

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH CHIMES

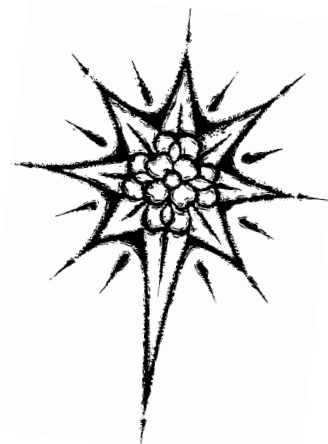
December 2025
Volume 64, Issue 12
www.firstgeneseo.org

Sharing Christ's Love

WORSHIP WITH US THIS WEEKEND!

Worship Saturday 5:30 p.m.
Worship & Livestream Sunday 9:30 a.m.

Come and Rejoice at the Birth of our Savior



Advent Lessons & Carols ~ December 6 & 7

5:30 p.m. Saturday — 9:30 a.m. Sunday

Join us for a service which combines Scripture readings, Advent hymns, Christmas carols, and prayers to tell of God's vision, promise, and gift of salvation through Jesus Christ to all the earth. All of our music groups will present special music and lead congregational song. Saturday's special music will be varied.

Sunday, December 14 ~ One Service Weekend

9:30 a.m. — *Intergenerational Christmas Presentation*

Come and hear this delightful and humorous retelling of the Christmas story with plenty of congregational participation. If you would like to be a part of the story (angel, shepherd, cow, duck, horse, innkeeper, Mary, Joe), come early to get your costume! No rehearsal required.

Christmas Eve ~ Wednesday, December 24

4 & 7 p.m. — *Candlelight, Carols & Communion*

Come join us for candlelight, carols, Holy Communion, special music, and a children's message at both services. Both services will be livestreamed.

Christmas Day ~ Thursday, December 25

10 a.m. — *Carols & Communion*

11 a.m. — *Community Christmas Dinner (see page 7 for more details)*

Bodies are Messy... and Noisy

"I don't know how you do it, Pastor. How can you preach with so much distraction?" I've been asked this several times throughout the years, usually after a particularly lively worship experience.

The truth is, sometimes it's hard. Sometimes it's hard to preach when there are a lot of distractions. Someone's phone goes off, because they forgot to silence it. 18 people decide that they need a potty break. Someone starts coughing, and then someone else leans over to whisper to them and offer them a cough drop, and then the cough drop wrapper itself crinkles at a tremendous decibel level. A kid (probably mine) drops his water bottle and then knocks over a row of plastic toys. And a baby starts crying.

But the other side of that truth is, I would rather preach to a messy, noisy church full of messy, noisy people (and kids) any day, as opposed to a church full of mostly empty pews, or, like we did during COVID, a completely empty church with a video camera. People make up the Body of Christ, and people have bodies. And bodies have needs, and they make noise.

Plus, in addition to the distraction of simply sharing space with other bodies, my own mind and body provide distractions of their own. Sometimes I look out from the ambo and see some of you watching and listening, and I am reminded of conversations we have had about life and death, grief, faith, love, family, or any number of other topics. Sometimes I'm not 100% sure that what I have prepared is what needs to be preached, and I'm praying that God gives me the wisdom to choose the right words. Sometimes I'm begging God to help me get through the sermon without coughing or losing my voice. And, I usually have an eye on my own kids and what they're up to.

Another aspect I want to highlight is the importance of silence as a part of our worship life. There are usually at least three times during our worship services that silence is included as an intentional part of our liturgy: during the Confession & Forgiveness (so that we can confess our sins), after the sermon (so that we can reflect on the Word), and during the prayers of intercession (so that we can offer the prayers of our hearts). Silence is relative, though. By "silence," what we mean is that there are no words to be spoken and no music to be played. You'll still hear children wiggling, pews creaking, and your neighbor breathing. Those are the sounds of the Body of Christ. As parents and grandparents, we can teach our children that these moments of silence are holy moments, and that we should try to respect them for our own sake and the sake of our worshipping brothers and sisters. We can remind our kids (and ourselves) why these moments exist, so that we can experience a deep connection with God.

So I do encourage you all, as worshippers, to be respectful of other worshippers, and try to keep distractions to a minimum. But I also encourage you to not feel guilty when you happen to cause a possible distraction, and to not make others feel guilty when the same happens to them! We are a Body (the Body of Christ!), and bodies are messy, noisy things. Amen.

—Pastor Laura

December 6 & 7, 2025

Advent 2 | Lessons & Carols

December 14, 2025

Advent 3 | One Service Weekend

Intergenerational Christmas Presentation
on Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

No Worship on Saturday, December 13

December 20 & 21, 2025

Advent 4

This weekend's texts include Isaiah 7:10-16,
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19, Romans 1:1-7 and
Matthew 1:18-25.

December 24, 2025

Nativity of Our Lord—Christmas Eve
Candlelight, Carols & Communion at
4 and 7 p.m.

This evening's texts include Isaiah 9:2-7,
Titus 2:11-14 and Luke 2:1-20.

December 25, 2025

Nativity of Our Lord—Christmas Day
Carols & Communion at 10 a.m.

This day's texts include Isaiah 52:7-10,
Psalm 98, Hebrews 1:1-4 and John 1:1-14.

December 27 & 28, 2025

Christmas 1

This weekend's texts include Isaiah 63:7-9,
Psalm 148, Hebrews 2:10-18 and Matthew
2:13-23.

FIRST WORSHIP & MUSIC



Please keep the following Lifelines petitions in your prayers:

World and Community: For the people of Ukraine, Israel, and Gaza. For our leaders: President Donald Trump and Governor J.B. Pritzker. For health care workers. For all who work for peace and justice. For those serving our country in the military, especially Karl Flynn (*Maurie Nelson's friend*), Brian Hanshaw (*Jan & Steve Weber's son-in-law*), Jacob Hartman, Christopher Unrath, Law Enforcement Officers and First Responders.

Church: For our bishops: Rev. Yehiel Curry and Rev. Stacie Fidler. For our partners in ministry: Pastor Emmanuel Gideon Mollé and the people of Ilkiding'a and Osupuko Parishes in Tanzania; Rev. Dr. Peter Paul Thomas, Bishop of the Arcot Lutheran Synod, India. For missionaries who share the Gospel around the world. For Lutheran Social Services of Illinois and Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center. For our pastor, parish staff, Preschool staff and Church Council (names listed on pg. 10).

Health and Wellbeing: Ann Behrendt (*Phil Wildermuth's sister*), Courtney Benke (*Mindy Brown and Melissa McCarty's friend*), Linda Bloomberg, Carol Boyd, Mazie Calderon, Paul Flynn (*Maurie Nelson's friend*), Gretchen Jones (*Maurie Nelson's friend*), Jerry Klavohn, Christine Korth (*Kim Sefton's aunt*), Neo Wilder Lampe (*Mike & Ethel Pries's great grandson*), Lorrie Lord, Karen Myhre, Alan Novak (*Melissa McCarty's father*), Marlene Prestegaard (*Kim Sefton's cousin*), Mike Pries, Peggy Schram (*Doris Swanson's daughter*), Barbara Sigwalt (*Kathi Fluck's friend*), Dee Sterling, Tracy Taber (*Barb Burghgrave's niece*), Jim Unrath and Steve Weber.

Joys: We rejoice with those who confirmed their faith on October 26, 2025: *Miles Curcuru, Kane Fuelling, Emma Hofer, Madison Kuethe, Kellen Minder, Annie Reed, Violet Runty, Martez Sefton, Benjamin Simosky and Gage Steffes.*

Sorrows: On the deaths of LaVern Robertson, father of Teri Robertson and brother of Jackie Nystrom; and Cindy Fruit, family friend of Kim Sefton.

Thanksgiving:

P.L.E.A. (Praying to the Lord Expecting Answers): For our next Director of Youth & Family Ministry. O God, you invite us to come before you persistently in prayer, asking for all that we need. Ministry with children, youth, and families is a vital part of our congregation's mission. Send us the right candidate for this ministry – a faithful disciple who will be ready to teach, equip, and serve. Continue to strengthen each staff member and volunteer through this interim period, as we teach and lead our children and youth. Prepare this congregation to receive our next leader with welcome, ready to work together for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

If you wish to submit a prayer request, please visit www.firstgeneseo.org and use the password First! to access the prayer request form in the Member Access Section. If you or a member of your family have a medical procedure planned or are admitted to the hospital, please call the church office. In the event of an after-hours emergency please contact Pastor Laura at 703-505-8710.

FIRST PRAYER

FIRST MINISTRIES



Worship Attendance in App

We will launch worship attendance check-in using the church app on Sunday, December 14. Bring your phone that day and the pastor will talk everyone through the steps. If you are not using the app, printed attendance cards will still be available. If you haven't yet download the app, now is a great time. It's a convenient way to access: livestreams and archives of worship services, calendar of events, upcoming activities, sign ups, ways to get involved, submitting prayer requests, important church-wide announcements, membership directory, giving options and more!

- Download the app from your phone's App Store by searching Church by **MinistryOne** in Google Play or Apple App Store (*It is a purple box with a white cross.*) Find our church using zip code 61254. Once in, click in the upper left and sign in using a cell phone number or email that is on file with the church.



Advent Devotionals

Three options are available in the Fellowship Room. Choose the one that best meets your needs!

"A Grand Miracle," inspiration from C.S. Lewis for adults of all ages.

"A Season of Peace" a large print devotional for seniors.

"Look Around the Stable" Advent Daily Devotions and Advent Chain for Kids and Families —

Families are welcome to pick up an Advent daily devotion and Advent chain makings beginning on the weekend of November 22 & 23 to use this season! By the end of Advent, you will be able to hang your chain on your Christmas tree or somewhere prominent in your house to help celebrate the true gift of Christmas!

Council Highlights for November 17, 2025

- Set a date for a Congregational Forum on Sunday January 18, 2026 at 10:30 a.m. to prepare for the Annual Meeting.
- Accepted Pastor Laura's sabbatical plan for 2026, to be taken in two sections: May 26 to June 25, and August 1 to 31.
- Approved \$350 from Social Ministry Fund for Secret Santa.
- Reviewed Swanson Task Force recommendation on hiring Streamline Architects to propose updates to the Fellowship Room, more discussion required.
- Accepted updated Investment Strategy from our Investment Committee.

October Financial Report

General Fund Offering:

October actual	\$34,294
October budget	\$37,308
YTD actual	\$400,079
YTD budget	\$420,583

Net Income Over Expenses:

October actual	\$3,320 deficit
October budget	\$5,409 deficit
YTD actual	\$19,698 deficit
YTD budget	\$36,556 deficit

Healing Hearts

Healing Hearts meets monthly for lunch and conversation. All widows at First Lutheran are invited to join us at Lavendar Crest Winery on Wednesday, December 3 at **11 a.m.** (*Note time change*) Please RSVP to Kathy Rogers, coordinator of the group, at (309) 945-5132 or call the church office. (*Reservations necessary*)

Stewardship 2026

Hit it Out of the Park

Thank you to all who *Stepped Up to the Plate* and returned a 2026 Commitment Card. As of November 17, we have received 94 commitments, totaling \$316,532 toward our mission and ministry for the coming year. We want to *Hit it Out of the Park* so we will continue to receive commitments in the offering plate, the drop box by the office door, or online.

FIRST MINISTRIES



New Member Weekend

Are you interested in joining the congregation? We will be receiving new members in Worship on the weekend of January 10 & 11. Please talk with Pastor Laura or Vicar Madelyn if you want to join or would simply like more information!

Save the Date for Pie in Face!

As part of our stewardship campaign, we have a goal of receiving 160 commitment cards by November 30. If we receive 150, Vicar Madelyn gets pie in the face. If we receive 160, both Vicar Madelyn AND Pastor Laura get pie in the face. The Pie in the Face event is tentatively set for **December 14** at 10:45 a.m. At the time of printing, we do not yet know if we have made our goal! Watch social media, First Day and worship slides for updates.

First Book Club

Come and join us for discussion on the content of the book *Counting Miracles* and faith response to the author Nicholas Sparks on Thursday, December 18 at 2 p.m. in Grace Place.

Tanner Hughes was raised by his grandparents, following in his grandfather's military footsteps to become an Army Ranger. His whole life has been spent abroad, and he is the proverbial rolling stone: happiest when off on his next adventure, zero desire to settle down. But when his grandmother passes away, her last words to him are find where you belong. She also drops a bombshell, telling him the name of the father he never knew—and where to find him. Tanner is due at his next posting soon, but his curiosity is piqued, and he sets out for Asheboro, North Carolina, to ask around. He's been in town less than twenty-four hours when he meets Kaitlyn Cooper, a doctor and single mom. They both feel an immediate connection; Tanner knows Kaitlyn has a story to tell, and he wants to hear it. To Kaitlyn, Tanner is mysterious, exciting—and possibly leaving in just a few weeks. Meanwhile, nearby, eighty-three-year-old Jasper lives alone in a cabin bordering a national forest. With only his old dog, Arlo, for company, he lives quietly, haunted by a tragic accident that took place decades before. When he hears rumors that a white deer has been spotted in the forest—a creature of legend that inspired his father and grandfather—he becomes obsessed with protecting the deer from poachers. As these characters' fates orbit closer together, none of them is expecting a miracle . . . but that may be exactly what is about to alter their futures forever. Be sure to read this contemporary romance novel on join our discussion!

- **Please Note** – First Book Club will not meet in January. We will read *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver during January and February and discuss the book on February 19.

FIRST MINISTRIES



Christmas Walk Pasta Dinner

Saturday, December 13 ~ 4-7 p.m.

First Lutheran will be hosting a Pasta Dinner for everyone in the community to enjoy! Spaghetti, salad, green beans, garlic bread and homemade desserts will be served in the Fellowship Room from 4-7 p.m. The cost of the meal is \$7 for adults and \$4 for children age 10 and under. This year, all the funds raised will be used for Easter baskets this coming spring for children in foster care, in partnership with the LSSI office in Moline. ***We are still in need of volunteers and donations for desserts.*** Work shifts are from 2:30-5 or 5-7:30 p.m. If you are interested, please sign up at the Welcome Center or fill out a pew slip and drop it in the offering plate. Thank you for your support and helping us *Share Christ's Love* with our neighbors!

Jul Gott

Jul Gott (*"Christmas Goodies" in Swedish*) returns this year! Pastor Laura and Anna Kamprath are organizing the event, and we need your help! Donations of Christmas cookies or other homemade baked goods are welcomed. They can be dropped off at the church on Friday, December 12, between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m., or contact Pastor Laura to arrange pick up. Sign up on the app or at the Welcome Center to donate, or just bring your treats! The event will be during the Christmas Walk on Saturday, December 13, 10 a.m. to Noon. Customers will come and fill a box with the Christmas cookies of their choice. After you've chosen your favorites, cookies will be weighed and sold for \$10 per pound. All proceeds will be evenly split between the Geneseo-Atkinson Food Pantry, Geneseo Backpack Blessings, and ELCA World Hunger. We will need some volunteers to help run the event – contact Pastor Laura if you can donate your time!



Christmas Walk Lighted Parade

First Lutheran Church will once again be entering a float in the Lighted Parade at the Geneseo Christmas Walk on Saturday, December 13. With our float entry, we will be *Sharing Christ's Love* and the joy of the season with our community, as well as reminding our neighbors that they can join us this season to worship and celebrate the birth of our Savior. We will need volunteer help at different times:

Friday, December 12

- **1 p.m.:** A group will gather in the Conference Room A to pack bags of popcorn to hand out along the parade route.

Saturday, December 13

- **9 a.m.:** A group of strong, able-bodied people will assemble the float in the FLC parking lot.
- **5 p.m.:** We meet in the parking lot of Grace Methodist Church. Join us to walk with the First Lutheran Church float and hand out bags of popcorn along the parade route.
- **6:30 p.m.:** Strong, able-bodied volunteers will meet in the FLC parking lot to help take the float apart and store it in the garage, following the parade.

Sign-up to help at the Welcome Center, or online using the QR code!



Christmas Poinsettia Garden

Poinsettias for our Christmas Garden may be ordered in memory or in honor of a loved one. This year's 6" plants will cost \$16.50 per plant. Order and payment are due by Sunday, December 14.

Altar Flowers 2026!

Altar flowers can be donated in honor or memory of a loved one, special occasion, or simply for the glory of God. We will continue to purchase arrangements from Designs on the Boulevard in Geneseo which began in August of 2025. The cost is now \$70 for two arrangements. If you would like to purchase altar flowers, please sign up at the Welcome Center and place a check mark in the box next to your name if you plan to take the flowers with you after worship.

Angel Tree — Phrase 2

The angels for Allure (*yellow angels*) and Hillcrest Home (*green angels*) are ready to be chosen off the tree in the Fellowship Room. Please sign out your angel on the clipboard when you choose your angel. Gifts are due by Sunday, December 14.

- **Reminder:** LSSI Foster Care gifts need to be returned to the church by *Sunday, November 30*.

Thank you for being Angels to both groups. For some this is the only Christmas gift they will receive so your generosity means more than you will ever know

First Friends

Come enjoy a ham & scalloped potato dinner and participate in a Christmas sing along led by music director Inger. We will meet on Thursday, December 11 at 11:30 a.m. Cost is \$7. Sign up at the Welcome Center or call the church office. Friends invited!

Community Christmas Dinner

"We love each other as a result of Christ loving us first." 1 John 4:19

Our First Lutheran family will once again host the annual Community Christmas Dinner on Christmas Day from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. for a free traditional dine-in dinner. Our mission is to bring our neighbors and friends together to celebrate Christ's birth and to extend this meal as a free gift to our community. We welcome you to join us for this warm Christmas dinner including: *turkey, ham, mashed potatoes & gravy, stuffing, green bean casserole, salads and special Christmas cookies*

- **Home delivery** will be provided for to those in Geneseo/Atkinson/Cambridge communities who are unable to leave their home. Deliveries for those who are homebound can be scheduled by calling the church office at 944-3196, Janet Larson (309) 507-2997, by December 23 to reserve meals to be delivered on December 25.
- **Volunteers needed** to help prepare food on Tuesday, December 23 and to deliver meals and set up and serve guests on Christmas Day. Please sign up at the Welcome Center or through the app if you are interested in serving this Christmas.
- **Christmas Cookies are needed** - Please bake a few extra this year and drop off in the church kitchen Christmas week.

Sign-up to help at the Welcome Center, or online using the QR code!



FIRST MINISTRIES



Faithtime Kids (Wednesdays Afterschool)

All children Grades K-5

December 3 *Advent 1*

December 10 *Advent 2*

December 17 No Faithtime

*Faithtime will resume in 2026 on
Wednesday, January 7!

High School Youth Group

Our High School Youth plan to meet each month on the 1st and 3rd Sundays, 5-7 p.m. for dinner, fellowship, and Bible Study. Friends are welcome! This month, we gather on December 7 and December 21.

Confirmation

Everyone in the congregation is welcome to join our class on December 3 for *“Joy of Christmas.”* This annual tradition joins Augustana College students with community members for a beautiful service of worship and music that starts at Augustana Lutheran Church in Andover. The Christmas story will be read in several different languages. The service concludes with a procession to the Jenny Lind Chapel, which is illuminated by 100 candles, and where Holy Communion will be celebrated to the strains of familiar Christmas carols. Refreshments will be served in Luther Hall immediately after the service. If you would like to carpool, meet at First Lutheran Church at 6:45 p.m. The event begins at 7:30 p.m. in Andover. Dress warm for the procession from the church to Jenny Lind Chapel.

After this special event, we continue our study of the Old Testament. Here’s the December schedule: **December 3** – Joy of Christmas (*meet at FLC at 6:45 p.m.*)

December 10 – Babylonian Captivity & Prophets

December 17 – Wisdom Literature & Psalms



Coming in 2026!

Messiah returns to Augustana

February 22, 2026

Directed by Dr. Jon Hurty, the 200-member Augustana Oratorio Society will perform Handel’s masterwork “Messiah” at 3 p.m. Sunday, February 22, 2026, in Centennial Hall. “Messiah,” the beloved baroque masterpiece that has moved audiences for nearly three centuries with its soaring choruses and profound musical storytelling of hope and redemption, has been performed by the Augustana Oratorio Society since 1881. Musicians of the Augustana Oratorio Society include community members, Augustana students, members of the Augustana Choir and the Augustana Choral Artists.

First Lutheran Preschool

Merry Christmas!

We will use many of the symbols of Christmas in our stories and art this month. We'll be identifying and sharing our blessings and learning about Christmas traditions. All preschool children will be busy creating and wrapping gifts for their families this month. We will be busy decorating our classroom tree, making Christmas cards and singing songs of the season. Both classes will present a Christmas program for their families.

- **Christmas Break** – No school from December 22, 2025–January 2, 2026. Preschool will resume on Monday, January 5, 2026.

Noisy Offering

A *Noisy Offering* will be collected the weekend of December 6 & 7 to benefit the Free Community Christmas Dinner. Bring your nickels and dimes!

FIRST MINISTRIES

Worship at Liberty Village

Vicar Madelyn and Inger Oswald will lead worship at Liberty Village on Sunday, December 21 at 1 p.m. Volunteers are needed to help lead singing, and all are welcome to worship with our members and friends!

A Note of Thanks!

A big *thank you* to the garden crew! How amazing the veggies and zinnia's all gave us so much – everyone that received a cup of flowers loved them! Even though I could not be there your help was most appreciated.

—Karen Myhre

Worship Participants Needed for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day!

Communion assistants, ushers and greeters are needed for the 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. Christmas Eve services and the Christmas Day service at 10 a.m. Please sign up at the Welcome Center.

Cover Girls Quilting

Come see what Cover Girls are all about! Join us for a time of fellowship and fun tying quilts for LWR on Wednesdays, December 3, 10 and 17 in Grace Place. All are welcome!

Food Pantry Collection

The Geneseo-Atkinson Food Pantry is collecting *spaghetti sauce, sweet potatoes, stuffing, baking ingredients including flour, sugar, vanilla, chocolate chips, juices, water, toilet paper, paper towels, men's body wash, toothpaste, toothbrush, cleaning supplies, baby wipes, diapers, shampoo, conditioner and deodorant* to share with those in our community. Donations may be left in the basket by the church office.

Another opportunity ... The clothing room is especially in need of: hats, gloves, winter boots, coats all sizes, underwear (all sizes) bath towels and washcloths.

- **Please Note:** The Food Pantry will be closed December 25 & 26 and January 1 & 2, 2026.





FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

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OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Tuesday-Thursday

8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Wednesday

8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Friday

Office Closed

Closed for Lunch ~ Noon–1 p.m.

COUNCIL

Jeff Boyer—*President*
Sam Marshall—*Vice-President*
Julie Kunkel—*Secretary*
Matt Simosky—*Treasurer*

Chris Ahlstrand, Chase Anselmi,
Cindy Groene, Jamian Haser,
Kathy Heller, Lorrie Lord,
Eli Palmer, Linda Sheley

Meeting Schedule:

Cabinet — **Monday, December 8**
Ministries — **Monday, December 8**
Council — **Monday, December 15**

**NEXT CHIMES DEADLINE:
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4**