The First Edition

April 2026

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Easter Season Arrives

The 2026 Holy Week is upon us and with that the Easter Season arrives. The season of Easter is the high point of our church year, a 50-day celebration, lasting from Easter Sunday through Pentecost. It is a festive period focusing on the Resurrection, Christ's post-resurrection appearances, and Ascension, joyous music, and the continuous lighting of the paschal candle.

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.

Continental Breakfast and Easter Egg Hunt offered between services.

First English Lutheran Church
Cannon Falls

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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

Greetings People of FELC,
It is my favorite time of year – spring! We are seeing new life all around us. The snow is on its way out and the green grass is on its way in. The trees are starting to think about budding and early tulips could bloom anytime now. The birds are coming back and we are hearing their beautiful sounds all around us. We are even seeing more people outside on walks and hanging out on driveways.

All these signs of new life are excellent reminders of the resurrection which we will celebrate this Easter on April 5 (worship services at 8 am and 10:30 am). Life from death - this is the most beautiful paradox that we celebrate. Knowing that death does not have the final say, knowing that God is always at work even in death gives us hope that possibility and new creation will always prevail.

So, when you see signs of new life around you this spring, be reminded of the resurrection and the good news that we have a God who overcame death!

A BIG snow day — We give thanks to our Property Team who helped keep our sidewalks clear this winter. A special thanks to Austin Noble, Jared Miller, Josh Miller, Keith Meyers and Diane Johnson for shoveling us out of that massive snowfall last month that happened on March 15.

Lent Story Telling — During Lenten Holden Evening Prayer worship, our community had the privilege of hearing stories from members on Wednesday nights. Thank you Bill Peterson, Phil Jacobson, Jeremy Irrthum, Betty Nelson, and Mike Althoff for sharing your stories. Not only did we get to learn about you, we got to hear how the Holy Spirit works in many ways to encourage and challenge our faith lives. Sharing stories fosters connection, empathy, and community – all things we need more of these days.

Stay tuned as more stories from members will be coming out in a devotional format after Easter.

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

Join Us on Thursday, April 23

Are you retired or semi-retired and looking for an opportunity to connect with others at First English? If so, we are hosting our second gathering of its kind in April. On **Thursday, April 23 at 10am**, we will gather in the Fellowship Hall and Pastor Luke will provide a brunch (egg bake, fruit, coffee, and juice). There will be time for eating, fellowship, and conversation. Hope to see you there!

Pastor Alison

alisonb@firstenglishchurch.com

Note from the Pastor

I have truly enjoyed the intergenerational activities we've been doing here at FELC! The Trivia Challenge was fun in that there were questions for all ages, and the Bingo Event was great because it gave many people a chance to "win" and to learn a little bit about events in the Bible! The main point of all of this is, of course, to build community.

Community in a church setting is so important because it gives us all the opportunity to learn from one another. (Yes, elders can learn from children and vice versa!) Not only that, but it helps us to learn each other's names which is key to a thriving community.

I was doing some digging and found a short article regarding "the five God-given characteristics needed to form Christian Community."

They are…

- Absolute Generosity
- Faith and Prayer
- Humility to Work as a Team
- Responsibility and Initiative
- Dedication and a Spirit of Love

I have seen each one of these demonstrated here at FELC and I believe we are already a thriving community which can only get better and closer to one another! Thanks so much for being a part of First English Lutheran Church. If you haven't found a way to get "plugged in" yet, please let Pastor Luke or me know and we'll get you connected. God bless you.

Pastor Alison

On **March 1,** Kay Sabin and Pastor Luke led the group in a deep and beneficial conversation about grief. It was eye-opening to hear about the various kinds of grief people suffer as well as to be reminded that each person experiences grief in their own way. No one's grief is exactly like anyone else's.

On **March 15**, we were supposed to have a conversation about the "Friends of Huruma" but sadly Minnesota's winter got the best of us and worship was cancelled. We hope to reschedule with Pastor Chris Smith so he can tell us about his wonderful organization for youth in Tanzania.

Upcoming on Sunday, April 19—"We Are All Theologians." Have you ever wondered why all Christians don't believe the same things? Come explore the ins and outs of theology and learn a bit about how your beliefs do and don't intersect with your neighbors. Bill Peterson will lead us in this discussion about theology and how we all construct our own understanding about God.

Women of FELC Gathering and Bible Study

Join us for the next **Women's Group Bible Study** on the second Tuesday of the month, **April 14** at **10 am** in the Family Room. All are welcome!

Good Earth Village is leading VBS Day Camp at First English this summer! The program will be held from **8:30am – 3:30pm Monday, July 6, through Thursday, July 9**. Camp will be for students currently in **grades K-5**. Cost is **$25/camper**. Scholarships are available. Please register by submitting your camper's names to the church office, along with a check.

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. There will be separate areas for preschool through 1st grade kids and 2nd through 5th grade kids to participate.

FELC Office Hours

Our church office hours are
Monday-Friday,
9 am-Noon, 1-3:30 pm
Closed on Monday, April 6.

This Month's Youth Program Updates

Vacation Bible School at First English

Volunteers Needed—VBS will take place at First English **July 6 through July 9 from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm.** This year's theme will be "Wear Love. "Good Earth Village will again take the lead on programing, but we still need adults and high school age kids to help with it. Please see Pr. Alison if you are able/willing to help.

Vasa, Spring Garden, Welch, and St. Ansgar's churches will be participating with us so this should be great fun! Parents, please sign your kids up as soon as possible so we can begin making plans for the number of students who will be at VBS. Singing, crafting, eating, games, etc. will be part of the excitement!

Registration forms can be found on the FELC website at www.firstenglishchurch.com under the Sunday School tab, or you can get one from Pr. Alison. Hope to see you there!

Updates for Confirmation Families

It is hard to believe we are already at the end of the program year! It has been a great year with our confirmation students – as many as 45 sixth to ninth graders at a time. Here is the schedule for the remainder of the year:

April 1 & 8 – No Confirmation
April 15 – Regular Confirmation
April 22 – Regular Confirmation (6-8th grade); 9th graders work with Pastor Luke on Faith Statements
April 29 – End of Year Party!

Other notable dates:
April 18 – Ditch Clean Up Volunteer Opportunity (Meet at Josephson Farm at 10:30 am)
May 17 – Confirmation Sunday for 9th Graders

Youth Group Update

High schoolers continue to join us on Wednesday nights for devotions, food, and fun! We will meet on April 15 and 22 and high school youth are invited to join confirmands for an end-of-year party on April 29.

Additional upcoming events include a youth ditch clean up on April 18th and Pastor Luke will be planning some fun day events for the summer. On Saturday, April 18th, we will meet at the Josephson farm at 10:30 am to begin picking up trash along County Road 24. Pastor Luke will provide vests and garbage bags. Bring gloves if you have them. After cleaning the ditches, the Josephsons will provide hot dogs, chips, fruits, and beverages. Service is an important part of who we are – we hope you will join Pastor Luke for this event!

Love in Outreach Group to Host April Breakfast Club

April's focus for the Love in Outreach team will be serving a meal, under the capable direction of Julie Gergen (thanks Julie!), for the Cannon Falls Breakfast Club on Tuesday, April 7 at St. Ansgar's. Phil Jacobson is the planned speaker.

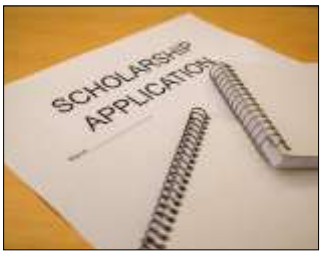
Breakfast Club is a time for students to gather in a spirit of kindness, to be fed in word and fellowship, and grow in their faith. Breakfast is served at 7 am, speaker and activities follow until 7:45 am when students head off to school. All High School youth are invited to attend the Breakfast Club events on the first Tuesday of every month during the school year. The food is always great!

BINGO!

A New Intergenerational Activity Held at FELC!

Pastor Alison led an intergenerational BINGO game on Sunday, March 22. All ages were invited to participate and prizes ranged from Cheetos to fruit snacks and candy. A good time was had by all!

Keep your eyes open for future intergenerational activities. They are a wonderful way to meet other congregational members. Pr. Alison heard back from participants that this type of activity is "such a great way to connect with people and to learn names." It sounds like some of our wise elders were helping our youngers and some of our youngsters were giving prizes to our elders! Way to go FELC!!



FELC Scholarship Available

Apply Now!

First English Lutheran Church is offering educational scholarship(s) totaling $4000, which may be awarded to one individual or divided among multiple individuals to support qualifying educational expenses (tuition, room and board, etc).

Applicants may be graduating high school seniors who are going into any form of post-secondary education (including four-year colleges, two-year colleges, trade programs, apprenticeships, and certificate programs) OR returning post-secondary students currently enrolled in one of these programs. Individuals applying for this scholarship should have a home residence that lies within 30 miles of the City of Cannon Falls. Scholarship applicants will be rated based on their community involvement, potential for growth, and personal character.

Application deadline is May 1, 2026. You can find the on-line application on our website at www.firstenglishchurch.com.

Izzy Drew Althoff was baptized on Sunday, March 1, 2026. Izzy was born on July 30, 2025 in Northfield. Her parents are **Andy and Erica Althoff**. Her sponsors are **Mitch and Angie Althoff** and **Mike and Stephanie Althoff.**

Regan Lorraine Spillman was baptized on Sunday, March 1, 2026. Regan was born on November 24, 2025 in St. Paul. Her parents are **Doug and Rachel Spillman**. Her sponsors are **Matt and Anne Shoemaker.**

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.

Property Team

Thank you to Amanda Thompson, Jake Chapek, and Austin Noble for moving the metal shelving units from the lower level north small room to the Sunday School storage room. Thank you to Amanda for organizing the Sunday School storage room. Many of the old shelving units and bins will be given away or taken to the dumpster. Plans are to use the lower level north small room as a mini waiting area for Food Shelf clients. A team will be painting the walls, putting in new flooring (if needed), and removing the door.

Thank you to everyone who has helped shovel snow this winter.

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)

Creating Connections Through Family Fellowship

Pastor Luke hosted several Family Fellowship events over the last few months. While there was always interest, it was hard to get people together between schedules and illnesses. We completely understand!

As people with families continue to seek out connection, we are hoping to facilitate this in two major ways. First, the gathering space by the Sunday School classrooms has been updated to include some cozy seating and areas for coffee and treats. This is a great space for people to gather on Sundays when you might be here already! People are already using it and we are so glad. Second, families who are interested in gathering with others outside of Sunday mornings should connect with Pastor Luke. He is going to create a group chat so people can set up meet up times at parks and other places as our Minnesota weather improves. All you have to do is pick a date and location where you want to meet up with others and we will help communicate it. A number of families have already expressed interest and indicated they have parks in mind where they'd like to meet up with others.

Spring Ditch Clean Up – April 18

First English has helped with ditch clean up on County Road 24 by the Josephson Farm over the last several years. If you are interested in helping us with this project, please sign up at our Welcome Desk so we know how many to expect. We will meet on Saturday, April 18, at 10:30am at the Josephson Farm, clean the highway ditches, then gather back on the farm for hotdogs and fellowship. This is a great opportunity for youth to get volunteer hours. Pastor Luke hopes you will join him as we help clean up God's beautiful creation! Note that Saturday, April 25, is our back-up date if April 18 has bad weather.

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.

Hours:
Thursdays
3-6 pm

Consider helping to unload or distribute food. Weekly help is needed. Contact Paul at 507-819-0236.

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.
Contact Info: 507-819-0236, cannonfallsfoodshelf70@gmail.com

Council Highlights

The First English Lutheran Church Council met at their scheduled meeting on March 12, 2026. Here are some highlights.

Approved February 12, 2026, council minutes.

Received written reports from Pastor Hollander (also noted Family Fellowship is good, but scheduling is difficult; checking in with families; Bill Peterson is helping with retired persons gatherings) and Pastor Bondy.

Approved Treasurer's Report, subject to audit.

Cam Moll will begin trial period as part-time Music Director on March 22.

Sheena Bechtoldt will cover custodial duties in March and April; interviewing candidate to begin in May.

FELC will pay 50% of pastor's cost of MN Paid Family & Medical Leave if they elect coverage. Both declined at this point. Offer stands.

The Southeastern Synod of the ELCA invitation to participate in a march and worship service organized by ISAIAH on Palm Sunday afternoon at the state capitol was discussed.

The council retreat will be on a Sunday after worship at Bill Peterson's home.

Council will be begin process of Strategic Planning.

Received written reports from Finance, Love in Outreach, Worship and Music, and Property. The Worship and Music report was corrected to note that Jay Woodward's group will be leading music on April 19. FELC, St. Ansgar's, and Spring Garden will be participating in VBS July 6-9.

Respectfully submitted,
Diane Johnson

Next Council Meeting:

Thursday, April 9, 2026 at 6 pm

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

FELC Finance Committee Update

The FELC Finance Committee has been meeting monthly to review the church financial and Ledger updates. In March, the committee suggested we publish quarterly updates on our income and expenses. Below is our 2026 year-to-date figures as of this printing. Note we are slightly behind as we had to cancel worship on March 15 due to the snowstorm as well as increased staffing and building costs.

	Income	Expense	Difference
General Fund Receipts	$80,265.02		
General Fund Expenses		$87,131.22	-$ 6,866.20
Benevolence/Pass-Through/ Designated Receipts	$ 7,224.76		
Benevolence/Pass-Through/ Designated Disbursements		$ 5,551.57	+$ 1,673.19

Please consider helping us make up the difference if you can.

In Memory of Arlan and Kathy Niebling
Randy Degerness

In Memory of Betty Woodward
Bev Stedman

Gathering at Cannon Rivers Senior Living

First English hosted a gathering at Cannon Rivers Senior Living for residents and the FELC Support Team on the morning of Tuesday, March 24. (Our Support Team visits our homebound members.) Treats and coffee were available for everyone with a short program by Pastor Luke and Pastor Alison. Everyone seemed to enjoy the event!

Let Us Know
When Your Contact Info Changes

In this day and age when phone numbers, mailing addresses and email addresses are frequently changing, getting ahold of our church members can be challenging, especially when unexpected or emergency situations develop.

If your address, email or phone number has changed, please call (507-263-3042) or email (kathye@firstenglishchurch.com) with your current information. We will do our best to keep you informed of important notices.

April 2026

APRIL 2, THU Maundy Thursday
2 pm Communion Worship
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf
7 pm Communion Worship

APRIL 3, FRI Good Friday
7 pm Worship

APRIL 4, SAT
8 am Altar Guild Easter Decorating

APRIL 5, SUN Easter
8 am Communion Worship
9:15 am Easter Breakfast/Egg Hunt
10:30 am Communion Worship

APRIL 6, MON
Church Office Closed

APRIL 8, WEDS
No Confirmation Classes

APRIL 9, THU
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf
6 pm Church Council Meeting

APRIL 12, SUN
9 am Worship
10:15-10-45 am Sunday School

APRIL 14, TUES
10 am Women's Group Gathering and Bible Study

APRIL 15, WEDS
6 pm Confirmation Supper & Classes

APRIL 16, THU
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf

APRIL 18, SAT
10:30 am Annual Spring Ditch Clean-Up

APRIL 19, SUN
9 am Communion Worship
10:15-10:45 am Sunday School and Faith and Life Conversations

APRIL 22, WEDS
6 pm Confirmation Supper & Classes

APRIL 23, THU
10 am Prime-Timers
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf

APRIL 26, SUN
9 am Worship

APRIL 29, WEDS
6 pm Confirmation Supper & Classes

APRIL 30, THU
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf

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

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More Music Talent Joins Worship

Welcome to Cam Moll who has begun filling in as a part-time Music Director at First English. Cam graduated from Luther College last December with a Music Education degree. He brings a lot of gifts to our community – plays piano and organ, has conducted ensembles, worked as an intern in a larger church with digital ministry, and more. Cam is currently working as a long-term sub, so he has limited availability but we hope to see him a couple of Sundays a month and will explore how he might best support our worship. His first Sunday accompanying us in worship was March 22. Next time you see Cam, please welcome him!

Decorating for Easter

Join the FELC Altar Guild at **8 am** on **Saturday, April 4,** to decorate the sanctuary and narthex for Easter morning services.

All are welcome to help!