

JANUARY 2026



FAITH EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH
3355 MACARTHUR ROAD
WHITEHALL, PA 18052
610 435 0451

The Rev. June E. Wann
Pastor

Zach Keenan
President, Church
Council

Michelle Tabatabai
Vice President

Heidi Carr
secretary

Margy Muthard
Treasurer

Jordan Bucks
Organist

Joanne Gantz-Jalowiecki
Financial Secretary

Jennifer Kishbaugh
Director Of Music

Claudette Nia
Office Administrator

DATES TO REMEMBER

January 1 is New Year's Day

January 5 brings Twelfth Night, an English folk custom that marked the end of Christmas merrymaking and, in ancient Celtic tradition, the end of the 12-day winter solstice celebration. On Twelfth Night, it was customary for the assembled company to toast each other from the was-sail bowl.

January 6 is Epiphany. According to the New Testament's Gospels, on this date, the Magi—the three wise men or kings—venerated and brought gifts to the infant Jesus.

January 17 is Benjamin Franklin's birthday. He was not only a world-renowned statesman, inventor, and scientist but was also fascinated by agriculture.

January 19 is Martin Luther King Jr. Day (observed). This holiday is held on the third Monday in January and honors the principles of this civil rights leader and Nobel Prize Winner dedicated to nonviolence.



From the Pastor

Merry Christmas! I have a feeling that most everyone reading this will be doing it sometime after the 25th of December, but of course, it's still Christmas until January 6th, because Christmas—God coming to dwell with us, as one of us—is too big and important of a celebration to confine to one day. I'm glad and grateful for the chance to celebrate the Christmas season with all of you, and I'm looking forward to the work and ministry that we'll do together, during Christmastime and beyond.

Thank you to everyone who was a part of the Christmas Eve services. Our Christmas Eve services were wonderful and joyous, and we couldn't do it without a lot of hard work from a lot of different people: musicians, worship leaders, altar guild members, acolytes, livestream technology operators, ushers, counters, and volunteers of all sorts who I'm sure I'm forgetting. It's a blessing to have so many people working together to celebrate at FELC. Thank you especially to Cathy Haller, Dan Herzog, Ernie Haller, Jeff Holobusky, Jordan Bucks, and Jennifer Kishbaugh for the work that you've all done to make our Christmas worship go smoothly and beautifully!

Even after the Christmas season comes to a close, I'm looking forward to the ministry and work that we'll do together. I'd like to highlight a few of those things. First, we are setting a goal to hold a congregational/community fellowship event at least once a month in the coming year. We hope that this will help provide more opportunities for fellowship! Watch newsletters and constant contact for more information in the months to come!

We're also still working to provide opportunities for youth ministry in the congregation and in the community. While the position of Christian Education Director remains open, we hope to provide more learning opportunities for all ages. My hope is that we will have a Sunday school class for children each week. Also, I would like to see more of a focus on our youth and work on building a youth group that would provide learning and fellowship for the youth of FELC. We have wonderful young people in this congregation who yearn to grow in faith. I also hope to establish bible studies for everyone to enjoy in this coming year. There is always so much to learn and so many different ways to grow!

And finally, the season of Epiphany is traditionally a time when people bless their homes. We'll have prayer cards with a house blessing and chalk (to mark the traditional inscription over the doorframe) available during the season of Epiphany, and if anyone would like to have Pastor June come and bless their home, I'd be honored to. Just give me a call or send me an email, and we can find a time that will work.

There are a lot of exciting and joyous things happening at St. John's, and a lot of opportunities for ministry in our community. I'm excited to be a part of them!

Happy New Year!

With God's blessings,

Pastor June Wann



SUNDAY SCHOOL AND ADULT FORUM AT 9:00 AM

WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:00 AM

Altar Communion-The first Sunday of each month
celebrate Communion around the Altar. Please join us!



UPCOMING EVENTS

January 18 FELLOWSHIP HOUR AFTER SERVICE

FEBRUARY 18 ASH WEDNESDAY

MARCH 1 HUNGER INITIATIVE MEAL HERE AT FAITH

MARCH 7 AND 8 BASKET SOCIAL

WIRED RIBBON REQUESTED

Our Basket Social is coming up in March.

Please drop off wired ribbon in the office M-Th 9am to 3pm.

Now is a great time to fill up baskets with holiday sales. March will be upon us before we know it!

Dear friends of the Food Pantry,

It is becoming more difficult to find the food that we need for our patrons through Second Harvest, our food supplier. We would be grateful for help with the following foods or money to purchase the foods that we need:

Cereal

Juice (non-refrigerated if possible due to limited refrigeration)

Coffee

Pastas (penne, rigatoni, soup noodles, etc.)

Soups

Canned fruits

Canned vegetables

We are extremely grateful for your support to help those experiencing difficult times.

Judy and Shel Ehret

Dear "Faithful" members and friends,

The Pieceworkers of Faith invite you to join our sewing group. We meet most Monday's from 1-3 p.m. in Parker Hall (during the school year) and in the Gathering Place during summer months due to Petit Scholars meeting downstairs.

Our group works on projects for our baptized babies, quilts for shut ins, items to sell at the craft fair as well as small items for hospital distribution.

No quilting knowledge is needed, but sewing skills are helpful.

We enjoy the camaraderie and friendship that we have established and would love for you and your friends/neighbors to join us.

Gearing up for the Basket Social March 7 and 8! We always welcome volunteers!

Please send in recipes, adventures, pictures, testimonies by the last week of the month to be included in the monthly newsletter. Let's make our newsletter personalized to us at Faith!

THANK YOU TO OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS WHO TIRELESSLY GIVE OF THEIR TIME,
ENERGY, AND TALENTS TO ENRICH OUR FAITH FAMILY WITH GOD'S GOODNESS

THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU

MIKE MILLER,

DAN HERZOG,

SHEL EHRET,

RON COLE,

BILL FOCHT,

BRIAN AND JEFF HOLUBUSKY,

WAYNE GRIM,

CATHY AND ERNIE HALLER

ZAC, TINA, OWEN, AND BOB KEENAN,

KYLE, BEN, AND BOB BRANDT,

HEATHER, OMAR, KINGSTON, AND VALENCIA RIVERA

BARB YURASITS,

PAT MASONHEIMER,

LINDA JOHNSTON

PAT WALSCHBURGER,

SHIRYL DECKER,

VICKIE LYNNE AND LINDA SCHADLER,

BARB KOTSCH,

APRIL SPAITS,

CHARLENE FRACK,

GAIL HERZOG,

ROSEMARIE HAFFNER,

ROSE AND WILLIE STROBL,

MICHELLE TABATABAI,

KARLA AND BOB BILLIG,

JUDY EHRET,

GLORIA SENCHAK,

LINDA AND TAMMIE EBERHART

Faith's Church Council members as of 12/28/25 Congregational meeting

2026 CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS

Please remember to respect personal and professional responsibilities of the members. If you call or reach out, they will return a call at their earliest convenience.

Faith Church Office # 610-435-0451 (Monday—Thursday 9:00am —3:00 pm)

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Kyle Brandt, Youth Liaison	
Ben Brandt, Youth Liaison	

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STAFF

Jordan Bucks, Organist

Joanne Gantz-Jalowiecki, Financial Secretary

Jennifer Kishbaugh, Director Of Music

Margy Muthard, Treasurer 610-509-5367

Claudette Nia, Office Administrator 610 435 0451 claudette@faithon145.org

WORSHIP TEAMS FOR JANUARY 2026

JAN 4

JAN 11

JAN 18

JAN 25

ALTAR GUILD	Shel and Judy Ehret	Diane Batza and Linda Johnston	Barb Yurasits and Gloria Senchak	Pat Masonheimer and Charlene Frack
ASSISTING MINISTER	Howard Schaffer	Bob Brandt	Shel Ehret	Karen Blayle
LECTOR				
GREETER	April Spaits	Charlene Frack		April Spaits
FLOWER SPONSOR			Chris Gartner	Charlene Frack
BULLETIN SPONSOR	Heidi Carr	Darlene Asbeth	Christ Gartner	Charlene Frack

NOVEMBER 2025 CALENDAR
JANUARY 2026

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1 NEW YEAR'S DAY OFFICE CLOSED	2	3
4 Sunday School 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Altar Communion 7:00 PM AA	5 <u>1:00 PM Piece</u> <u>makers</u> 6:00 PM Brownies 7:00 PM Pioneer Band (BH)	6 <u>10:00 AM</u> <u>Prayer Group</u> 6:45 PM Boy Scouts 7:00 PM	7 6:00 PM Eagle Scouts	8 6:00 PM Cub Scouts <u>6:15 pm Bell Choir</u> <u>7:30 pm senior choir</u>	9	10
11 Sunday School 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM 7:00 PM AA	12 <u>1:00 PM Piece</u> <u>makers</u> 6:00 PM Brownies 7:00 PM Pioneer Band (BH)	13 <u>10:00 AM</u> <u>Prayer Group</u> 6:45 PM Boy Scouts <u>Ex Council</u>	14 6:00 PM Eagle Scouts	15 6:00 PM Cub Scouts <u>6:15 pm Bell Choir</u> <u>7:30 pm senior choir</u>	16	17
18 Sunday School 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM <u>11 AM Fellowship Hour</u> AA 7:00 PM	19 <u>1:00 PM Piece</u> <u>makers</u> 6:00 PM Brownies 7:00 PM Pioneer Band (BH)	20 <u>10:00 AM</u> <u>Prayer Group</u> 6:45 PM Boy Scouts <u>7:00 pm Church Council</u>	21 6:00 PM Eagle Scouts	22 6:00 PM Cub Scouts <u>6:15 pm Bell Choir</u> <u>7:30 pm senior choir</u>	23	24
25 Sunday School 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM 7:00 PM AA (PH)	26 <u>1:00 PM Piece</u> <u>makers</u> 6:00 PM Brownies 7:00 PM Pioneer Band (BH)	27 <u>10:00 AM</u> <u>Prayer Group</u> 6:45 PM Boy Scouts	28 6:00 PM Eagle Scouts	29 6:00 PM Cub Scouts <u>6:15 pm Bell Choir</u> <u>7:30 pm senior choir</u> <u>29</u>	30	31

REFRAMING NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

Wherever January finds us—it brings the promise of a new year. With eager anticipation or weary relief, we turn the page on our calendars and look ahead to the future yet to be written. Many of us also make New Year's resolutions, setting out our hopes and plans for what might be different from and better than the past. Yet the past stays with us and, if we pay attention, we may find that our history has insights that still matter for our lives.

This year Christians worldwide will observe the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. To mark the anniversary, ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton has encouraged congregations and individuals to study Martin Luther's Small Catechism. Luther intended this short volume, containing his explanations of the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the sacraments, along with daily prayers and Bible verses, to be used by ordinary people in churches and households.

"The catechism is built on the experience of a God who loves us," said Kirsi Stjerna, professor of Lutheran history and theology at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, Calif. She said that experience was, first and foremost, Luther's own: "Luther was so burdened ... he felt like an utter failure. Then he read the word and felt free from the burdens of his conscience. He was able to see himself in a new light as someone who is free, and he wanted to share it."

Luther described the burden of sin as being *incurvatus in se* (curved in on the self). That inward curve can be marked by pride and selfishness, but Luther found that sin is also manifested in the ways we focus on ourselves with anxiety or shame. We know "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), but often we don't stop there: we pile on the ways we have fallen short of our expectations and those of others. Whether we curve in on ourselves in self-righteousness or self-deprecation, the more inward our focus, the more isolated we become.

Even our well-meaning New Year's resolutions can contribute to the inward curve. Commitments to lose weight, save more money or try to make the world a better place are not, in and of themselves, unhealthy choices. But it's worth asking: Why do we make resolutions? Are we the problem we are trying to resolve? Resolutions focused on making ourselves better often arise from the deep fear that we aren't good enough. This fear is reinforced by a commercial culture that profits from our feelings of inadequacy, promising that freedom lies in the right diet, the right look, the right product.

Anyone who has ever made New Year's resolutions knows that these often fail. Even when they succeed, our best efforts can't free us from the trap of *incurvatus in se*. We can't free ourselves—but then again, we don't need to. This is what God does for us through Jesus Christ.

For Luther, this was the gospel and the good news was more than just news. As Timothy Wengert, emeritus professor of Reformation history at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, remarked, "The gospel is not just information, but an experience of God's mercy."

The catechism, then, offers not a new "to-do" list but an experience, a new posture of freedom. In Christ, God gently reaches into our hearts to liberate us from self-focused anxiety and turns us outward so we may recognize how we are called and gifted to serve our neighbors. "What are you free for?" Stjerna asked. "You're never free for your own sake, but for others."

In that spirit of freedom, this article explores how insights from Luther's Small Catechism might "reform" some common resolutions, creating "New Year's reformation" for living Lutheran in 2017.

Lose shame

I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties (Luther's explanation of the Apostles' Creed).

"I wrote the word *acceptance* on my hand yesterday," said Elyssa Salinas. A graduate of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Salinas is now pursuing a doctorate, studying connections between body image and Luther's theology of creation. Like Luther, her theological interests are intertwined with personal experience. "I've had my own body issues this year and it's been very difficult," Salinas admitted.

Weight loss often tops the list of goals for the new year—and the root of this resolution is often not just health but feelings of shame about our bodies. “This voice of pain says, ‘You’re not enough,’ ” she said. “[Losing weight becomes] a constant ladder, these constant stairs you’re never going to get up.”

Losing shame, Salinas finds, begins when we remember that we were made by God. “You weren’t just created; you were created with purpose,” she said. “It is so profound to consider your body as something purposefully made—as art.”

“If I really believe I am God’s beloved creation, then what is the mirror God holds up to me? There’s no shame in that mirror,” she said.

Meet your grace

You should not covet your neighbor’s house. What does this mean? We are to fear and love God, so that we do not try to trick our neighbors out of their inheritance or property or try to get it for ourselves ... but instead be of help and service to them in keeping what is theirs” (Luther’s explanation of the Ten Commandments).

The hashtag “#goals” is often used in social media to comment on someone else’s accomplishments or possessions. Though mainly employed as a compliment, this practice also reflects the human temptation to compare our lives to others. When our “#goal” is someone else’s life, we’re coveting—a practice that can lead to envy, resentment and isolation.

Mary Joy Philip, assistant professor of Lutheran global theology and mission at Waterloo (Ont.) Lutheran Seminary in Canada, finds that focusing on grace rather than goals also builds relationships: “When I talk about goals, it comes from a place of control and power. It implies that I can by my abilities and power make things happen. But when I am not in that place, I have to rely on another [and] be vulnerable and open to grace, and that is precisely what makes for community.”

Find enough

Give us today our daily bread. What does this mean? In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving. What then does daily bread mean? Everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies ...” (Luther’s explanation of the Lord’s Prayer).

Earn more, save more, pay down debt—financial and material concerns dominate New Year’s resolutions. Far from chastising people for desiring worldly things, Luther expanded the definition of daily bread to include not only food and drink, clothing and shelter, and family, but also “good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.”

Many of us, even if we receive this daily bread, keep looking anxiously for more that will make us feel safe, rather than recognizing and celebrating what is enough. In contrast, Luther’s notion of daily bread echoes the freedom of Jesus’ invitation not to worry about what we will eat, drink or wear (Matthew 6:25).

As God frees us from the fear of scarcity, we are opened up to generosity, to sharing daily bread with those who need it. “We pray for ‘our’ daily bread and not ‘my’ daily bread,” Philip said. “The whole prayer is in the plural, if we only paid attention to that.’ ”

Be church

I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy, and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith” (Luther’s explanation of the Apostles’ Creed).

Resolving to make it to church more? It’s not unusual for Christians—and even Lutherans—to assume that attending worship, praying, reading the Bible and other good works will bring us closer to God or make us better Christians. Luther absolutely rejected this notion. Even the faith through which we are saved does not happen by our own “understanding or strength” but by the work of the Spirit, he asserted.

For Luther, it’s clear that faith is “not something we do but something we experience,” Wengert said.

Understanding faith as an experience rather than a product of our efforts can liberate our faith practices. Stjerna argues that Luther's instructions in the catechism rest on his belief in "the absolute presence of God in my living ... in the holiness of each life, each person, each location."

Whether it's in worship, prayer or participation in a church community, Stjerna invites Christians to focus on God's presence inside us. "When you do that, God will speak to you," she said. "It's the mystical reality of God. We need a tool to be illumined and sensitized and really hear God talking to us."

It's often said that we don't go to church; we are the church. Like a good tree planted to bear good fruit, God makes us holy, and "being made holy means living life, then, for others," Wengert said.

Serve the world

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also a true human being, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true (Luther's explanation of the Apostles' Creed).

"Volunteer more" is one of the top resolutions individuals make. And the ELCA's tagline "God's work. Our hands." speaks of a church that takes seriously its identity and mission to be the body of Christ in the world—whether it's through congregations volunteering in local communities, youth groups engaging in summer service projects or national and international church ministries.

Our work as a church testifies to Luther's belief in the vocation of every baptized person. Wengert explained that in the catechism "Luther says, 'You're all in holy orders ... in the church, society, the household, all walks of life.' "

Yet it's crucial to remember that whatever our vocation, none of us is called to save the world. We are not the Savior—Jesus is. This is the heart of the gospel and of Luther's catechism: not what we do, but what God does for us and for the sake of the world. In Christ, God frees us not only from our sin, but even from unrealistic expectations of our calling that would curve us inward in pride or in panic. In God's liberating grace, Westhelle said, "we turn outward, stretching into the world" toward our neighbors—not to save—to serve.

Conclusion: New Year's reformations?

God's liberating grace through Jesus Christ, which Luther experienced and passed on to us through the Small Catechism, can reform us as we face a new year. Grace frees us from indulgent self-focus, reminds us that it is God who makes us feel whole and invites us to turn outward in love to our neighbors.

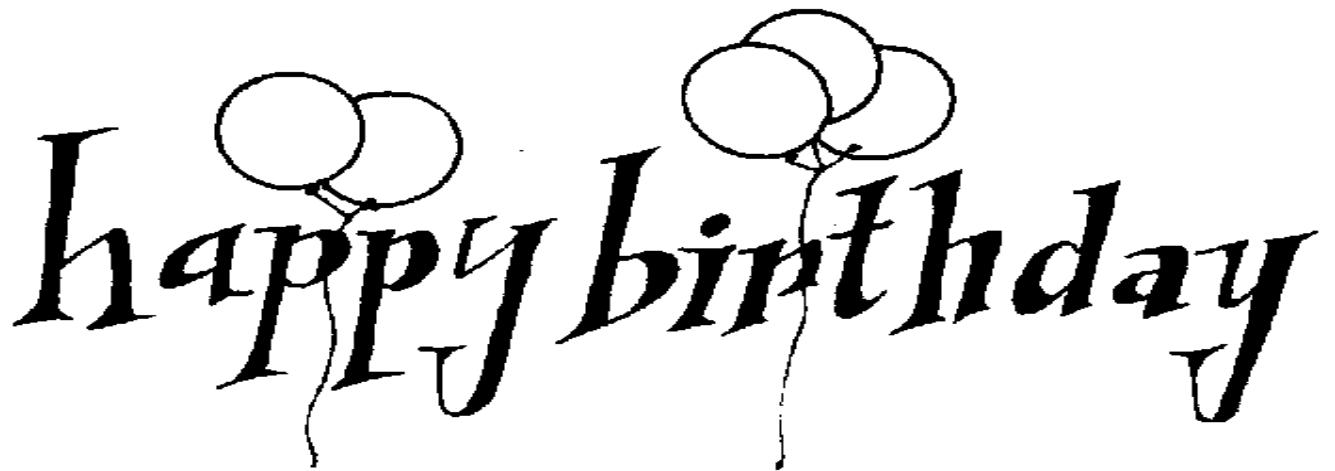
How do we live a Reformation life, in ways that don't just replace one to-do list with another, or turn us back inward to focus on ourselves?

We live in the community of faith

Through the church, God renews, refreshes and liberates us when we need it. Freed in Christ to serve our neighbors, we, as the church, can do more together than we could ever do alone—stand with the suffering, speak out against evil, help those in need and be continually reformed.

In that hope, Philip offers a final reminder that "living as one created in the image of God, with the freedom to image God and to live life to its full potential [is] not a once-a-year or once-in-a-lifetime thing." Rather, this freedom is intimately bound to "our baptismal understanding of daily dying and rising. It needs to happen every day—period," she added.

Just as the church is *semper reformanda* (always reforming) so may we be freed from sin, curved out toward our neighbor and the world, bearing what Luther describes as "a living, daring confidence in God's grace."



Birthdays

BARTHOLOMEW, GRANT 01/02
KING, BEVIN 01/04
KOTSCH, MELISSA 01/04
CARR, RACHAEL 01/05
HALLER JR, ERNEST 01/06
KOTSCH, BARBARA 01/06
SCHROEDER, AMY 01/08
SCHAEFFER, KATHRYN 01/10
WARNER, CAROL 01/12
HOWER, LOIS 01/14
MASONHEIMER, PATRICIA 01/14
BASHORE, AMANDA 01/15
KNECHEL, CHARLES 01/18
GARTNER, CHRISTINE 01/19
EHRET, SHELDON 01/22
TROTTER, ALICIA 01/22
RYAN, KIMBERLY 01/25
BRANDT III, ROBERT 01/27
BLACKER, PAMELA 01/31
KING, BRIAN 01/31