

# First Evangelical Lutheran Church

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(724) 478-1283

P.O. Box 275

Apollo, PA 15613  
office@flcapollo.org

*A congregation of the Southwest Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

## PASTORAL PARAGRAPHS

January 2026

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Wow, another new year! As we approached end of the year, time seemed to be passing faster and faster each day! Let's look forward to the new year with these passages from:

**Job 8:7**

Your beginnings will seem humble, so prosperous will your future be.

**Psalm 46:**

<sup>1</sup>God is our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help in trouble....

<sup>9</sup>He makes wars cease  
to the ends of the earth.

He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;  
he burns the shields<sup>[d]</sup> with fire.

<sup>10</sup>He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth.'

<sup>11</sup>The Lord Almighty is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

I always like to look at the new year as a fresh start, and as I typically believe, the new year will be wonderful. These two passages remind me how God is present and there for us, and that God wants the best for us always. In 2026, look to God for love, faith, and hope, and pray that all the best will happen for us and our world.

Blessings, Pr. Caroline

The Reverend Dr. Caroline E. Clifford, Pastor

Southwestern  
Pennsylvania Synod  
Bishop Melissa Stoller  
412-367-8222

Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America  
800-638-3522

### COUNCIL

Mary Beamer  
Lisa Carnahan  
Carmen Cypher  
Cal Deemer  
Dorothy Doty  
Kim Harmon  
Deb Kerr  
Pr Caroline Clifford  
Georgia Richardson  
Cindy Shaner

### STAFF

Pr Caroline Clifford  
Ken Carnahan  
Lisa Carnahan  
Dorothy Doty  
Ben Coulter  
Gregg LeMay  
Georgia Richardson  
Leslie Smeltzer

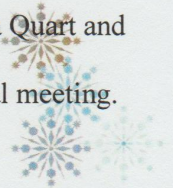




## December Council Highlights

The council meeting was held on December 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 AM. The following is a summary of the meeting:

1. Action item:
  - a. Steve, the man from the chairlift, will need to come to the church for something about the drawings for the chairlift.
  - b. Dot will plan a meeting for next year for Policy and Procedure updates in January.
  - c. Steps in the balcony have been marked with white tape.
2. Letters were received
  - a. A thank you letter was received from the Apollo Lion's Club for the donations for the veterans' dinner.
  - b. A thank you letter was received from the A-R Food Bank for the \$575 donation for Turkey Fund, \$125 anonymous donation and all the food items received.
  - c. A thank you letter was received from the Apollo Library for the donation towards their Gala.
3. Treasurer's report:
  - a. A note to mention that the Gas meter was replaced, and because the meter was not reading, we paid an extra amount to pay off the excess amount this month
4. Pastor Report: Things continue as usual for visitation and worship. She mentioned she was looking forward to Christmas Eve service.
5. Old Business: A note that there was a sudden change of nominees before the first congregational special meeting as Vince Milie was hospitalized and was asked to be removed from the nomination list. Leslie Smeltzer was then added. The check from the Ethel Verney Fund for the Food Bank was received on Monday, December 8, 2025.
6. New Business:
  - a. Pastor Caroline will install the new council members, William Kerr, William Moore and Leslie Smeltzer on Sunday January 11, 2026.
  - b. Georgia Richardson asked to be removed as the church liaison for Meals on Wheels and Cindy Shaner volunteered to be the new liaison.
  - c. A special need has come to the attention of the council to help an anonymous member with their rent as good stewards.
7. Standing committee reports:
  - a. It was mentioned that the handicap Parking Signs have not been out on Sunday mornings. The guys have been working on other projects and forgot to put them out. They will work at getting that done again.
  - b. The council voted to accept the recommendation for the bid from Bernie Zecca to replace the air-conditioning units at the approximate cost of \$35,000.
  - c. The council voted to purchase a new water fountain for the basement area.
  - d. Worship & Music: The Christmas Eve Service will be Special Music @ 3:45 and Worship will begin at 4 p.m. There was no meeting in December.
  - e. Outreach/Service Committee: Blizzard Bag items were purchased and filled as well as Christmas cards from the congregation. All were delivered by the congregation and pastor.
  - f. Endowment Committee: - Next meeting in December.
  - g. WELCA: Vegetable Soup will be made and sold on January 14 & 15, 2026 for \$10 a Quart and \$5 a Pint. The purchase should be made by Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>.
  - h. Finance Committee: The new budget for 2026 will be presented at the congregational meeting.
  - i. Safety Committee: Next meeting on December 17, 2025.
8. Next Council meeting will be held on January 14, 2026, at 10:30 AM.







The staff from First Lutheran Church would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year 2026!! May God's grace and peace bless you as you step into this new year.

The 2025 books will close at **Noon on January 2, 2026.**  
Please have any donations that you wish to make to  
First Church for 2025 in by that time.



Volunteers are needed to undecorate the  
church on Monday, January 5, 2026 at  
10:00 a.m.



**Men's Breakfast Buddies** will meet  
Saturday, January 10, 2026 at  
Valley Dairy/Leechburg @ 8:30 a.m.

**Ladies Lunch Bunch** will meet  
Saturday, January 10, 2026 at the  
church at 11:00 a.m. to go to  
Happy Day Café



### Offering Envelopes

The 2026 offering envelopes are now available.  
You can pick up your envelopes in Tower Hall.

**Psalm 119:105 - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.**





### **Sunday Morning Worship Assistants**

We're updating our records for Worship Assistants for the upcoming new year. If you would like to help out again or volunteer for the first time, the sign-up sheets are located in Tower Hall. Please note that we will have both greeters and ushers assigned for Sunday mornings.

### **Ethel L. Verney Fund Grant** **Mission Endowment Fund of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod**

This fund was established in 2014 as a result of a bequest from Ethel L. Verney for "relief and support of people living in poverty" on the territory of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod. Congregations, agencies, institutions, camps, and Rostered Leaders of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, may apply for grants for up to three years in a row with the consideration of the amount requested/received decreasing in successive years.

First Church took advantage of this generous offer and applied and received a grant in the amount of \$10,000 for Food4Kids in 2024.

In 2025, we applied again. On March 5, 2025, we received a letter from Pastor Jeffrey Schock, Board Chair of the Mission Endowment Fund Board, awarding us \$9,950 for our Food4Kids Ministry. The monies will be released in quarterly distributions throughout 2025.

We pray that this ministry will continue to flourish and bless the many people who serve. We are very grateful to have received this grant.



### **Council Members to be Installed January 11<sup>th</sup>**

William Kerr, William Moore and Leslie Smeltzer will be installed as members of our Congregation's Council on January 11, 2026. They are accepting the responsibility of overseeing the congregation alongside Pastor Caroline between congregational meetings. We are thankful for their willingness to serve in this essential ministry.

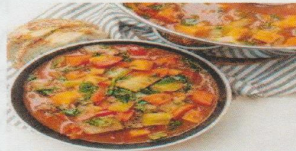




Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Thank you so much for the beautiful gifts given to me at Christmas! You are a wonderful congregation, and I'm so pleased to be here. Thank you again!

Blessings, Pr. Caroline

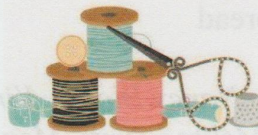


### **DON'T FORGET!! – VEGETABLE SOUP SALE**

Wednesday, January 14 & Thursday, January 15, 2026

Prices will be \$10.00 per quart & \$5.00 per pint

Last day to order is January 12.



### **2026 already!!!**

Dresses and Britches will begin the new year by meeting on January 20 at 1 p.m. in the fellowship hall at St. Paul's-Highfield Lutheran Church. New faces are always invited. If you have little or no sewing skills, please come anyway. We have projects for all levels.

Have a blessed Christmas and a healthy 2026!



**Valentine's Day will be here before you know it!**

**Just a reminder to pick up your valentines for our shut-in valentine bags.**

### **Memorial Calendar** **Open Memorials**

*The Memorial Calendar for 2026 is now available! Please stop by the office to sign up. The calendar fills up quickly so please check on dates before sending in your money. Thank you!*





# January 2026



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## **CONGRATULATIONS to all those celebrating Birthdays:**

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9	Eira Sasik	21	Rob Gibbons
10	Randy Beamer	24	Yvonne Hilty
11	Gary Baer	28	René Copeland
11	Vince Milie	28	Marie Postle
12	Roxana Legarsky	29	Annette Cholock

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## **CONGRATULATIONS to all those celebrating Wedding Anniversaries:**

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26 Gregg & Susan Goodbread

**Members & Friends in our prayers:** *Nancy Bloom, Vince Milie, Fay Klingensmith, Cindy Moyer, Don Rosensteel, James Swift, Melissa Swift, Megan Swift, Glenna Emanuel, Minnie McKay, Eddie VanDyke, Todd Watterson, Joe Mulhall, DeClan Cox, Geri Rosensteel, Nancy Kochka, Ralph Kilgore, Jr., Debbie Schultz Coulter, Orvil Smith, Michael Hooks, Ron Kerns, Jerry Kerns, Thomas Coulter, Melissa Held, Lavina Stefaniak, Frank Stefaniak, Jr., Kelly Gourley, Anthony Ward, Darwin Moore, Mark Otwell, Doug Rearick, Barry DeMay, Joey Valella, David Fallecker, Debbie Townsend, Sandra Rivera, Nancy Hart, Katie Loftus, Thomas Hileman, Tyler Stone, Eric Kennedy and Baby Lucas Michael.*

**Members and friends in our continuing prayers:** *Mary Ellen Emerick, Pastor Al Petrill, Pastor Jack Delk, Barbara Grance, Pastor Richard Grance, Ed Smith, Scott Aikens, Brian Stone, Jim Stone III, Heather Eppley, Al Kochka, Audrey & Susan Siems, David Ellison, Debbie Hill, Virginia Madison, Jack Tickle, Darlene Davis, Ed & Rose Haberchak, Bill & Diane Sloan, Luke Kanish, Tim Kanish, Dakota Stone, and Shane Carnahan.*

**Our Homebound Members:** *Cindy Bush, Donna Wilver, Lillian Yamber, Annette Cholock, Judy Altman, Yvonne Hilty, Earliene Klingensmith, Frances Klingensmith, Jim Myers, Richard Mangus, and Tom Mangus.*

**We ask God's care for the following Military Personnel and their loved ones:** *Stephen Porter and Nevin Downey.*

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*If you are in need of a pastoral visit or are in the hospital or have been in the hospital, please contact the office @ 724-478-1283 or Pastor Caroline 814-769-5662. The Pastor is unable to visit if she isn't alerted to your condition.*





# January 2026



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 <b>4 EPIPHANY</b> 9:30 a.m. Sunday School 11 a.m. Worship	 <b>5</b> Undecorate the Church @ 10 a.m.	 <b>6</b> WELCA Meeting @ 1 p.m. 	 <b>7</b> Building & Grounds Meeting @ 9 a.m.	<b>1</b> 	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> <b>10</b> Men's Breakfast @ Valley Dairy in Leechburg @ 8:30 a.m. Ladies Lunch Bunch meeting at the church at 11 am to go to Happy Day Café Quilt Club Sew-In
<b>11</b> 9:30 a.m. Sunday School 11 a.m. Worship Installation of New Council Members	<b>12</b> <u>Soup Orders Due Today</u> Lions Club Mtg. @ 6 p.m.	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Council Meeting @ 10:30 a.m. Ministerium Meeting at New Beginnings @ Noon <div>Soup Sales – Pick up between 2:30- 3 pm</div>	<b>15</b> Pastor in the office Choir Practice @ 6 p.m.	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>18</b> 9:30 a.m. Sunday School 11 a.m. Worship	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> Pastor in the office Choir Practice @ 6 p.m. Quilt Club Meeting @ 7 pm	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> Quilt Club Sew-In
<b>25</b> 9:30 a.m. Sunday School 11 a.m. Worship	<b>26</b> Newsletter Assembly & Mailing @ 10 a.m. Lions Club Mtg. @ 6 p.m.	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> Pastor in the office Choir Practice @ 6 p.m.	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> 





# January 2026



DATE	4	11	18	25
ASSISTING MINISTER	Carmen Cypher	Tammy Manko	Georgia Richardson	William Kerr
COMMUNION ASSISTANT	David Coulter	Georgia Richardson	Carmen Cypher	Lisa Carnahan
LECTOR	René Copeland	William Kerr	Kaylie Peace	David Coulter
CANTOR	Gregg LeMay	Gregg LeMay	Gregg LeMay	Gregg LeMay
USHERS	Calvin Deemer Vivian Boyer Dorothy Doty Joe Marchitelli	Melvin Silvis Donna Stone Jack Tickle Beverly Tickle	Calvin Deemer Robbie Deemer John Hollis Sandra Hollis	Melvin Silvis Kim Harmon Kim Knepsfield Eloise Loughlin
GREETERS	Kim Harmon Cindy Shaner	Kim Harmon Cindy Shaner	Kim Harmon Cindy Shaner	Kim Harmon Cindy Shaner
ACOLYTE	Calvin Deemer	Kim Harmon	Brennon Faulkner	Robbie Deemer
ALTAR GUILD	Eloise Loughlin Kim Harmon	Robbie Deemer René Copeland	Dorothy Doty Marlonna Moore	Georgia Richardson Grace Olson
PEW COMMITTEE	Cindy Shaner	Cindy Shaner	Cindy Shaner	Cindy Shaner
CAMERA PERSON	Lisa Carnahan	John Shaner	Kevin Geer	Kaylie Peace

Please obtain your own substitute if these dates conflict with your schedule.

Please notify the church office by Wednesday of any changes.

If we are not in the office, you may leave a message on the answering machine.

Thank You!





## *Have you ever heard a whisper?*

"Hello!"

Can you all whisper back to me?

Whispers are quiet, gentle, almost like a secret. You have to lean in close to hear them. And I wonder if it's possible for the heavens to whisper at Christmas?

One silent night, far away, in a town called Bethlehem, the stars twinkled brighter than ever. And the angels were there, too. It was as if the whole sky was whispering: "Something wonderful is happening ..."

Let's all look up at the ceiling like we're looking at the stars.

Can you twinkle your fingers like stars?

Now let's whisper together, "Something wonderful is happening ..."

The heavens weren't shouting. They weren't making a big noise. They were whispering, because whispers make us stop, listen and pay attention.

And what was the whispering about? A baby. A tiny baby lying in a manger.

His name was Jesus.

Can you pretend to rock a baby in your arms?

The night Jesus was born, the shepherds heard the whisper in the sky when the angels sang. The Wise Men sensed the whisper in the star that guided them. And Mary and Joseph felt the whisper in their hearts: "This child is special. This child is God's gift."

Sometimes we think God only speaks in loud voices or through big miracles. But Christmas reminds us that God often whispers. God whispers love and kindness and peace.

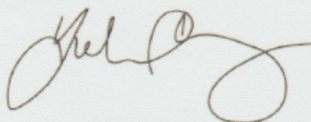
Can you think of one kind thing you could whisper to someone this week?

So, this Christmas, listen closely. The heavens are still whispering: "Jesus is here. God loves you. Share that love with the world."

Let's all whisper together: "Jesus is here."

Now say "God loves us" in a joyful voice!

Amen.



The Rev. Yehiel Curry  
Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America





### Soup! Soup! Soup!

We are having a Vegetable Soup sale. In order for us to have enough vegetable soup made, we are taking orders now.

The price of the soup will be \$10.00 per quart or \$5.00 per pint.

\*\*\*All orders must be in by **Monday, January 12, 2026**

The soup orders may be picked up  
**Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup> or Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup>,**  
**from 2:30- 3:00 p.m.**

Please contact Cheryl Coulter @ 724-567-7823 or the Church @ 724-478-1283.

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Orders for soup are due by **Monday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026**. Please fill out the form below.

### Vegetable Soup Order Form

Quart @ \$10.00 = \_\_\_\_\_

Pint @ \$5.00 = \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount \_\_\_\_\_

**Please circle** the day you would like to pick up your order between 2:30 and 3:00 p.m.

**Wednesday**  
**January 14<sup>th</sup>**

**Thursday**  
**January 15<sup>th</sup>**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_