

Vine Street Journal

Johnstown, PA

First Lutheran Church

September 2026

A message from Pastor Christy...

"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." (Genesis 1:31)

It's hard to believe summer is coming to an end and September is already here! This time of year, always feels like a season of new beginnings. School is starting, schedules are changing, and after a beautiful summer filled with all kinds of adventures, we begin settling back into our regular rhythms.

One of those rhythms is returning to our sanctuary for worship. We enjoyed worshipping together downstairs in the fellowship hall this summer, and I'm grateful for that time together. Still, there is something special about returning to our familiar worship space. As we do, may we remember that what makes the church special is not simply the building, but the people gathered around God's Word.

September also gives us a wonderful opportunity to celebrate God's creation beginning Sunday, September 6th with a Creation Worship Service. As summer fades and the signs of autumn begin to appear, take a moment to notice the beauty of the world God has entrusted to us. Creation is one of the many ways God reminds us of his goodness and care.

We will also celebrate God's Work. Our Hands. Sunday on Sunday, September 13th. We remember that God calls us to serve our neighbors in all different kinds of ways. And – we don't serve to earn God's love, but we serve because we have already received his love through Jesus Christ. We will show our love to our community and those around the world as we prepare Backpacks, Blessing Bags, and Personal Care Kits. What a gift it is to be God's hands at work in our community!

As our children head back to school, we will have our Blessing of the Backpacks on Sunday, September 13th. Please join us as we pray for our students, teachers, and everyone who makes our schools places for learning and growth. We pray that God's presence will go with them throughout the school year. And – adults are invited to bring forward any item(s) that they use during their workday for a blessing!!

And, of course, September means the return of some of our favorite fellowship/learning opportunities!

Sunday School resumes on Sunday, September 13th – if you know any Sunday School aged children – please see Jessica Boring or Susie Kinsey!!

We will also continue our *"The Chosen"* Bible study. I hope you'll make time to join us – or if you were with us for Season 1 – return for Season 2 – as we learn, ask questions, and enjoy fellowship with one another.

As we say goodbye to summer and welcome fall, may September remind us that God is with us in every season. Whether we are returning to school, returning to the sanctuary, returning to Bible study, or simply returning to our regular routines, God's grace goes with us.

I'm looking forward to all that God has in store for us this fall.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Christy



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FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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PASTOR

Christy Harford

MINISTER OF MUSIC

Kim Rauch

OFFICE MANAGER

Jessica Boring

CLEANERS

Paul Eisenhuth

HOUSEKEEPER

Debbie Jones

CHURCH COUNCIL

Barry Critchfield (Treasurer), *James Hargreaves*, *Karen Hargreaves*, *Josh Rinaman*, *Janice Hill*, *Vicki Price*, *Dick Schrott* (Vice President), *Fawn Slonka* (President), *Shirley Waclo* (Secretary).

OFFICE HOURS – Mon – Fri 9 am – 2 pm.

~ PASTORAL ACTS ~

Funerals:

Nancy Gay 8/7/26

Jeanne Burr 8/15/26

~ CONTRIBUTIONS ~

CHURCH PRESERVATION FUND

Barry Critchfield

Jane Hanechak

Richard and Patricia Schrott

Caryl Swanson

Donna Caprous

Greer Koeller

Harriett Miller

Ann Furlong

Lance and Debbie Shomo

Christopher and Jennifer Bennear

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Vacation Bible School

Shirley Hilbrecht, Wendy Hilbrecht,

Peggy Lichtenfels, Carol Allison,

Heidi Piurkowsky, Polly Grubb,

Cindy Fabo, Donna Kovalchek,

Fawn Slonka, Loretta Knapp,

Tyna Kaltenbaugh, Jody Kirk

Kim Rauch, Susie Kinsey,

Bishop Kevin Shock,

Pastor Christy Harford, Jessica Boring,

Caryl Swanson, Greer Koeller,

Mary Blackford, Abbigail Saverig,

Callie Bennear, Lilian Boring

Bereavement Meals

*William and Rebecca Gregory – In
Memory of Nancy Jane Gay*



Next Journal Deadline

October 20, 2026

Share your news with us!

Income and Expense Summary as of July 31, 2026



	Current YTD Actual Jan. 1 thru July 31, 2026	Current YTD Budget Jan. 1 thru July 31, 2026	Difference over+/under- Budget
Regular Offering Income	\$87,052.90	\$81,985.05	\$5,067.85
Trust Fund Income	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other Income	\$2,291.34	\$1,662.46	\$628.88
TOTAL INCOME	\$89,344.24	\$83,648.31	\$5,695.93
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$114,499.34	\$106,146.99	\$8,352.35

The Church Council met on August 26, 2026. Of note: Dick Schrott stepped back from the chair of the property committee. Rick Blackford is the new chair of the property committee. The Outreach committee met and will have a calendar full of activities. Offerings for the month of July 2026 were \$9,519.00, which is 105.77% for the year to date. The new back door was installed and is working properly. However, there are some sagging issues with the handle, and we have contacted Spory's Locksmith. Spory's has suggested they can replace the lock with a storeroom functional trim that will allow it to remain locked as the key will only retract the lock's latch to open the door. The lever trims are \$110.00, and they can put the cylinder in the current lever into the new one. If we want to replace this lever, we can contact Spory's. Debbie Jones has been hired for the cleaning position and will work Wednesdays 9:30-1:30.

Submitted by Fawn Slonka, President Church Council.

Council elected officers for the 2026-2027 council year. They are:

President: Fawn Slonka
Vice President: Dick Schrott
Treasurer: Barry Critchfield
Secretary: Shirley Waclo

The next regular council meeting will be September 16, 2026, at 7:00 pm.



Upcoming worship opportunities:

September 3 – The Chosen Series at First

September 6 – Creation Worship

September 8 – Bible Study and Bell Choir resumes.

September 13 – God's Work, Our Hands, Blessing of the Backpacks

September 17 – The Chosen Series at Benscreek

September 18 – Friday Helping Hands 9:00-11:00a.m.

September 20 – Coffee Hour resumes.

September Readings and Psalms

September 6th – 15th Sunday after Pentecost

- **Ezekiel 33:7-11**
The prophet's responsibility to warn the people
- **Psalms 119:33-40**
I desire the path of your commandments.
- **Romans 13:8-14**
Live honorably as in the day
- **Matthew 18:15-20**
Reconciliation in the community of faith

September 13th – 16th Sunday after Pentecost

- **Genesis 50:15-21**
Joseph reconciles with his brothers
- **Psalms 103:[1-7] 8-13**
LORD, you are full of compassion and mercy.
- **Romans 14:1-12**
Accepting diversity in the community of faith
- **Matthew 18:21-35**
A parable of forgiveness in the community of faith

September 20th – 17th Sunday after Pentecost

- **Jonah 3:10—4:11**
God's concern for the city of Nineveh
- **Psalms 145:1-8**
The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- **Philippians 1:21-30**
Standing firm in the gospel
- **Matthew 20:1-16**
The parable of the vineyard workers

September 27th – 18th Sunday after Pentecost

- **Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32**
The fairness of God's way
- **Psalms 25:1-9**
Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love.
- **Philippians 2:1-13**
Christ humbled to the point of death on a cross
- **Matthew 21:23-32**
A parable of doing God's will

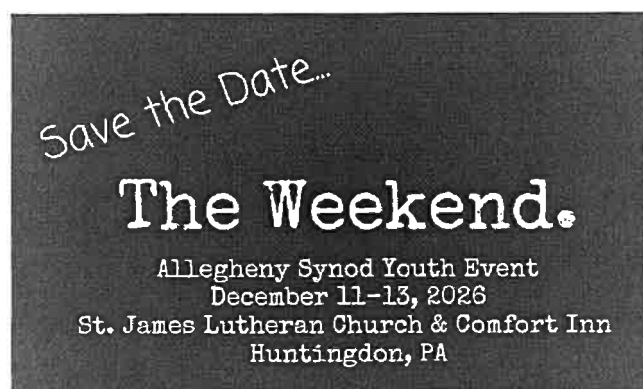
Upcoming events:

St. Francis Feast Day

For the Feast of St. Francis, we are excited to return to a blessing of the animals' service in our lovely Serenity Garden. We will gather with our pets at 12:30 on Saturday October 3. In recognition of the event, we will hold a collection of pet items to be donated to St Mark's Pet Food Pantry and to Cinnamon's Closet, an animal rescue mission in Cambria City. Most needed are food and treats but also pet toys and collars and leashes and other accessories are welcome.

So, bring your pups, cats, white mice and iguanas or whatever pet you love, and they can receive a blessing on October 3.

THE WEEKEND YOUTH EVENT



Look for more information to follow...if you are interested – please see Pastor Christy!!



Sunday September 13, 2026

Everyone is welcome to this year's **God Work, Our Hands Sunday**. We will gather after worship in the Social Hall for a light lunch, fellowship, and service opportunities. This year we will be filling 120 backpacks for Lutheran World Relief school kits, school kits for our Little Library boxes, blessing bags, and LWR hygiene kits. Why school supplies? To the children who receive School Kits, these supplies mean the difference between getting an education or not. Public school is usually free, but in the places where LWR works, even a few required supplies, like pens and paper, may be more than many families can afford.

Since 2013, thousands of ELCA congregations have participated in this dedicated day of service, gathering to serve communities in ways that share the love of God with all of God's people. The event has quickly become an anticipated way to be "church together" and "church for the sake of the world."

"God's work. Our hands." Sunday is an opportunity to celebrate who we are as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) – one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor. We are a church that boldly does God's work of restoring and reconciling our communities. This is work you do every day — showing love to your neighbors and helping make your community a better place. Let's do this work together!



The generosity of First Lutherans reaches beyond our church walls, into the community, the church at large and globally. We receive notes of thanks and acknowledgement for many of the gifts given. Acknowledgements received are noted each month in the VSJ and posted on a bulletin board located in the Lounge.

THANK YOU –

- Thank you to Caryl Swanson, Polly Grubb, and Becky Gay-Gregory for their help with the Friday Helping Hands on August 28th. Together, we were able to polish all the silver and brass used for services and clean the Altar area.
- Thank you also to Vicki Price for taking on the task of cleaning and polishing the candelabras.

Next month, we will be dusting and vacuuming the balcony area on September 18th.

Best regards,
Fawn



- Our sincere gratitude to everyone whose time and donations went to helping make Vacation Bible School a great success. Our hope is that every child, parent, and volunteer left with a deeper knowledge of the Word, an eager desire to follow Jesus, and the mission to confidently share their faith with the world. – Susie & Jessica
- Thank you to all who helped make this year's Vacation Bible School a success!! I was blessed to be part of such a fun week!! Thank you to Susie and Jessica for all you did to make this possible!! – Pastor Christy



Every 11:00AM
Sunday worship
service is now live
on Facebook! If
you can't attend in

person, please join us on Facebook! If
you're not a Facebook member, subscribe.
Then, go to First Lutheran's Facebook page.
Click on the LIVE post with the current date.
Captions for the voices are also available on
Facebook live. To see the captions, click on
the little gear that appears when you click
the video window. On the screen that
appears, click on closed captions to turn
them on.

We will continue to post videos of weekly
recorded 11:00AM Sunday worship on
YouTube.com, First Lutheran Johnstown
channel. We plan to have live worship also
on YouTube in the future.

Many thanks to our video ministry team, *Bill
Grubb, Bill Hargreaves, Bill Price, Bill Weible
and Rob Abele* for shooting the video for
YouTube & Facebook each week. Thanks
also to *Bill Grubb* and *Barry Critchfield* for
helping to run the internet cables that made
these live broadcasts possible.

FLOWERS for 2027

Altar and Organ flower listings will roll over to
2027. Please check your listings for accuracy.
Charts are now on the table in the lounge along
with the bulletins and ads. Check the charts and
OK the listing if it is correct. Please leave us a
note on the form provided for any changes. Also,
let us know if you would like to take your
flowers home or if you would like them to go to
homebound members.

Thanks,
Vicki Price

Opportunities to Serve

Sponsorships

**Bulletins Sponsorship & Tribune Democrat
Sponsorship** is available.

COFFEE HOUR

Resumes **Sunday, September 20th** for anyone
interested in hosting. Sign-ups are in the Lounge

Kids Klost Korner

Look in the Bulletin and future Vine Street
Journals for information regarding an ongoing
project called "Kids Klost Korner." It is to be a
collection of school appropriate clothing for
students in grades K through 12. As you clean
out closets this fall keep in mind that we will be
accepting donations for new or gently used kid's
clothes. The immediate need is for boys'
underwear and pants sizes 3t – 8 and girls'
underwear and pants size 3t – 6.

Now Is the Time...

The adult choir will return
Sunday, September 13th. If interested contact
Howard, Choir Director
Phone: (814) 421-5429
[Email: taketimeandhurry13@gmail.com](mailto:taketimeandhurry13@gmail.com)



Worship and Music Notes: September
Vicki Price

LOOKING AHEAD:

God's Work Our Hands Sunday is September 13th. Sunday Church Services will again be in the Sanctuary.

Of the Land and Seasons is September 19th and 20th.

Reformation Sunday is October 24th and 25th.

All Saints Day Sunday is October 31st, November 1st. We will start asking for names that you want remembered on October 10th. Look for the Announcements!

Worship and Music Committee Meeting: October 22, 2026

THANK YOU

August Altar Guild: Caryl Swanson, Greer Koeller, Vicki Price, Fawn Slonka, Donna Kovalchek, and Annie Hayes.

To the **August pianists:** Kim Rauch, Luis Gonzales, Heidi Staib, Joel Hoshaw, Vicki Price, and Linda Prozialeck. Joel Hoshaw for Accompanying on Sundays.

To the **Tower Bell Ringers:** Pastor Christy, George Fattman, Anne Fattman, Vicki Price, and Kim Rauch.

To **August Lectors, Worship Assistants, Communion Assistants and Cantors:** Vicki Price, Dick Schrott, Rob Abele, Howard Bennett, Rick Blackford, Calvin Anderson, Josh Rinaman, Fawn Slonka and Jessica Boring.

New Schedules are out! If you do not know your assignments or have not received a copy, please contact Vicki Price. Copies are in the Lounge.

Volunteer Page - Month of September
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SATURDAY ALTAR GUILD

5 Fawn Slonka, Donna Kovalchek
 12 Fawn Slonka, Donna Kovalchek
 19 Annie Hayes
 26 Annie Hayes

COUNCIL GREETERS – Richard Schrott

FLOWER DELIVERY– Josh Rinaman

ACOLYTES

6 Ushers
 13 Ushers
 20 Ushers
 27 Ushers

COMMUNION ASSISTANT

6 Josh Rinaman
 13 Howard Bennett, Eli Kirk
 20 Jody Kirk, Shirley Waclo
 27 Barry Critchfield, Vicki Price

WORSHIP ASSISTANT

5* Fawn Slonka
 6 Josh Rinaman
 12* Jessica Boring
 13 Howard Bennett
 19* Vicki Price
 20 Jody Kirk
 26* Rick Blackford
 27 Vicki Price
 *Saturdays

LECTORS

5* Joel Hoshaw
 6 Josh Rinaman
 12* George Fattman
 13 Eli Kirk
 19* Vicki Price
 20 Jody Kirk
 26* Rick Blackford
 27 Ann Furlong
 *Saturdays

SATURDAY PIANISTS

5 Joel Hoshaw
 12 George Fattman
 19 Linda Prozialeck
 26 Vicki Price

VIDEO

6 Bill Grubb
 13 Rob Abele
 20 Bill Price
 27 Bill Hargreaves

SOUND

13 Harry Bennett
 20 Rick Blackford
 27 Calvin Anderson

TOWER BELLS

Vicki Price	Sunday 6, 13, 20, 27
Christy Harford	Monday 7, 14, 21, 28
George Fattman	Tuesday 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
Anne Fattman	Wednesday 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
Vicki Price	Thursday 3, 10, 17, 24
Kim Rauch	Friday 4, 11, 18, 25
George Fattman	Saturday 5, 12, 19, 26

September 2026

First Evangelical Lutheran Church – Johnstown, Pennsylvania
814-536-7521 email: firstlutheran@wpia.net
Office Hours: Mon. thru Fri. 9 am – 2:00 pm

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
		1 4:30 – Sunday School Meeting	2	3 6:00 – The Chosen at First	4	5 Pentecost 15 5:00 – Word and Sacrament
6 The Creation Service 11:00 – Word and Sacrament	7 OFFICE CLOSED	8 11:00 – Staff meeting 6:30 – Bell Choir Pastor Christy Office	9 <i>Pastor Christy Vacation</i> Hours at First	10 Hours at First	11 Hours at First	12 Pentecost 16 5:00 – Word and Sacrament
13 16th Sunday after Pentecost 10:45 – Sunday School 11:00 – Word and Sacrament God's Work, Our Hands Backpack Blessing	14 11:45 – Communion 12 – Prayer Meeting <i>Pastor Christy Bishop's Convocation</i> Pastor Christy Office	15 6:30 – Bell Choir Hours at Benscreek	16 7:00 – Council Meeting Hours at Benscreek	17 6:00 – The Chosen at Benscreek Hours at Benscreek	18 9:00 – Friday Helping Hands Hours at Benscreek	19 Pentecost 17 5:00 – Word and Sacrament OLAS
20 17th Sunday after Pentecost 10:45 – Sunday School 11:00 – Word and Sacrament OLAS The Feast of St. Francis Begin donations for Pet supplies	21 11:00 – Staff Meeting 11:45 – Communion 12 – Prayer Meeting Pastor Christy Office	22 6:30 – Bell Choir Deadline for VSJ Hours at First	23 Hours at First	24 Hours at First	25 Hours at First	26 Pentecost 18 5:00 – Word and Sacrament
27 18th Sunday after Pentecost 10:45 – Sunday School 11:00 – Word and Sacrament	28 11:45 – Communion 12 – Prayer Meeting 6:30 – Joint Worship & Music Meeting BLC Pastor Christy Office	29 6:30 – Bell Choir Hours at Benscreek	30 Hours at Benscreek	“Trust in the Lord forever; for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.” Isaiah 26:4		