The First Edition

December 2025

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Advent and Christmas – A Time to Worship

Perhaps we don't realize it right in the middle of one of the busiest seasons, the Church offers a place and a time to rest, reflect, and simply be fed. Worship services during this season help us stay grounded in the hope, peace, joy, and love we receive from God. Here are the worship offerings for December:

Sunday Advent Worship – December 7 and 14 at 9 am

Each Sunday at 9 am, we will continue to gather for our normal worship services while focusing on the themes of Advent which will help us anticipate the coming of the Christ Child, Emmanuel, God with us. Families will light the Advent candles on the wreath.

Advent Midweek Services – December 3, 10, and 17 at 7:30 pm

Each Wednesday that we have confirmation classes, we will come together and worship at 7:30 pm for an Advent Midweek service. All are welcome to participate in this service as we reflect on the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love.

Youth Christmas Program – December 21 at 9 am

This service will feature the Youth Christmas Program in lieu of a sermon at our normal 9 am worship, and the focus all morning will be on youth.

The Longest Night – December 21 4 pm

We recognize that the holiday season carries both hope and despair. On Sunday, December 21, we will host a contemplative worship service at 4 pm in the sanctuary that recognizes both the burdens and the gifts of the darkest time of the year. Especially welcome are folks who are grieving the deaths of loved ones.

First English Lutheran Church
Cannon Falls

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Tiffany Kiffmeyer
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Visit our Website for Updates!

www.firstenglishchurch.com

Pastor Luke

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Note from the Pastor

People of FELC,

There are fleeting moments of calm in a storm, chances for deep breaths when all around us is overwhelming. Worship can provide this for us each week. It can ground us in the grace and peace of God. And it is good when we can do this as community.

As I reflect on how to help create these moments for First English, I came across this *prayer of commitment* that I would like to share with you now. I hope it will be a resource you can use this month to pause and take a deep breath.

"In gratitude for this moment, this place, those around us, Christ among us, we give ourselves to you, our God. Take us out to live as changed people because we have met the risen Christ and cannot be the same. Ask much of us, expect much from us, enable much by us, encourage many through us. So we may live lives of gratitude to your glory both as inhabitants of earth and citizens of the commonwealth of heaven. Amen."

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Luke

Live Streaming Worship Services

The livestream of our 9 am worship service is available on YouTube via our website, www.firstenglishchurch.com
And aired on the local HBC Channel 12
(check local listing for schedule)
& MediaCom cable channel 12
(11 am on Tuesday, 3 pm Wednesday, and 4:30 pm on Saturday)

PRIME timers
AT FIRST ENGLISH

New at First English!

Are you retired or semi-retired and looking for an opportunity to connect with other "prime timers" at First English? If so, we are starting a group for you!

In December, we will have our first meeting when we will share a light brunch, pray together, listen to a short program led by Pastor Luke, and enjoy time for fellowship. Join us on **Thursday, December 18, from 10 am** to about noon.

Pastor Alison

alisonb@firstenglishchurch.com

Note from the Pastor

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Paul speaks in Hebrews about the importance of gathering together and encouraging one another. I'm very happy to say that many of you have already done this for me, although I have only been at FELC for about three and a half weeks!

Pastor Luke and I have been meeting with whomever shows up to Cannon Belles on Mondays from 11 am – 12:30 pm. This time has been wonderful! So many of you have shown up to greet us and to get to know a bit more about me, your new Associate Pastor. There were at least six of us the first time we met and more like 11-12 the second time we gathered together. Everyone has been so kind and welcoming, and the conversation has been great! We'll continue to meet on Mondays at Cannon Belles for the next couple of weeks.

I've also had the opportunity to jam with some of you at the Woodward's home. What fun to meet people and make music together! This gave me so much joy and allowed me to see the musical talents of several members.

I'll be attending a Women's Gathering on Wednesday, December 3rd and will also enjoy a Happy Hour with some folks on December 8th. I can't thank you enough for the warm welcome and love shown to me in these first few weeks. I feel like I already know many of you and I look forward to more opportunities to fellowship together!

God bless you…

Pr. Alison

Healing Service on November 30

I hope you enjoyed the special Healing Service held on Sunday, November 30. It was meant to be a time of quiet reflection, song and prayer. This type of service will occur on those months when there is a fifth Sunday. Please let me know if you have any questions or ideas regarding Healing Services. Thank you for trusting me to lead you through the first one here at First English.

PRAYER Requests

Thank you to Deb Stark for her part in keeping our prayer chain going. Sue Josephson has also assisted by monitoring the prayer wall. Many thanks for what has already been happening. At this point, the prayer concerns will be added to a prayer list each week which will be sent out to the Prayer Team.

There are several ways you can add a prayer concern to this list:

Go to FELC's website and click on the "Prayer" link, then fill out the form online.

Fill out a prayer card which you can find at the Welcome Desk in the Narthex.

Put a prayer concern up on the prayer wall.

God listens to and answers prayer and the more "pray-ers", the better! There is power in corporate prayer. I encourage you to lean into prayer and trust your concerns with the Prayer Team.

If you would like to be on the Prayer Team, please let Pastor Alison know and she will add you to the Team.

YOUTH BAKE SALE

Dec 21

Do you enjoy eating Christmas baking but not necessarily making many different treats? Or maybe you like baking but don't want to eat it all? Or maybe you simply like supporting First English Youth and making once in a lifetime experiences possible for them?

If yes to any of these, youth from First English will help host a Youth Bake Sale on Sunday, December 21, after worship to help fundraise for their summer trip. As of right now, we are planning on a service and learning trip to Guatemala, but there may be a second trip in the works as well. More details to come in the new year!

New Baby?

We want to know!

Are you expecting a child through birth or adoption? Do you have a new infant at home? In these sacred times of welcoming a baby, First English Lutheran Church is here for you. We have resources to support the whole family and look forward to connecting with you! Contact our office for more information.
For baptism requests, please fill out the Baptism Request form found on our website at www.firstenglishchurch.com.

This Month's Youth Program Updates

Our Sunday School youth have already started preparing for the Christmas Program. This year the program will be during worship on Sunday, December 21, in lieu of a sermon. We hope to see many of you there as over 20 of our youth proclaim the gospel by telling the Christmas story through a play and Christmas music you can sing along to. If you have kiddos that would like to be involved in the program as angels, shepherds or animals, show up to rehearsals on Sundays in December. Thanks to our marvelous volunteers for making this possible!

Confirmation Updates from November

Our confirmands have been busy engaging with their faiths over the last month.

NAMI—A presenter from NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) led us in a class titled "Breaking Barriers to Mental Health" when we learned about the stigmas around mental illness and resources available for students and their friends.

Migrant's Journey—Then, Kathy Chatelaine from the SE MN Synod office led a two-session class entitled "Migrant's Journey." This was an interactive experience that taught us about the perilous journey children and families make every day as they flee violence, hunger and other factors that force them from their homes. We specifically followed the journey of two children from El Salvador and read about their interactions with police and border patrol officers, shelter directors, and more.

Both classes reminded us that our faith goes beyond church and encouraged us to live out our faith by showing God's love to others and ourselves. The students did a great job asking thoughtful questions and engaging with both experiences.

Gr 9-12 Youth Invited to Lock-In December 12

A few high schoolers have been meeting regularly on Wednesdays in the Youth Room downstairs. They decided that a lock-in would be fun!

The current plan is to host a lock-in on **Friday, December 12**. High school students (grades 9 to 12) are invited to participate. They can show up to the church at **6 pm**. We will have pizza and snacks, play games, watch movies, and enjoy some fellowship! They are encouraged to bring their sleeping bags and pillows and whatever games they'd like to play.

In the morning, we will have a light breakfast then we will send them home around 9 am. Contact Pastor Luke with any questions.

New Family Fellowship to Start December 11

Families with younger kiddos are creating meaningful relationships at First English. Many have expressed that they would like to continue building a stronger sense of community. Pastor Luke plans to begin hosting Fellowship and Bible Studies for parents with younger kiddos starting in this month. The first event will be **Thursday, December 11, from 6 to 7:30 pm**.

We are working to find volunteers to help watch the kiddos at the church, while parents can enjoy some time getting to know one another and growing in faith together. Please reach out to Pastor Luke if you are interested in learning more about this or if you are willing to help keep kiddos entertained with games and crafts during this time.

Annual Giving Tree

Helping the Goodhue County Families

The December project coordinated by First English's Love in Outreach (formerly Social Ministry) team is the Christmas Giving Tree. Our donated gifts of clothes, toys, a gift card for holiday groceries and other basic items for families in need through the non-profit organization Hispanic Outreach of Goodhue County will help many area families. Please take a tag or envelope from the tree on the main level or the bulletin board and return your gift or financial contribution to the church by **Sunday, December 14**. Please attach the tag to your gift. Gifts should be unwrapped; you may provide wrapping paper or a gift bag if you'd like.

First English has a history of being incredibly generous in sharing during the holidays; all contributions are appreciated and will go directly to families that need extra support this year.

Love in Outreach Ministry

Sewists Welcome!

About this time of year, members of the Love in Outreach Committee delivers the quilts that were made during the year to Lutheran Word Relief. LWR then ships them all over the world to those in need. They can be used as warm bedding, simple tents or floor coverings.

This year, our volunteers created 28 quilts to be packed and sent off. The group plans to pack the quilts on Tuesday, December 9 at 11 am.

Volunteers are also needed in hopes to produce even more next year. The quilt tops can be sewn together at home in a simple square or rectangle design to measure 60"X80" when finished. Once a month, usually the third Tuesday, the group meets at church to assemble and tie the quilts. The batting is donated. There is an assortment of fabric available at the church to use for the quilts or you can use your own.

If you are interest in helping with this project or have questions, please contact Sarah Novotny (507-293-0301) or Chris Pofahl (651-380-9922).

FELC Office Hours

Our church office hours are
Monday-Friday,
9 am-Noon, 1-3:30 pm
Closed on Wednesday, December 24, Thursday, December 25, and Friday, January 1 for the holidays.

The Next

December 7

In August, this fall's Faith and Life Conversations topics and schedule were developed.

Our next upcoming conversations will be on Sunday, December 7 with the topic of **Historic Overview of Cannon Falls Churches**, led by Brian McDonald.

Join us in the Family Room after worship! The next planning meeting will be held soon for future topics.

Altar Guild

Christmas Decorating December 6

The Altar Guild will be decorating First English for Advent and the Christmas holiday on Saturday, December 6, starting at 8 am.

Help is needed to put up trees, ornaments and other holiday decorations all around the church. Just show up if you can help.

If you have any questions, please contact Stephanie Fox.

Join I Cantanti and Le Donne Chamber Choirs for their annual Nine Lessons and Carols concert held at Skinner Memorial Chapel at Carleton College in Northfield on Sunday, November 30th at 7 PM or on **Sunday, December 7th at 4 PM at the First English Lutheran Church in Cannon Falls**.

The Nine Lessons and Carols concerts include opportunities for the audience to sing along and the reflections provide an excellent opportunity to kick off the Christmas season. In lieu of tickets, a free-will exit offering will be taken at the door.

Cannon Falls Food Shelf

For over 30 years, the volunteers of the Cannon Falls Food Shelf has devoted their energy to passionately advocating for the needs of our community family.

Consider donating funds or food to restock the shelves for our community today.

Hours:

Thursdays 3-6 pm
Closed on Christmas Day and New Years Day

The Cannon Falls Food Shelf is run by a local volunteer board and is not under the administration of First English Lutheran Church.
Tax ID# is 30-0221349.

Council Highlights

The First English Lutheran Church Council met at their scheduled meeting on November 20, 2025. Here are some highlights.

Approved the October 20, 2025, council minutes.

Received Pastor Hollander's written report and comments.

Received Pastor Bondy's report.

Approved Treasurer's Report, subject to audit.

Approved renewing CD at Community Resource Bank.

William Holz reported that his Eagle Scout landscaping project at FELC has come in under budget, so he was able to complete all phases.

Stewardship Campaign: Letter with pledge card and quarterly giving statement mailed; people sharing stories during worship.

2026 Budget: shared draft, Finance will adjust salary figures, will present to congregation the Sunday before the annual meeting.

Deb Stark submitted her resignation letter, with November 23 being her last Sunday as organist. Approved thank you gift of flowers and gift card. Kathy Illa will lead music for Sunday worship during search process.

Job descriptions for Pr. Hollander and Pr. Bondy will be done by December meeting.

Approved the congregation's implementation of the Minnesota Paid Family & Medical Leave program effective January 1, 2026.

Bylaw amendment to allow annual meeting to be held any Sunday in January (instead of 4th Sunday) will be proposed at January 2026 annual meeting.

Amanda Thompson, Kelly Miller, and Bill Peterson are reviewing Foundation scholarship policy.

Approved moving high school scholarship application process from the school to First English.

Officially approved Kimberly and Thomas Bertram, Ryan Simon, Lenny Morales, Jacqueline Hartl, Tammy Vandenheuvel, Laura and Erick Prink, Perry and Kiersten Nichols, Ray and Sandy Meglic, Ron Marascalco, James and Kaitlin Beissel, Samantha Althoff, Erica Althoff, Megan Anderson, Chris and Kate Nobach, Alyssa and Michael Ohmann, Victoria Hartl, Nicole and Jake McPherson, Elizabeth Reber, and Chloe Miller as voting members of First English Lutheran Church.

FELC will serve at CF Breakfast Club on Tuesday, December 2, at St. Ansgar's Church. Julie Gergen is coordinating.

Respectfully submitted,
Diane Johnson

Next Council Meeting:

Thursday, December 18, 2025
at 6 pm

Women of FELC Gathering

And Bible Study

The next gathering of the Women of FELC group will be held on **Tuesday, December 9** at **10 am** in the Family Room. Join them for fellowship and bible study!

2026 Giving Envelopes

The 2026 Giving Envelopes will be available by the end of December. If you have been using church envelopes in the past, a 2026 box will be reserved for you. If you would like to have a box of numbered envelopes to use in 2026, please notify the church office ASAP so that a box can be reserved for you

Every member will have a giving number for their household whether they have an envelope box or not. Please be sure to note your name or your 2026 household giving number if you are donating via cash or check throughout the year.

Questions? Please contact the church office at 507-263-3042.

December 2025

DEC 1, MON
11 am-12:30 pm Pastor's Meet and Greet at Cannon Belles

DEC 3, WEDS
6 pm Confirmation Supper and Class
7:30 pm Wednesday Advent Worship

DEC 4, THU
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf

DEC 6, SAT
8 am Altar Guild Church Decorating

DEC 7, SUN 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
9 am Communion Worship
10:15-10-45 am Christmas Program Practice & Faith and Life Conversations
4 pm I Cancanti Concert

DEC 8, MON
11 am-12:30 pm Pastor's Meet and Greet at Cannon Belles

DEC 9, TUES
10 am Women's Group Gathering and Bible Study

DEC 10, WEDS
6 pm Confirmation Supper and Class
7:30 pm Wednesday Advent Worship

DEC 11, THU
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf
6 –7:30 pm Family Fellowship/Bible Study

DEC 12, FRI
6 pm Youth Lock-In

DEC 14, SUN 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
9 am Worship
10:15-10-45 am Children's Christmas Program Practice

DEC 15, MON
11 am-12:30 pm Pastor's Meet and Greet at Cannon Belles

DEC 17, WEDS
6 pm Confirmation Supper and Classes
7:30 pm Wednesday Advent Worship

DEC 18, THU
10 am Prime-Timers Group
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf
6 pm Church Council Meeting

DEC 21, SUN 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
9 am Children's Christmas Program and Worship
Youth Bake Sale after Worship
4 pm Longest Night/Blue Christmas Service

DEC 24, WEDS CHRISTMAS EVE
3 pm 1st Christmas Eve Worship
5 pm 2nd Christmas Eve Worship

DEC 25, THU CHRISTMAS
Church Office Closed
CF Food Shelf Closed

DEC 28, SUN
9 am Lessons and Carols Worship
No Sunday School

DEC 31, WEDS NEW YEAR'S EVE
No Confirmation Classes or Wednesday Worship

First English Lutheran Church
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Cannon Falls MN 55009

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Christmas Eve Worship Services

December 24 3 pm and 5 pm

The Nativity of Our Lord – Christmas Eve
At 3 and 5 pm on Wednesday, December 24, we will gather around the manger, as we sing, hear, and witness the miracle of Christ's birth. Music, candlelight, and experiencing the ultimate story of hope will highlight this service.

Lessons and Carols – December 28 at 9 am
Sunday worship on December 28 will be a service of Lessons and Carols. Join us as we sing Christmas favorites together and read familiar stories at 9 am.