲	O=✿	T=♪
D=◀	K=	P=□	TH=◆

Y      □ □ □ □      □ □      □ □

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Proverbs 3:13

Answer: Happy is the one who finds wisdom and the one who gets understanding.

### Faith in Action

*A Christian is someone who makes it easier for others to believe in God — not through perfection, but through kindness, grace and love in everyday life. When people see Christ's compassion in us, they're drawn closer to Him.*

### Bible Quiz

Fill in the blank to complete this verse from 2 Corinthians: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new \_\_\_\_\_. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

- A. Creation
- B. Beginning
- C. Season
- D. Covenant

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/1stlutherannewton](https://www.facebook.com/1stlutherannewton)

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



Julie Trusler 01/03  
Jorgen Rose 01/07  
Mark Monroe 01/08  
Richard Klopp 01/16  
Ron Klopp 01/16  
Garrett Cantu 01/25  
Lee Swenson 01/31



## Special Dates

- \* New Year's Day, January 1, 2026
- \* Installation Sunday, January 4th, 2026
- \* Epiphany, January 6, 2026
- \* Baptism of the Lord, January 11, 2026
- \* Bury the Altar begins, January 18, 2026
- \* Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 19, 2026

**New Council installation will be January 4.**

Please help us welcome **Sue Bauer and Evelyn George** to council, as we say goodbye to our outgoing council members **Judy Monroe, & Duane Quanbeck**

### A Year of Prayer – Seeking God Together

*Dear Lord,  
We begin the year in prayer as a church family.  
Throughout this special year, we'll focus our hearts on Scripture and lift up our congregation, our community and our world in prayer. Let us Join as one as we seek Your wisdom, strength and peace for the year ahead.*

**Amen.**

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### Christian symbol

SHIP — The Christian church has long been symbolized by a ship. While the Old Testament tells of Noah's ark preserving righteous people during the flood, the New Testament recounts Jesus calming the storm that battered the disciples' fishing boat. St. Ambrose described the church as a ship with the cross as its mast, and others have compared salvation to being drawn out of the sea of death into the safety of the church (ship). Indeed, many large churches are constructed to represent a big boat, with the main worship space called the nave — Latin for ship.



**S**cripture Keys to a Joyful New Year

**H**old fast to your faith (Hebrews 4:14)  
**A**ssemble with the saints (Hebrews 10:25)  
**P**ray earnestly every day (1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18)  
**P**ray for great blessings (Malachi 3:10)  
**Y**ield not to temptation (1 Thessalonians 5:22)

**N**egelect not your talents and opportunities (Galatians 6:10)  
**E**xamine yourself daily (2 Corinthians 13:5)  
**W**ork diligently for the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58)

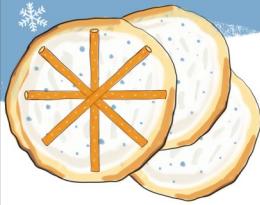
**Y**ield your members to righteousness (Romans 6:11, 16)  
**E**xercise yourself in godliness (1 Timothy 4:7)  
**A**im at sinless perfection (Hebrews 6:1)  
**R**edeem the time (Ephesians 5:15, 16)

— Gus Nichols

**Thank you to all the volunteers who braved the cold and snow last month and helped decorated the church for Christmas!**



## Snowflake SNACK CAKES



Celebrate the beauty of winter with these fun snowflake-inspired treats!

### What you need:

- Graham cracker squares or sugar cookies
- White frosting or marshmallow fluff
- Pretzel sticks (snowflake arms)
- Shredded coconut or white sprinkles
- Mini marshmallows or candy pearls



### What you do:

1. Frost each cracker or cookie.
2. Arrange pretzel sticks in a crisscross for the snowflake base.
3. Sprinkle with coconut or sprinkles for snow.
4. Add marshmallows or candy pearls to the ends for detail.

### Lesson tie-in:

Remind kids that God made each of us unique—just like no two snowflakes are alike! (Psalm 139:14, KJV)



# JANUARY

2026

# 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

Sunday Morning  
Worship  
9:30 am.

Coffee Hour  
10:30am