



THE MESSENGER

JULY 2026



First Lutheran Church

Office Hours:
Monday—Thursday
7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Fridays
Closed

107 2nd Street Southeast

Aitkin, MN 56431

Office: 218-927-2028

E-mail: office@flc-aitkin.com

<http://www.flc-aitkin.com>



facebook.com/flcaitkin



"Therefore, encourage one other and build up each other..."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Happy Independence Day! The first week of July has always been special for me. Not only July 4th has special significance this week. I was born on July 3rd, and my son was born on July 7th. So that first week of July was a week of celebration in our family. I hope your first week of July will be as joyful.

I'm starting some of the work that leads, in time, to a new pastor. So I'm asking some questions. I've been here for about 2 months. What do you like about how I'm doing my job? Are there things you don't like? What sort of pastor would you like and would fit well here at First Lutheran? It is harder to get a "good fit" between pastor and church compared to 50 years ago.

Churches are very different these days, even in the same denomination. I have served in a lot of churches, and they all have different ways of doing things. For example, in this church, communion at a funeral is often served. Before this congregation, I've had communion at just one funeral in my entire career.

One big difference between churches is how churches follow up and support members. Some don't. The best churches do.

The best churches:

- Are systematic with how they support sick and homebound folks
- Notice when people are missing from worship and call them. Not in an angry way, a supportive way: we missed you.
- Have at least 4 entry points into a church (small groups, worship, community events in church, community advertising, etc.). Make sure that new folks are intentionally connected with other members they have something in common with.
- Have accessible pastors and staff (not always in the building, but often)

The ELCA has a tradition of giving members much freedom. There are many different theological and social beliefs that are acceptable in the ELCA and here, in this church. You can come and go as you wish. You can worship at home if you wish. You can contribute and volunteer as you wish.

But currently we have little way of tracking when a person or family attends worship or other events. It is sometimes hard to know if a person went to a hospital. It has been hard to track when and if members leave First Lutheran for good (a few send a letter, most don't).

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Why does that matter? You can't support somebody if you don't know where they are, who they are or how to reach them. Members submit phone numbers and email addresses. Many non-members don't. Lapsing members may not update their cell number or email. Hospitalized members (or in those in rehab) may not have their cell with them, or access to the Internet.

And the need for a church to stay in touch with members is real. In churches I serve, I reach out to absent members as I find out about them. I can't tell you the number of folks who have said to me over the years, "I didn't show up for a few weeks and nobody contacted me." I hear "I was in crisis and the church didn't care." Now I understand members also have a responsibility to ask for help. But people in crisis often are too stressed to reach out. And we lose some members if we don't stay in touch. The church is a family. How would you reach out to an absent family member? Ideally, we must reach out consistently, whether informally or through a formal process.

I have had churches use different ways of tracking members' involvement: attendance sheets, a small group of people attending nearly every week who know when someone is missing, and in very small churches I've done that myself (but you are too big for that). There may be other ways via giving etc. How best can we support members? Losing track of members has implications for the call process. Sometimes churches lose members and they don't know why. If a church doesn't know why it's hard to fix an issue.

Churches who support members in crisis have members who are loyal and have the same spirit Paul encourages the Thessalonians to have. You have that same spirit in this church. How best can we stay in touch with one another?

Blessings and Thank You, Keep the Faith!

**Blessings,
Pastor Glen**



**CHURCH OFFICE IS
CLOSED ON FRIDAYS
IN SUMMER**

FROM MAY 22 - SEPTEMBER 4



Neurodivergence — A Unique Human Quality

What is neurodivergence? This term was coined 30+ years ago to describe people who are not neurotypical. This is a non-medical term to describe people whose

brains work differently than the norm or standard. Examples of people with neurodivergence include those with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and dyslexia (trouble processing written language). These people have a different brain and fall on a spectrum or range. They have a different way of interacting with the world and processing information. Up to 20% of the world population shows signs of neurodivergence. Genetics and environment could be causal factors. Unemployment rates are up to 40% for neurodivergent people.

Some signs of neurodivergence are difficulty with social interactions, clumsiness, anxious, restless, sensitivity to light, sound, touch, and smell; and need for repetitive routines. Strengths of neurodivergent people include creativity, accuracy, unique problem solving, high level of concentration, and reliability. They may have a unique ability for complex math, patterns, and memorizing.

A core principle of diversity and inclusion is that there is more to a person than how they appear to others. Neurodivergent people often do not meet societal norm expectations and are misunderstood. Facial expressions can be read incorrectly from both sides.

We, as people of God, need to accept all people where they are at. Try to understand where people are coming from. Be patient and kind. Create an accommodating environment. Remember, there is not "one" normal way to communicate.

God made all humans in His image. We are all unique children of God.

Information taken from Matt Vorell, professor at St Cloud State U, "A Different Way to Learn" by Naomi Fisher, John Hopkins U, and North West Medicine.

Submitted by Rebecca May, RN

Pastor Glen is available to speak with you!

He would like to meet with folks over the phone or in-person, and is happy to come over or meet at the office.

If you are interested in setting up a meeting, please call him at
507-269-9079.



With Gratitude
**TO OUR PALISADE &
AITKIN NEIGHBORS**

COMMUNITY MEAL HAS ENDED

Our final meal service at our Palisade and Aitkin Community Meal Locations was on June 4th, 2026.

Thank you for allowing us to be part of the community. Sharing meals, conversation, and connection with you has been a true honor.

We are grateful for every guest, volunteer, and neighbor who helped positively shape this space.

**Use the QR code to explore
free food resources
available in the county**

www.loavesandfishesmn.org/find-a-community-meal/



JULY 80 PLUS BIRTHDAYS

Judy Matthias - 7/06

Richard Johnson - 7/07

Lois Schultz - 7/07

Walter Sauerbrei - 7/13

Carol Harmon - 7/24

Linda Hommes - 7/31



JULY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

**All Sunday's in July worship
at 9:00am & 10:40am**

**Coffee fellowship immediately
following 9:00am service**

Thank you to Jenni Cline for her dedication, leadership and heart in guiding our youth through their confirmation journey. Jenni's impact has shaped youth and strengthened faith--what a blessing to our FLC community.



*Thank
you*

Jenni is pictured with her husband Mic Petrenko and daughter Natalja Petrenko.



Finance Committee

Financial Summary through May 2026

	2025	2026
General Operating Income - YTD	141,707	135,412
May Budget Expectations-YTD (Historical Average)	167,597	171,017
Variance to Budget Expectations - YTD	(25,890)	(35,605)
Actual Expenditures - YTD	156,845	173,002
Percentage of dollars received for period to dollars pledged	86%	88%
Unpledged Dollars Rec'd – YTD (Regular Offering)	42,175	48,172
Building Fund Income - YTD	13,240	12,018
Building Fund Expenditure - YTD	19,635	14,635
Campership Balance	9,747	9,770

In comparing General Fund income with **actual** expenses, you will see a shortfall of \$37,590. This compares to last month when the shortfall was \$25,661.

In using the straight-line method of calculating the budget, general fund was about \$48,146 under budget.

Using the historical average method of calculating budget as shown above, you will see that the variance was a negative \$35,605.

Regular offering was \$27,668 under budget expectations through May, and less than 2025 by \$6,062.

General Fund offering for May was \$24,026. Historically, May results in 7.95% of general fund giving. This amount would be \$35,023.

**Extra Mile
Mission
Focus for
July**

**VOYAGEURS
LUTHERAN
MINISTRY**

**If you'd like to donate,
please go to our website
www.flc-aitkin.com or
send a check to the church**



ATTENDANCE

<i>Week of</i>	<i>5/31</i>	<i>6/07</i>	<i>6/14</i>	<i>6/21</i>
Sunday 9:00 am (In-person)	88	85	89	68
Sunday 10:40 am (In-person)	10	15	10	20
YouTube	47	39	131	29

All YouTube attendance is based on YouTube views as of June 26.
A view may be more than one person per view. Wednesday night is all in person attendance.



AITKIN YOUTH CENTER

Any teen in grades 6-12

Open Thursday & Friday 3:30-7:30 pm

FREE! NO CHARGE!

Located at First Lutheran Church (door E2 SE)
Youth Center is renting a space, not a church or religious activity

No need to pre-register

No need to bring parent (will send letter home)

Full Meal

Snacks & Beverages

Full Gym, Ping Pong, Foosball and Lots of room to chill



Community Game Nights in Aitkin!

Are you looking for an opportunity to spend some time playing games? Open game nights will be offered on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month from 6:30 pm – 9 pm at Sampaguita. Attend them all or just stop by occasionally. Everybody is welcome, but we must ask that minors under 16 are accompanied by a responsible adult.

Some games will always be available, but if you have a particular game you like, bring that with you. Parents bringing kids will want to bring an appropriate game for younger people as well. You are free to bring your own snacks and drinks.

Direct any questions to tomjonesmnafs@gmail.com.



New Member Class

July 12 – 11:45am in the Library

Pastor Glen Bickford will be leading a class for anyone interested in becoming members. If you are interested or know someone interested, please invite them to attend.



PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

NEXT MEETING:

July 16th

1 pm



Ministry opportunities at First Lutheran:

If you would like to participate in worship services, call any of the following people and volunteer.

Training provided.

Lector: Reading scriptures & the prayers of the Church):

Contact the office (218-927-2028)

Communion assistant: Contact the office (218-927-2028)

Usher: Contact the office (218-927-2028)

Children's sermon: Contact the office (218-927-2028)

Sound Technician: Contact the office (218-927-2028)

Power Point Technician: Contact the office (218-927-2028)

Video Technician: Dave Sadlowsky (952-221-3861)

Worship Committee: Rebecca May (927-3481)

Contemporary worship song leaders/musicians: Pat Perrine (218-428-1884)

Hymn selections: Linda Delaney (927-6237)

Altar Guild: Mary Peterson (927-6820)

WELCA: Mary Peterson (927-6820)

Dinner at your Door: Carla Hakes (320-333-1876)

Choir: Aaron Perrine ((651)428-9005)

Please call me back I'm one of those people who regularly calls for lectors, communion assistants, kitchen help, worship assistants, Sunday coffee hour help, etc. If you're not home, I leave a message on your answering machine. It would be most helpful if you would return my phone call with a yes or no—then I'll know you received my message and it will save me more phone calls. Thank you for making my volunteer job much easier!

New Option: We have a new scheduling program – Ministry Scheduling Pro. Very easy to use and to volunteer for many positions. Contact the office to get signed up.

Support Groups

1. **Rides for Health** (Aitkin Co CARE) 927-4077
2. **Memory Loss/Caregivers** (Aitkin Co CARE)- 1st Wed 1230 pm 927-1383
3. **Doughnuts with Dawn** (previously memory lane cafe) – Maryhill Manor every Wed 1000-1200 pm
4. **HOPE** (healing, opportunity, provided equally) (previously AADA)- domestic violence- Wed 800-900 am for women, Thurs 400-500 pm for teens
5. **Sexual Violence Resource Center/Support Within Reach-** 927-6226- Mon and Wed 800 am-500 pm
6. **Aitkin Co Child Abuse Prevention Council** 927-6226
7. **Diabetes Resources-** Riverwood Health Care Center 927-5152
8. **Suicide Prevention-** Aitkin Co Public Health – 927-7272
9. **Crisis Line** 1-800-462-5525

STAFF

Pastor Glen Bickford

(Interim Pastor)

glen@flc-aitkin.com

Jill Jameson

(Office Manager)

office@flc-aitkin.com

Nicole Cook

(Ministry & Media Coordinator)

mmc@flc-aitkin.com

Barb Bendson

(Accountant)

barb@flc-aitkin.com

Justine Nordick

(Sunday School Coordinator)

justinenordick@gmail.com

Mike Purdy (Custodian)

Rebecca May (Organist)

Sarah Grovogel

(Nursery Facilitator)

Aaron Perrine (Choir Director)

Mission Statement

With God's love we embrace one another,
our neighbors, and all creation.

Vision Statement

Doing God's Work with Our Hands by
Providing:

Spiritual Growth for All

Opportunities for Living Out Our Christian
Faith

Support of our Mission and Ministries

Church Values

TRUST and LOVE in Jesus Christ

COMMIT to living God's Word

PRACTICE hospitality with welcoming and
kindness

RESPECT and CARE for all people

SERVE our community

Live Stream/Recording of every 9:00 a.m. Sunday Service

Can't make it to church? Watch it live.

Missed last week? Catch up by watching the recording.

Want to see it again? Or pass it on....

Go to YouTube – enter First Lutheran Church in Aitkin

Scroll thru and search for the date you are looking for.

Click on play. It's that simple.

How do I turn on subtitles/closed captioning on YouTube?

Steps

1. Open a YouTube video.
2. Click the gear icon in the bottom-right corner of the video player to display the video player settings.
3. Expand the combo box next to Subtitles/CC.
4. Click the desired subtitle language to begin displaying subtitles.

You will have to do this each time with any video.

9:00 a.m. worship Service is
livestreamed on YouTube at First
Lutheran Church of Aitkin and broadcast
at 10:00 a.m. on KKIN 94.3 FM Aitkin

NEWSLETTER
ARTICLES
DUE ON THE 15TH OF
EVERY MONTH

*PLEASE NOTE: The church is charged 75 cents for undeliverable mailings. If you do not want to
continue receiving this mailing, please request that your name be removed from our list by returning
the attached label to First Lutheran Church, 107 2nd St., SE, Aitkin MN 56431, or by emailing the
church at office@flc-aitkin.com September 2025*



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
107 2ND ST SE
AITKIN MN 56431