The First Edition

May 2026

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The Gift of Prime-Time

One of the gifts of being in a community is a sense of belonging. This was experienced as "retired" folks gathered for food and fellowship, then shared some of the best (and worst) advice they have heard as they entered retirement. Thank you to all who join us on Thursday, April 23, to Bill Peterson for leading us, and to Pastor Luke for making a tasty brunch! Twenty-two people were gathered and the room was filled with experience and laughter. If you are retired or semi-retired and would like to join in conversation and fellowship, watch for more information on the next gathering.

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Cannon Falls

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Visit our Website for Updates!

www.firstenglishchurch.com

Pastor Luke

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Note from the Pastor

Grace to you and peace,

The other week, a group of us gathered for Faith and Life Conversations. Bill Peterson led us in a process where we identified our own theologies. That is, we each thought about what we believe individually regarding God, humanity, purpose, etc. Amidst some great conversation and diverse personal theologies, I was reminded how important liturgy is for me. I appreciate the structure, the sacrament, the lectionary, AND the calendar. I love how there is a rhythm to our year.

We are currently in the Easter season – a time when we celebrate the risen Christ, look for God showing up in unexpected places, and even expect death from life. Simultaneously, we experience a Minnesota spring when new life and the unexpected are all around us. We can all appreciate the budding trees, the spring rain, and the busyness of life all around. But for me, I am always watching for the birds. Eager to see what surprises spring migration are going to bring. This year, I have already seen a Black-bellied Whistling Duck and a Western Tanager (two rare visitors) in Minnesota!

Isn't this in a sense what faith is all about? Looking for life in unexpected places! Hope that we will find peace and joy in the midst of the mundane and even despair? Jesus' closest friends and followers didn't recognize him post-resurrection. I wonder how many times we encounter the risen Christ and we don't even notice. Likely in the people we'd least expect.

Pastor Luke

Pastor Alison

alisonb@firstenglishchurch.com

Note from the Pastor

Psalm 147: 3-5

"(God) heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; he give to all of them their names. Great is our Lord and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure."

On Sunday, May 31, along with our senior recognition, Pastor Luke and I will be facilitating another healing service during which there will be a time for prayer, music, silence and anointing if you choose to have it. The last healing service was well received, and Pastor Luke and I thought May would be a good time to incorporate this type of service once again. School is ending, summer is beginning, people are traveling, etc. There are plenty of reasons to thank, praise and ask God for help. Please come and show our graduating seniors your support as you enter into a space of prayer and healing.

Pastor Alison

Women of FELC Gathering and Bible Study

Join us for the next **Women's Group Bible Study** on the second Tuesday of the month, **May 12** at **10 am** in the Family Room. All are welcome!

Thanks for Joining Us During Holy Week!

Thank You

Way to go!

Thank you to FELC members who provided meals, music or message for the Cannon Falls Breakfast club this past school year. Thei program is a way for teens to start their day with a nutritious mail, and inspirational message and fellowship.

About 45 FELC members contributed in some way. It is appreciated!

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.

FELC Office Hours

Our church office hours are
Monday-Friday,
9 am-Noon, 1-3:30 pm
Closed on Monday, May 25 and Friday, May 29.

This Month's Youth Program Updates

Sunday School Update—Thanks to all the Sunday School Teachers and Administrators that made Sunday School possible this past program year. You are much appreciated! Thanks also to all of the children who came to Sunday School to learn more about God and God's love!

We will end this year on Sunday, May 3 with a pajama party from 10:15 - 10:45 am in the Sanctuary. Chips and juice will be provided. Wear your pajamas and bring a small pillow to lay on if you so choose. We will be watching a movie about some of the greatest heroes of the Bible!

Confirmation Program Update—The Confirmation program has been successful again this year with over 40 kids attending on average. A big thank you to the Confirmation Leaders who offered their time and wisdom to these young people every week – you are rock stars! Thank you parents for getting these young people to confirmation each week – you are much appreciated!

For the last academic Confirmation lesson, we did a *Trivia Challenge* that reviewed the entire year. Students were on teams who had to identify answers to 45 questions about: Martin Luther, The Reformation, the Lutheran Confessions, the Apostle's Creed and the Lord's Prayer, Holy Baptism, Confession and Forgiveness, Justification by Faith, The Cross, Saint and Sinner, the Freedom of a Christian, the Neighbor and Grace!

How many of you would do well on this *Trivia Challenge* ? It's a lot of information but we have faith in your kids and believed they would be successful at answering a few questions about each subject. They did an awesome job!! Ask them sometime about one of the topics above and see what they can tell you about it.

Confirmation (Affirmation of Baptism) Service to be held on May 17

Eight 9th grade students will affirm their baptism during worship on Sunday, May 17 at 9 am. Owen Albers, Jackson Althoff, Ben Flanders, Charlie Gappa, Eleanor Montgomery, Kinzley Rezac, Ashton Shattuck, and Mason Sjoblom have completed confirmation class and written faith statements naming what they believe. Posters highlighting the students and their faith journeys will be posted in the Fellowship Hall for you to peruse after service. Help us celebrate this milestone with them at worship with a reception following!

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, confirmation is a pastoral and educational ministry, often called Affirmation of Baptism, where young baptized Lutherans publicly affirm the promises made on their behalf at baptism. It involves study of the Lutheran confessions, scripture, conversations around faith, and active service.

Ditch Clean-Up Bagged Up!

Thank you to all who helped with the annual ditch clean up on County Road 24 on Saturday, April 18, by the Josephson Farm. Despite being a cold and windy day, our crew was all smiles and spent the morning picking up the highway ditches, then they gathered back on the farm for hotdogs and fellowship. Thank you to Sue and Steve Josephson for hosting the food and location.

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)*

Conley David Schmalenberg was baptized on Sunday, April 26, 2026. Conley was born on February 18, 2026 in Northfield. His parents are **Becca and Alex Schmalenberg** His sponsors are **Meagan and Mitch Anderson.**

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.

Love in Outreach Ministry

Thank you to those who help to support the Love in Outreach Ministry for March. A total of $914 was raised for the Yesod Mutual Aid Fund and the La Viña Church in Burnsville for their missions as well as 63 pounds of food for families served by the La Viña Church.

The May focus will be blankets for our high school seniors.

President's Perspective

Dear members of First English,

As we look ahead to the coming year, I am filled with gratitude and hope for all that we have accomplished together and all that lies ahead. Our congregation continues to be a community of compassion, service, and faith in action. Whether though outreach, worship, or fellowship the work we do through our faith makes a difference in our community and beyond.

This past year has been a testament to what can be achieved when we come together with a shared purpose and commitment. From celebrating our 125th anniversary with a great worship service and picnic, to welcoming Pastor Alison this fall we have continued to support one another through our love for Jesus. The dedication shown by so many of you through gifts of time, mentorship, fellowship, and financial gifts reflects the strength and heart of this church.

Moving forward, we remain focused on a strong sense of community while deepening our connections, expanding our outreach, and nurturing our faith. There are many opportunities ahead, and I encourage each of you to stay engaged and involved as we continue this journey together with Christ. If you would like to become more involved with a service, please use the sign-up sheets on our welcome desk; if unsure on the duties of ushering, assisting with communion, or lay reading, please reach out to myself, Pastor Luke, Pastor Alison, or any other member of the Council.

Thank you all for being as essential part of this community. It is a privilege to serve alongside you, and I look forward to continuing our great work.

In Faith and Service,
Austin Noble, Council President

Churches Unite to Strengthen Cannon Falls Community

In a time when communities across the country are searching for meaningful ways to support their neighbors, a quiet but powerful collaboration in Cannon Falls continues to make a lasting difference. The Community Church Interaction Council (CCIC), a partnership of twelve local churches, is demonstrating what can happen when faith communities come together with a shared purpose: caring for those in need.

CCIC has serves as a backbone of support in Cannon Falls, coordinating outreach efforts that touch the lives of individuals and families throughout the area. Their mission is simple yet impactful: identify needs within the community and respond with compassion, dignity, and practical help.

One of the most visible ways CCIC serves is through its monthly free community meals. These gatherings are more than just an opportunity to share food, they are a place where neighbors connect, friendships are formed, and everyone is welcomed without question. Whether someone comes for a warm meal, conversation, or companionship, the doors are open to all.

Beyond these meals, CCIC plays a vital role in supporting the local food shelf, helping ensure that families facing food insecurity have access to essential groceries. Volunteers from the participating churches regularly contribute time, resources, and donations, reinforcing a community safety net that many rely on.

Perhaps most impactful is CCIC's direct support to families experiencing financial hardship or unexpected crises. Through coordinated efforts and thoughtful stewardship of resources, the council is able to step in when it matters most, helping with rent, utilities, transportation, and other urgent needs. In 2025 alone, CCIC distributed more than $40,000 in assistance to members of the Cannon Falls community.

This level of support is made possible not only through financial contributions, but through strong relationships with local schools, social workers, and community organizations. These partnerships help identify needs quickly and ensure that help is directed where it can have the greatest impact.

Tim Herroff, CarePortal Area Director for Minnesota, noted the uniqueness of this approach, saying, "What makes Cannon Falls stand out is not just the generosity of its churches, but their unity. It's rare to see so many congregations working together so seamlessly; sharing resources, responding quickly, and putting the needs of families ahead of everything else. That kind of collaboration is what truly transforms a community."

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Council Highlights

The First English Lutheran Church Council met at their scheduled meeting on April 9, 2026. Here are some highlights.

Approved March 12, 2026, council minutes.

Appointed Tiffany Kiffmeyer (2/25-1/28) and Dean Kautz (2/26-1/29) to serve on Audit Committee.

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

Custodial duties: Sheena Bechtoldt will cover in April; Robin McManus begins May 1.

Appointed scholarship committee members Kelly Miller, Bill Peterson, and Amanda Thompson. Foundation members Emily Spicer, Kathy Swanson, Barb Elias, and Dean Kautz will be asked if they want to be part of this.

Lenten and Holy Week reflections: Storytelling was great, liked Holden Evening Prayer worship.

Brainstorming on helping people understand how our giving enables our ministry.

Guatemala trip: Bill Peterson noted that the trip planned will be geared toward High School students (15 years and up); maximum of 12.

Respectfully submitted,
Diane Johnson

Next Council Meeting:

Thursday, May 14, 2026 at 6 pm

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

Cannon Falls Community

Continued from previous page...

While each of the twelve churches maintains its own identity and congregation, they come together under a shared commitment to serve. This collaboration allows them to pool resources, avoid duplication of efforts, and expand their reach far beyond what any single church could accomplish alone.

In a small town like Cannon Falls, where community ties run deep, the work of the Community Church Interaction Council is a reminder that care for one another remains a central value. Through meals shared, needs met, and lives supported, CCIC continues to embody the spirit of service; quietly, consistently, and with profound impact.

As one community member recently shared, “It’s not just about the help, it’s about knowing someone cares.”

And in Cannon Falls, thanks to CCIC, that care is felt every day.

All About Coffee

Jeremy Irrthum will lead a conversation all about coffee after worship on **Sunday, May 3.**

The conversations will be held n the Family Room. Join us!

The Importance of Visitation

Visiting FELC’s shut-ins or homebound members is of utmost importance! They may not get to church very often, but they truly enjoy receiving communion and having the opportunity to talk with Pastor Luke, Pastor Alison or a lay visitor.

FELC currently has 12 people on our visitation list, along with five lay visitors that offer their time to help both Pastor Luke and Pastor Alison with visiting a regular basis.

If you are interested in becoming a lay visitor, please see Pastor Alison; otherwise, keep the following people in your prayers…

Judy Holt, Donna and Richard Miller, Jan and Jim Edlund, Marcine Lundell, Jean Barsness, Sharon Beske, Marlys Weber, Don and Donna Woodward, and Evie Strack. All are marvelous people who have previously given whole-heartedly in various ways at FELC when they were more able to do so. Thank you!

May 2026

MAY 3, SUN
9 am Communion Worship
10:15-10-45 am Sunday School End of Year Party

MAY 6, WEDS
5 pm Church Council Retreat

MAY 7, THU
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf

MAY 10, SUN
9 am Worship

MAY 12, TUES
10 am Women's Group Gathering and Bible Study

MAY 14, THU
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf
6 pm Church Council Meeting

MAY 17, SUN
9 am Communion Worship and Confirmation Service

MAY 21, THU
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf

MAY 24, SUN
9 am Worship

MAY 25, MON Memorial Day
Church Office Closed

MAY 27, WEDS
5 pm Community Baccalaureate

MAY 28, THU
3-6 pm CF Food Shelf

MAY 29, FRI
Church Office Closed

MAY 31, SUN
9 am Worship and Senior Recognition

May 10, 2026

First English Lutheran Church
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Cannon Falls MN 55009

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Attention Class of 2026 and Families!

First English Lutheran Church will be hosting a **Community Baccalaureate Service on Wednesday, May 27 starting at 5 pm.**

First English will also be recognizing our own graduates during our worship on Sunday, May 31 at 9 am. The Love in Outreach Ministry created blankets for our graduates as a gift.