The First Edition

March 2026

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2026 Lenten Season Is Upon Us

This Lenten season we will ground ourselves in our identity as beloved children of God. In Martin Luther's words, this means we are 100% sinner, 100% saint. While not as comforting as "beloved child," it gives us a framework for reflection, repentance, and reconciliation in a way that connects us to our need for God and sends us out healed and called as a community.

We are invited into spiritual practices of prayer and devotion, fasting, repentance and reconciliation, almsgiving, and works of love as means to recognize our dependence on God and one another. We are all broken and imperfect and this season is an opportunity for us to come together in our brokenness to heal in God's grace and abundance.

Lenten Soup Suppers started on February 25 and will continue until Holy Week. The suppers will be served at 6 pm with Lenten Worship to follow at 7 pm. Helpers are needed to cook and serve soup for the suppers for each of the five Wednesdays during Lent. Sign up in the Narthex or call the church office if you can bring or serve soup.

Lenten Soup Suppers

Wednesdays through March 25

Supper starts at 6 pm

First English Lutheran Church
Cannon Falls

511 W Belle St Cannon Falls MN 55009
507-263-3042 www.firstenglishchurch.com

Church Office

507-263-3042
Office Hours: M-F, 9 am - 3:30 pm
E-Mail: info@firstenglishchurch.com
Website: www.firstenglishchurch.com

Pastor: Luke Hollander
507-218-1311
lukeh@firstenglishchurch.com
Associate Pastor: Alison Bondy
507-263-3042
alisonb@firstenglishchurch.com
Treasurer: Phyllis Althoff
phyllisalthoff@gmail.com
Fin. Sec./Admin. Asst.: Kathy Ehlers
507-263-3042
kathye@firstenglishchurch.com
Accompanist: TBD

Choir Director: Jill Serres
507-649-0851
jserres@mac.com
Bell Choir Director: Jane Peterson
507-263-4148
janerichard@mchsi.com

Church Council

President: Austin Noble
austin.noblecf@gmail.com
Vice-President: Bill Peterson
bipet001@gmail.com
Secretary: Diane Johnson
dcjohnson1000@att.net

Phyllis Althoff
Kelly Brintnall Miller
Julie Gergen
Scott Johnson
John Peterson
Jami Reinhardt
Amanda Thompson
Carna Visagie
Jared Woodward

Visit our Website for Updates!

www.firstenglishchurch.com

Pastor Luke

lukeh@firstenglishchurch.com
507.218.1311

Note from the Pastor

Good People of First English,

Ash Wednesday was February 19 and a brave crew endured the storm to launch us into our forty-day journey toward Easter. We marked our foreheads with ash acknowledging that we are from the earth, and we die and return to the earth. By marking the sign of the cross, we remember our baptism and acknowledge the new life we are given in Christ. Our journey through Lent will remind us we are reconciled to God through Christ and so we humbly pray for God to make our hearts clean while rejoicing that "now is the day of salvation."

Pastor Luke

Pastor Alison

alisonb@firstenglishchurch.com

Note from the Pastor

First Annual Trivia Challenge—We had our first annual Trivia Challenge here at FELC on Sunday, February 22 and it was a lot of fun! We hope to have this challenge yearly and to encourage more people to participate in it. You don't need any experience, and you certainly do not need to be a trivia expert. It is more of an opportunity for the congregation to get to know one another better.

Friends of Huruma—Pastor Chris Smith from an organization called, "Friends of Huruma" will be preaching on Sunday, March 15. "Friends of Huruma" was founded in 1994 as an affiliate of Bega Kwa Bega, to be a supportive, trusted partner with the Huruma Centre which is a Children's Home in Iringa, Tanzania. The home provides a safe and secure place for children in which they can flourish, grow, learn, and receive the promise of a thriving future.

The Huruma Centre was founded in 1994 by the Iringa Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania with the support of Bega Kwa Bega (BKB) to care for homeless children from southern Tanzania. Bega Kwa Bega is a Swahili phrase that means *shoulder to shoulder*, describing the way in which we accompany one another in a spirit of mutuality, inclusivity, and vulnerability.

There will be a QR code in your bulletins on March 15 and March 22 if you have a desire to donate to the Friends of Huruma Centre. There will also be a basket on those Sundays if you would prefer to give cash or a check made out to FELC, which will then be gifted to the organization. Thank you in advance for any gift you choose to make to this wonderful place.

INTERGENERATIONAL IMPACT AT FELC

FELC is trying some intergenerational activities during February and March. Having children get to know the elders in the church is such a gift to both groups and this type of programming is becoming more and more popular. Included here are portions of an article about intergenerational learning so you can read about the benefits. While this is an article about schools, the impact can be just as great in churches, especially when young people see faith modeled to them by older adults. Please join us in creating and implementing more intergenerational activities here at FELC.

Intergenerational Learning: Proven Benefits for Both Elders and Youth
Authors: Adam Barton, Gloria Lee
Research worldwide has shown that intergenerational learning can boost children's social skills, increase school attendance, deepen knowledge of culture and history, and accelerate academic learning, while also providing socio-emotional and health benefits to older adults. U.S. schools are considering how hiring older adults could help with:

Improving literacy: At the Downshall Primary School in the East London town of Ilford, older adults interact with select children in a dedicated activity center. Researchers studying the program saw students' progress in literacy and communication skyrocket, particularly among immigrant students whose English language skills were the least developed.

Teaching history and culture: In Canada, Wapikoni Mobile trains First Nations youth as filmmakers to capture stories from the local community elders. Elders play a key role in promoting cultural identity and pride, which can be important factors in academic success. In the U.S., the Native American Community Academy (NACA) and schools in the NACA Inspired Schools Network (NISN) have hired elders to provide instruction in indigenous languages and to share traditional cultural practices. The "Gui Kima" program in the Anchorage School District invites Indigenous elders to classrooms to share their knowledge and stories. "It's about connection, lineage, legacy," said Anpao Duta Flying Earth, NISN executive director. "When an elder is in the room, it cements the idea of community and intentional connection."

To build social and emotional skills: The AARP Foundation Experience Corps program, funded by AmeriCorps, provides grants to 20 organizations that coordinate seniors to volunteer as tutors in schools, especially in early literacy. Training, peer networks, and ongoing evaluation help ensure a high-quality experience for students, volunteers, and school staff. A third-party study of the program's impact found statistically significant improvement in students' relationship skills, decision-making skills, motivation to succeed, and reading performance.

To create a sense of belonging: The nonprofit Fundación Mi Sangre (FMS) seeks to instill peace-building skills in the next generation of leaders in Colombia, after a nearly five-decade asymmetric war between the Colombian government, paramilitary groups, and crime syndicates. In their program, young people talk with elders about past social changes, jointly identify a community challenge, collaborate to develop a solution, implement the idea, share their experiences, and celebrate their collective work.
Participant evaluations show this intergenerational collaboration has enhanced well-being and sense of belonging for both generations. Youth feel useful, engaged, and capable, while elders are valued, understood, and celebrated. Entire communities are stronger.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Easter Sunday Special Events

Easter Breakfast—Join us on Easter Sunday, April 5, for a special continental breakfast between our 8 am and 10:30 am worship services. Thank you to Karen Anderson and Phyllis Althoff for planning and preparing the breakfast.

Easter Egg Hunt—Kids, come and have some fun with an Easter Egg Hunt at 9:15 am downstairs.

REMINDER

During the week when Cannon Falls Public Schools are on their spring break, there will be **no Sunday School on Sunday, March 15 and no Confirmation classes on Wednesday, March 18**, here at First English.

First English will be helping to host the Cannon Falls Breakfast Club on these following dates — **March 3** and **April 7**. The breakfast starts at **7 am at St. Ansgar's**.

The breakfast club is a place for kids to gather in a spirit of kindness, to be fed in word and fellowship, and grow in their faith. Pastor Alison will be the guest speaker on March 3. For questions, contact Pastor Luke.

Allen Troy Krueger was baptized on Sunday, February 8, 2026. Allen was born on October 31, 2025 in Rochester. His parents are **Allison** and **Noah Krueger**. His sponsors are **Cody Krueger** and **Lydia Krueger.**

Women of FELC Gathering

And Bible Study

Join us for the next **Women's Group Bible Study** on the second Tuesday of the month, **March 10** at **10 am** in the Family Room. All are welcome!

The **Faith and Life Conversations group** will meet on the following Sundays this spring.

Sunday, March 1
Dealing with Grief
Facilitated by Kay Sabin

Sunday, March 15
Friends of Huruma
Facilitated by Pastor Chris Smith

Sunday, April 19
Friends of San Lucas Update
Facilitated by Bill Peterson

Sunday, May 3
All About Coffee
Facilitated by Jeremy Irrthum

Room Updated for More Conversations

Thank you to our Coffee and Conversations team for their vision and hard work to update the Sunday School large room.

The team consisted of Amanda Swanson, Betty Behnken, Denise Jacobson, Kate Nobach, Laura Prink , Sandra Meglic, Samantha Althoff and LaNor McDonald, who met multiple times to determine a vision and solution for the open area downstairs by the Sunday School rooms. They chose colors for paint, chairs with input from everyone, and a coffee cabinet.

A special shout out to Beth McGeough who, with her son Andrew, painted the entire room. This was truly a gift of time and talent. The Sunday School benches were sold via Facebook Marketplace. The stage platforms were relocated with the help of Andrew McGeough and a couple of his friends.

When the 12 chairs and the coffee cabinet arrived, they needed to be assembled. Who do you call for expert assembly, but Ken Behnken and his son Jay. They spent several hours putting together the furniture. Thank you to these two awesome workers who only had a few parts left at the end!

The gorgeous coffee tables were crafted by Bill Peterson using his time and amazing carpentry talent to complete the conversation groupings. Denise and Phil Jacobson cleared the boxes and packing materials for recycling. This was greatly appreciated!

There are a couple of more items to hang on the walls to complete the overall look, but as of now, it a cozy, usable place for all.

MIDWEEK LENTEN

Worship Services

7pm – Holden Evening Prayer Service

Wednesdays, February 25 through March 25

Council Highlights

The First English Lutheran Church Council met at their scheduled meeting on February 12, 2025. Here are some highlights.

Approved January 15, 2026, council minutes. K. Miller moved, A. Noble seconded. Passed.

Received written reports from Pastor Hollander and Pastor Bondy.

Approved Treasurer's Report, subject to audit.

Approved renewing CD's at First Farmers & Merchants (1-yr @ 3.85%) and MIF (2-yr @ 4.00%).

Pr. Luke welcomed new council members and reviewed duties of council members. We have both a Personnel Manual and an Emergency Handbook and Safety Guidelines. Returning council members shared "what they wished they knew" stories.

Elected Officers: President - Austin Noble, Vice President - Bill Peterson, Secretary – Diane Johnson

Approved Luke Hollander, Kathy Ehlers, Phyllis Althoff, and Austin Noble as authorized signatories on all financial accounts with authority to open and close financial accounts on behalf of First English Lutheran Church.

Contact information in Emergency Handbook, etc., will be updated.

Have a prospect for organist position. Our janitor, Olga, is leaving at the end of February. Approved $200 gift of thanks to Olga.

Easter Sunday: Will have bakery and children's activities between worship services.

Outdoor worship will be on July 12 at the Lake Byllesby pavilion on the Goodhue county side. No other outdoor worship is planned.

Guatemala Trip. Only Bill Peterson and Pr. Hollander will go this summer. They will work to develop a relationship with one small community with whom we can partner going forward.

Friends of Huruma. Coordinator Pr. Chris Smith will preach on March 15 and lead the Faith and Life Conversations. Basket and QR code provided for special offerings to support this ministry.

Received written reports from Finance, Love in Outreach, Welcome Desk, Worship and Music, and Property.

Respectfully submitted,
Diane Johnson

Next Council Meeting:

Thursday, March 12, 2026 at 6 pm

All are welcome to attend council meetings. If you would like copies of the documents, please let us know.

In Memory of Barb Olson
Kenneth Olson
In Memory of Heidi Shorter
Jim and Babe Nelson
Kathy Shorter and Family

Property Team

Property Team Update
Thanks to volunteers for painting and for assembling the new furniture and to Bill Peterson for making the coffee tables in the lower-level large meeting area.

In preparation for "spring cleaning," we have done a preliminary walk-through of the building to identify items that are no longer used.

Cannon Valley Mechanical installed a 50-gallon water heater on January 23 at a cost of $1,900.

Austin Noble finished installing the lower-level security cameras.

Amanda Thompson is working on cleaning up the Sunday School storage room. Some of the metal shelving units from north lower level storage room will be moved to the Sunday School storage room. Plans are to use the lower level storage room as a mini waiting area for Food Shelf clients.

We have received reports that the main level toilets are not flushing properly. We will be investigating to determine if it is a sewer issue or if the toilets need to be replaced.

Please let us know if you would like to get involved in a project (outside summer work, small repairs, etc.).

Austin Noble (507-298-0045), Scott Johnson (651-301-9096), Diane Johnson (773-960-5482)

Meet Our 2026 Church Council

Phyllis Althoff has been serving as Treasurer for the council. She and her late husband John (passed away September 2024) have three sons, Mitch, Mike and Andy. They are all married and living in Cannon Falls. She has 7 grandchildren and a goldendoodle. Phyllis is a lifelong member of First English and has been active in Sunday School, bible school and confirmation. She was most recently the elementary school cashier for 20 years. "I am proud and honored to serve with the council of this very special congregation!" said Phyllis.

Julie (Brage) Gergen grew up in Cannon Falls and returned four years ago after her retirement. She spent 34 years at Dover—Eyota Schools as the Home Economics (FACS) teacher. It's been nice to come back to family and familiar surroundings. Julie has four BEUTIFUL grandchildren provided by her daughter and son. She will do her best to represent her First English family.

Scott Johnson describes himself as a balding, white male "slightly" past middle-age. He has been a member of First English since early 2000s. He is a Cannon Falls native and is married with children and seven grandchildren.

Bill Peterson is serving as vice-president of the Council this year. He and his wife Emily live just outside of Cannon Falls with two dogs and a dozen chickens. They have 5 adult children and 3 grandchildren (with another one on the way). Bill has worked as a carpenter, a teacher (English to adult immigrants and refugees), a lay minister (20 years doing youth and social justice work) and recently retired as Executive Director of Friends of San Lucas, a non-profit which funds development work in Guatemala. He is excited, humbled and honored to work on behalf of First English as it continues to grow and develop.

Kelly Brintnall-Miller has just finished her first year on council and has enjoyed the opportunity to serve and the time spent with fellow council members. She lives in Sogn Valley with her husband, Jared, and their two sons, Jackson and Tate. She has owned Liberty Tax Service in Cannon Falls for 18 years, a role that allows her flexibility with her boys and time for community involvement. Kelly loves living and working in her hometown, staying active with local schools, church, and community activities.

Diane Johnson is currently serving as secretary of our church council and is a member of the property team and bell choir (aka "the random ringers"). She grew up on the family farm near White Rock and graduated from Cannon Falls High School. After serving as Pastor of Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Cicero, Illinois, for 39 years, she retired and returned home to Cannon Falls. She and Tucker, the dog, live on the north side of town. Diane enjoys being active in community life, serving as president of her homeowners association, as a member of the Cannon Falls city council, and as a member of Rotary. She is excited to see more people, especially our young folks, getting involved in the life and ministry of our congregation.

Austin Noble was born and raised in Cannon Falls and is a lifetime member of FELC. He along with his wife, Cora, and daughter, Lyla, reside in Cannon Falls. He currently works for Dakota County in the Assessing Services Division. He is excited to continue working on behalf of the Church and fostering a strong sense of community.

John Peterson is beginning his first term on the Council. John first joined FELC at the wise old age of 7, and more wisely rejoined 12 years ago with his wife, Erica, and daughter, Finn. John owns Ferndale Market and enjoys being active in the Cannon Falls community. His family values the mission and community we share at FELC, and John looks forward to serving on the Council.

Jami Reinhardt was born and raised in Cannon Falls. She currently resides here with her husband, Alec; their two children, Charlotte (Charlie) & Weston; and their dog Jordy. Jami works with her family at Arena Trailer Sales. In her spare time, she enjoys baking, being outside with her family, and riding horses. She is eager and excited to serve on the council at First English!

Amanda Thompson lives in Welch township with her husband, Seth, and daughters, Madelyn and Paige. Amanda has been a science teacher at Cannon Falls Schools for over 20 years, primarily teaching Biology classes. She also has previous experience in environmental education and as a volunteer EMT with the Cannon Falls Ambulance service. Amanda has been involved with Sunday School and VBS programming at First English for many years and appreciates the opportunity to serve as a Council member.

My name is **Carna Visagie** and am starting my second year on the church council. I was born and raised in Cannon Falls. I was baptized at First English and have been a member ever since. I live down the street from the church with my husband DJ, our daughter Kenzie, and our cat Peeka. I am looking forward to another year of helping the wonderful people of First English.

I am **Jared Woodward.** I was born and raised in Cannon Falls and was baptized at First English, where I have attended since. After college, my wife, Alison, and I returned to Cannon Falls to raise our family. We stay busy with our three children—two daughters, ages 8 and 5, and a son who is 3.

After spending 15 summers playing amateur baseball with the Bears, my time has shifted more toward golf. I also enjoy playing volleyball, coaching my kids, biking, and grilling whenever I get the chance.

For the past 12 years, I have worked alongside Keith Meyers at Advanced Financial Consultants, most of that time serving as a Financial Planner.

This will be my first term on church council, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve and look forward to being involved.

Love in Outreach Ministry

The Love in Outreach Ministry focus for March will be to support two newly–formed organizations in the Twin Cities to meet the needs of people affected by the impact of ICE.

Yesod Mutual Aid Fund—An ELCA church (St. Paul's Lutheran) and Shir Tikvvah Synagogue are working together to provide mutual aid, including grocery money for the hungry, housing funds for the displaced and emergency medical bills. Donations made to FELC with Yesod Fund in the memo line will help provide dignity and support for the vulnerable in Minneapolis.

La Viña Church in Burnsville—La Viña Church has taken on the mission of helping vulnerable families with food and housing. Grocery pick up and delivery take place three days per week. Over 2,000 families have been served on recent Saturdays. We will be collecting non-perishable pantry items as well as monetary donations for this program.

Items most needed: rice, dry beans (pinto or black), pasta, pasta sauce, cereal, canned tuna

Other items: canned fruits and vegetables, smaller packets of potatoes, pastas, rice dishes or boxes of items that can be separated like granola bars, instant oatmeal.

Each family receives one plastic grocery bag of pantry items, so big containers of food only work if they can be separated into smaller portions.

For more information, check out their Facebook page, La Viña Burnsville.

It's hard to imagine during the cold, dark days of winter but spring – at least in the form of daylight saving time's sunny afternoons– is just around the corner.

Daylight saving time starts each year on the second Sunday of March. On that day, we move our clocks ahead by an hour to push more daylight into the afternoon. We will stay on that schedule until the first Sunday in November, when we "fall back" an hour.

March 2026

MAR 1, SUN
9 am Communion Worship
10:15-10:45 am Sunday School and Faith and Life Conversations

MAR 4, WEDS
6 pm Lenten Supper
7 pm Lenten Worship

MAR 5, THU
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf

MAR 8, SUN
Daylight Saving Time Begins
9 am Worship
10:15-10-45 am Sunday School

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

MAR 11, WEDS
6 pm Lenten Supper
7 pm Lenten Worship

MAR 12, THU
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf
6 pm Church Council Meeting

MAR 15, SUN
9 am Communion Worship
No Sunday School
10:15-10:45 am Faith and Life Conversations

MAR 18, WEDS
6 pm Lenten Supper
7 pm Lenten Worship

MAR 19, THU
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf

MAR 20, FRI
Church Office Closed

MAR 22, SUN
9 am Worship
10:15-10-45 am Intergenerational Sunday School

MAR 25, WEDS
6 pm Lenten Supper
7 pm Lenten Worship

MAR 26, THU
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf

MAR 29, SUN PALM SUNDAY
9 am Worship

First English Lutheran Church
511 W Belle St
Cannon Falls MN 55009

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Palm Sunday- **March 29, 9 am**

Celebration of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Observed with palm branches, parades and celebration.

Maundy Thursday- **April 2, 2 pm and 7 pm**

Marks the beginning of the Paschal Triduum and commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus with the Apostles.

Good Friday- **April 3, 7 pm**

Our service will be centered on Psalm 22. A solemn day that commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus and his death.

Easter Sunday- **April 5, 8 am and 10:30 am**

Hallelujah! Christ is risen! This day we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.