



2026 Newsletter

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⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

Promise of God: Matthew 7:7-9

It is natural and normal that we should have questions when establishments like our church are not as strong (or blessed) as we think they should be. We have learned elected leaders and government are not reliable. And now expanded conflict in the Middle East is straining international relationships. We can only ask and pray that these will become more honest and transparent so the peace we pray for will be resilient.

We can pray as Jesus disciples did at the time of Jesus arrest, through His crucifixion. We can relate with the disciples and followers praying, "stop this from happening" and learn from Jesus' prayer, "Not my will, Father, but Thine."

After Jesus rose from the grave He appeared offering peace, not as the world gives. After the world had done their worst to Jesus, whose only crime was embodying God's mercy and compassion, truth and love, death could not hold Him. Easter morning the tomb was found to be empty. And the question became, "Where will Jesus show up?"

Jesus showed up and assure them as the Father, though unseen, was with Him, He will be, is, with them also. In the strength of faith in His love wait for the Holy Spirit. Acts 2 reports: On the day of Pentecost Peter preached to the audience gathered by the Holy Spirit: ³⁶ "This Jesus whom you crucified, God has made Him both Lord and Messiah; let the entire house of Israel know with certainty. ^{24,32-34} He is risen from the dead and ascended to heaven and is exalted at the right hand of God."

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "What should we do?" ³⁸ Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

You who are reading this, people who love you brought you to their church for baptism. Privately and in worship we repent and in worship you hear your sins are forgiven. The Holy Spirit comes to you daily. You have learned the faithfulness of the Creator, Savior, and Holy Spirit and all they have done that we may have life and live it with abundance.

I won't repeat the list here, you know, and could recount if asked the life-giving acts of God. It is the evidence of God's love and mercy, the foundation beneath your feet as believers, faith and joy we gather around in worship, service, and glue of church family. As we continue Jesus' mission of bringing release to the oppressed and Good News to all.

The news that there is a resurgence of spiritual curiosity among young people has been brought to my attention by several of you. March and April articles in the Atlantic and Guardian process encouraging survey results from Barna and Gallup.

Our next
Property Council
meeting is
May 6th, 2026
at 6:30 Pm.



Interestingly the steepest rise in attendance was with millennials, who were 18-20 years old during the COVID shutdown, and Gen Z. They seek truth in a community gathered around God's presence and activity in and for the world they live in. Due to the hollowness of virtue signaling, and corruption of values, what God made our heart to desire has become difficult to secure in today's culture: opportunity for meaningful relationships based on durable truth which give significance to how one lives their life.

It has been scientifically observed that married people live longer and fulfilling lives. In a similar and powerful way believers experience relationship with God, in the triune ways they are present and active in and through us, enhances our joy and meaning in life. Yet rebellious and corrupt powers who pursued a god in their own image sought to destroy Jesus and God's mission through crucifixion.

The article "What Atheism Could not Explain" (Atlantic [family]) confirms what human hearts are made to seek. Luis Parrales traces Christopher Beha's journey to atheism, beginning in college. A disenchantment fed by encounters with death. He read anti-religious diatribes and started skipping church. Turned to the writings of atheists for answers to life's difficult questions (But, I will assert, "God was not done with him").

In his own book, *Why I Am Not an Atheist*, Beha describes why he ultimately rejected the anti-religious conclusions of the thinkers who had previously influenced him. "In short: He fell in love." Something more personal and healing than philosophical theory.

As a reference Baha notes that "G.K. Chesterton, in his 1923 biography of St Francis of Assisi, remarked that for the medieval saint, 'religion was not a thing like a theory but a thing like a love affair.'" David Brooks is also cited: "Faith is more like falling in love than it is like finding the answer to a complicated answer."

The answer to "What then shall we do" is not answered by "what can we do" or "what are we willing to do". Rather: begins with: "Whose are we, really? Will we ask and seek in faith of the One who's love raised Jesus from the grave, who claimed you at your baptism? Ask, how do our lives and church testify that we follow the Good Shepherd reaching outward with love rather than being turned inward. God's grace among us is a light in the darkness for generations who ask and seek answers to life's difficult questions.

You have a Good Shepherd who knows you by name. Trusting Jesus will keep your soul secure in the Creator's love and mercy as the world continues to change around us and our children. Our church is a community where Christ is at the center of our worship and found in our care for one another, and participation in local and international ministries of compassion.

We have a message of belonging and meaningful service to share in a world ¹⁴ "tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we *continue to grow up* in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love."

Ephesians 4

As we look toward the future, seek and ask what it means to be faithful and good stewards of the good news and ministries entrusted to us "let us run with perseverance

the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its

shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:1b-2

Let us not be anxious nor afraid, instead come before the Lord humbly in prayer, asking, seeking, knocking on the door of truth and hope. Open to the Holy Spirit illuminating what it means to be faithful stewards of our church, and our Lord's call for gathering in worship and sharing the Good News of

God's mercy and love in word and deed.

Pastor Kurt Hoover

Reminder: Joint Worship Service May 31, 2026 at UCC 11:00 Am.

Breakfast will be served 9:30– 10:45 Am.

Chihoni Calling!

Paula and David are back at Chihoni. Paula is excited to be settling into her Chihoni home, and David is working construction along with Sele. Arriving with them was a 4th year Mayo Clinic medical student, Emily Gardner, eager to serve the final rotation of her education at Chihoni Medical Center, CMC.

As CMC is becoming better known, more patients are finding their way there. Dr. Bon, Emily's supervising doctor, describes "Dr. Emily" as eager to learn about tropical diseases, and says he and Drs. Elikana and Eric all enjoy working with her. Emily, for her part, notes that she is learning much from them. In her words: "Even in my first two days, I had the chance to help see several patients in the clinic. We've seen a lot of kids which, as a future pediatrician, was especially exciting for me. During one visit, I was able to help identify a heart murmur in a seven-year-old boy, which was a great learning moment."



Mayo medical student Emily Gardner with Paula Lofstrom and Dr. Elikana



Work on the RCH is underway! All the work is being done manually!

Meanwhile, Sele's crew is digging the footings for the next building to go up, the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) facility. This building, required by the government, provides a place for prenatal and well-baby appointments right inside the gate and away from the Outpatient Department and the risk of exposure to contagious disease.

There is much to be grateful for. The ground floor of the "big house," or the Hostel, is ready for guests as more arrive this summer, although the second story will have to wait. Paula's most recent Update includes photos of the building, showing what a beautiful job Sele and his crew have done. You can find it at <https://www.ihptz.org>. Click on IHP Monthly Update, and select April.

We continue to keep this wonderful project in our prayers!

Elevator Update

"Though we hope our elevator will be back in service for May 10th, since it has been down so long and we have such a good relationship with the members of the Congregational church, and their elevator is working, If our elevator outage is causing a hardship for you and you want to worship and hear Pastor Kurt's message, please consider worshiping with the Congregational church next Sunday. Fellowship begins at about 10:20 and worship at 11."



A LEGACY OF FAITH

You're blessed when you have a mother, a grandmother or any relative or friend who passes down a strong faith to you. In the Bible, Timothy learned about faith from his mother and grandmother.

Complete the verse below by filling in the blanks with the correct vowels.

VOWELS: 1 = a 2 = e 3 = i 4 = o 5 = u

" m r m nd d f

y r s nc r f th, wh ch

f rst l v d n y r gr ndm th r

L s nd n y r m th r

 n c nd, m p rs d d,

n w l v s n y ls ."

2 Timothy 1:5, NIV

Answer: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also."

Mother's Day: A Legacy of Love

Mother's Day invites us to honor the women who have nurtured, guided and loved us. We celebrate not perfection, but faithfulness shown in countless quiet moments. May we give thanks for the love that shapes hearts and points us toward God's grace.



**Join Us at 9:30 Am on
5/10/26 (Mother's Day)
for a very special surprise!**

Happy Birthday

Gary Johnson 05/05

Heidi Sumpter 05/05

Isaac Friedman 05/08

Darrell Boettcher 05/11

Lane Rose 05/12

Janice Olson 05/14

Alice Klopping 05/20

Brynna Rose 05/21

Marv Zimmermann 05/23

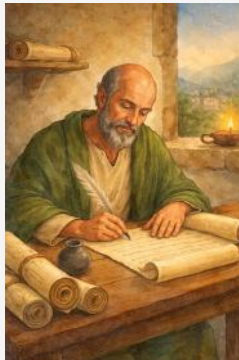
Ben Breuer 05/26

Claire Breuer 05/26

Bible Quiz

Although the apostle Paul is credited with writing the letter to the Romans, he dictated the message while another believer served as the scribe. Near the end of the letter, that writer briefly identifies himself. Who was it?

- A. Tertius
- B. Timothy
- C. Lucius
- D. Aquila



Answer on pg. 2

Joint service project UCC and First Lutheran

As part of our partnership we work on joint service projects. Last year we hosted a concert. This year we are preparing a thank you for the nursing home staff in town. We will be making snacks, and packaging them individually so that all shifts have an opportunity to have a thank you.

Workers are needed-

- Purchasers
- Cooks
- Taste testers
- Packagers
- Labelers
- Card makers- and ensuring that as many people in your congregation sign them as possible!
- Deliverers
- Fellowship - as in cheering on the cooks in various way- snacks for them maybe?
Or just your encouraging presence

And perhaps even in ways that are not mentioned above! The Joint Council does not pretend to think of everything!

There are 5 nursing homes in town and our only request is that the project be completed before Thanksgiving. We know how many staff to prepare for at each nursing home, and their preferred time of day for delivery. We hope for this to be a surprise delivery, so the timing is up to the team.

Please sign up to indicate you are interested in helping this year, or if you just want more information and we'll reach out to you! If you have a time of the year that is better for you (spring, summer, fall) please indicate that so we can pair folks up!

We have located funding, so purchasing the ingredients is not a barrier. We have suggestions for snacks, but they are not limitations- just ideas to get you going. First Lutheran has 2 ovens, UCC has 4. Both have ample work space.

We hope to have folks from the churches working together to get to know one another better.

If you want to help, but need a ride-that can be arranged too! Or if you see another barrier for yourself, let us know and we'll help you work around it!

Prayer for May

Heavenly Father, Quiet our spirits, direct our thoughts and enable us individually to grasp the Truth you have for each of us as worshipers today and everyday. As Mother's Day approaches, we thank you for mothers and mother figures, and for your steadfast love that surrounds and sustains us all. Loving Father, help us to remember that we belong to you. Touch us, heal us, bless us. Walk with us daily that we may have the courage and faith to meet all life's challenges. Help each of us to sincerely seek and know you so that our souls may be properly fed and that in the beauty of your house, we may sense again your profound love.

Amen.



A big thank you to First Lutheran!

On behalf of the NHS soccer team we want to thank you for letting us use your church kitchen to serve the team meal. It was a great success!



May Choices in Mission

In February, 2026 we received a letter from Capstone Behavioral Healthcare asking for our support for their initiative to expand their services, specifically, to enhance their substance treatment programs while continuing to strengthen their core mental health offerings. After visiting with them further, we decided that our May Choices in Mission will be for Capstone Behavioral Healthcare. Their mission is to navigate our community to mental health and addiction resources through treatment and hope, with the vision that everyone has access to the support they need to heal and thrive in Jasper and Poweshiek counties. Capstone has been awarded \$150,000 in Opioid Settlement Funds, an investment which underscores the urgency and importance of expanding local substance abuse treatment services. To make this expansion possible, they are seeking to raise \$500,000.

These funds will directly support:

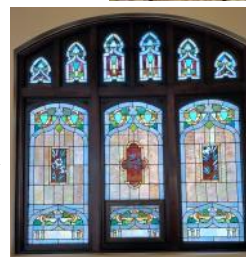
- Complete essential facility structure upgrades and remodeling
- Connecting individuals with necessary supportive resources
- Supervised group sessions and activities designed to meet adolescents emotional and social needs
- Adult peer support groups facilitated by a certified peer support specialist

If you feel this is a worthy cause, please contribute to this FLC Choices in Mission.

Something New

We are delighted to extend our heartfelt thanks to Margret Caldwell with the Centre for Arts and Artist in Newton, Iowa, for her remarkable artistic talent. Margret has crafted a beautiful new red chalice and paten set for us to use during communion for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Pentecost, & Reformation services. They are a lasting symbol of unity and grace. The set includes beautiful lilies on them that are inspired by First Lutheran's beautiful stained glass windows.

We are all excited to get to use them this month for Pentecost Sunday, May 24th.





2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3 Worship Service 9:30 am	4	5	6 Dorcas 9:30 Am.	7 National Day of Prayer	8	9
10 Worship Service 9:30 am	11	12	13 Property Meeting 6:30 Pm.	14	15	16
17 Worship Service 9:30 am	18	19	20 Lois Cr. 9:30 Am.	21 Ascension Day	22	23 Armed Forces Day
24 Worship Service 9:30 am	25	26	27	28 Council Meeting 6:00 Pm.	29	30
31 Breakfast 9:30-10:45 am Worship Service UCC 11:00 am	Memorial Day					
Trinity Sunday						

FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
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50208

**Watch Past and Live
services !**

newtonfirstlutheran.org
&
(on Facebook at)
First Lutheran Church-
Newton

**Online worship
service are
always available!**

Join Us

Sunday Morning Worship 9:30 Am

Coffee Hour 10:30 Am

