THE Branch
THE NEWSLETTER OF FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
October 2026





SUNDAY,
OCTOBER 25

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FROM THE DESK OF PASTOR ADAM:

Dear Church,

A few weeks ago during a Mass on Holy Cross Day (Sept. 14), the Rev. Brent Bowman, a Roman Catholic priest at a school in Minnesota, had a profoundly affecting spiritual moment in which he appeared unable to lift the chalice containing the Blood of Christ and he was moved to tears. Immediately, social media feeds were filled with the video of what had happened and rumors swirled that a Eucharistic miracle had taken place—that perhaps even the elements of bread and wine had taken on the qualities of Blood and Body.

The priest himself said what he had experienced was a heavy realization of what he was doing—handling the Body and Blood of Our Lord. He called it an intense "private spiritual experience." Fr. Bowman went on: "I believe I was given grace to understand more deeply the bittersweetness of Our Lord's Passion and how much blood Christ shed for the immense weight of all our sins. I believe I experienced this weight in the chalice. This spiritual experience emotionally and physically overwhelmed me as evident in the Mass recording."

Aside from some Eucharistic theological quibbles, I do not doubt for a moment what Fr. Bowman experienced. I experience it every Sunday at the Eucharist here at North Branch. But whereas Fr. Bowman's experience seems entirely personal and a revelation of God just to him, what I experience every Sunday is the deep and abiding realization that in communion, in receiving the true Body and Blood of Christ together, we in this place are ever and always becoming that which we eat—that very Body and that very Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That's the very meaning of communion, the very meaning of Eucharist: from the Greek eu meaning "good" and charis meaning "grace."

It moves me profoundly every Sunday, you all coming through the line, hands outstretched, eating and drinking your forgiveness and eternal life. My eyes are always at least a little rimmed with tears. It is a very intense public spiritual experience that I pray you also feel, profoundly and really and truly. You are all given this grace, and I know you, too, have felt it. I close my eyes often throughout each day and see each of your faces, each of your pairs of hands before me, and it fills me, too, with the reality of what is happening at the sacrament: we are all becoming one with Jesus and with one another. What a grace that is, and not one that can be limited to any one person, especially the one who happens to be delivering what Jesus has already said is his alone to give: his very Body and Blood. It's a reminder that our faith and the grace given to us all by God may be personal, it is never a private matter, but something that very publicly marks us all as the redeemed and resurrected Body of Christ!

So when next you find yourself before the altar, if you do not already, think of what a profound thing is happening! Jesus is forgiving you, giving you eternal life, making you one with him, one with one another. And it's happening to you and the person in front of you and behind you and all the assembly, all publicly gathered. Shalom!

Adam

Council Corner

Highlights/ September 2026 Meeting

Old business:

- New OSJ members will be elected next month. Nolan and Kyle are no longer on council.
- Lutheran Memorial church interested in the pastoral intern but discussions forthcoming.

New business:

- Long-term building fund discussed
- 150th Church celebration committee still needed
- ELCA surplus, $1000 grant opportunity

Board Reports:

Pastor's Report:

- Pastor Adam made 18 pastoral visits, led 4 worship services including services at Linden View & Good Samaritan, a funeral and a baptism.
- Nebraska Synod wrote a story on the fair food stand.
- New member classes starting, catechism parent meeting held Sept.2, catechism co-op with Luther Memorial.
- Lutherland deadline approaching
- Fall Leadership gathering, October 19-21.
- Confirmation-October 25

Youth Representative:

- No report

Board of Christian Education

- Rally Sunday, September 13, brunch served between services

Board of Property

- No report

Youth and Family

- Fall Festival, October 18

Witness and Fellowship

- Refreshments to be served between services.
- Food stand to provide a taco night September 16 (has since been rescheduled)

Worship and Music

- Harvest Blessing in October, date to come
- Sign-up genius sent to altar servers, will send to all youth.
- Ideas for volunteers to sign-up for worship assistants.

Board of Stewardship

- No report

Board of Deacons

· No report

Giving Opportunities

2nd Mile Giving		
Project	Estimated	To Date
Global	On Going	$22,130
Peru	On Going	$19,915
2nd Mile	$20,000	$10,991

Treasurer's Report

Current Fund (Pastor and Administration, Office, Building, Education, Worship)

Received through August 31: $157,524.41
Expenses through August 31: $156,440.58
Budgeted through August 31: $168,856.75

Our giving this year has covered our expenses through August by $1,083.83. Thank you for your thoughtful giving.

Giving Online: If you would like the convenience of giving online you can do so by using the website: https://onrealm.org/firstlutheranavoca/Give or Text NORTHBRANCH to 73256.



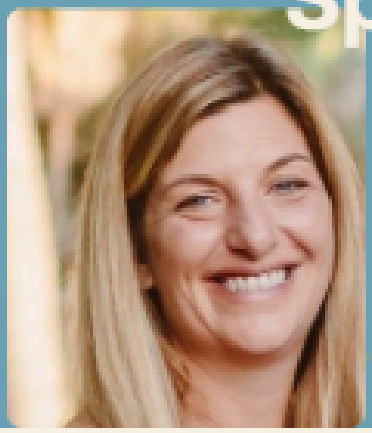
The Little Red Wagon

October: Syracuse Food Pantry-canned green beans and kidney beans, quick oats, toilet tissue, 4 roll packs. Thank you!



Endowment Recipients for Fall 2026: A copy of your first semester paid tuition statement, along with full-time student (12 hours) verification is due by **October 1, 2026,** to receive your grant. Please forward this information to the Endowment Committee at the church. Thank you.

Leader's Spotlight



by Kelsey Stubbendick

October 2026

Leader's Spotlight

There is something special about harvest season. As the fields around us turn golden and farmers begin to harvest, we're reminded that harvest is about much more than crops. It's also a beautiful picture of faith.

Farmers invest their time preparing the soil, planting the seed, nurturing the crops, and patiently waiting. They cannot control the weather or know exactly what each season will bring, but they continue to work and trust that their efforts will eventually produce a harvest.

Our faith can be much the same. We plant seeds every day through our words, our actions, our prayers, and the way we love and serve others. Sometimes we may not see the results right away.

Just as a farmer trusts God with the growth of a crop, we are called to trust Him with the growth in our own lives and in the lives of those around us. The seeds we plant in our children, our families, our church, and our community may take time to grow, but God is always at work.

This harvest season, as we watch the fields being gathered, may we also take a moment to consider the seeds we are planting. Are we planting seeds of kindness, faith, hope, and love?

We may not always get to see the harvest from every seed we plant, but we can trust that God does.

Plant faithfully, serve faithfully, and trust God with the harvest.

But God reminds us in Galatians 6:9, "Let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up."
Galatians 6:9



Church News & Events

Church Events



Join us at North Branch for a **Fall Festival, Sunday, October 18 from 11:45 a.m. -1:15 p.m.** Hay rack rides, pumpkin crafts & decorating, games and a fall family photo station! Hot dogs and apple nachos will be served. **For more information, please contact Marci Gartner at 402-430-8324. All are welcome!**



Coat Drive! First Lutheran will be taking donations of used coats and other warm clothing, such as scarves, mittens and gloves. All donations can be dropped off in the narthex.



October is Pastor Appreciation Month! Please be sure to thank Pastor Adam for his dedication, unwavering faith, and guidance. Details of a celebration coming soon!



Confirmation of Baptism





Note Calendar zoom date change: Bible study will be **Tuesday October 20 at 8:00 p.m., not Thursday, October 22.** Thank you!



Thank you First Lutheran, Thank you so much for the monetary donation after Hunter's accident and long hospital stay, We greatly appreciate it. God has been working miracles here. Hunter is recovering well and keeping up with out-patient p.t. at Madonna. *Shawn, Jill, Hunter and Allison Holle*

Autumn Renewal 2026

Women of the ELCA

"God Doesn't Make Junk"

Saturday, October 10, 2026
St. Paul's Lutheran Church,
1515 South Harrison, Grand Island
Registration 9:00 a.m. — Program 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made...—
Psalm 139:14

Plans are still being developed for the day. Watch our website and Facebook page for details to be released soon. Nebraska Synod Bishop Scott Johnson will be joining us. "Excess Baggage: Riding the Orphan Train" presentation plus a few surprises.

Offering designated as follows: 60% Churchwide Women's Organization, 20% NSWO, and 20% Humanities Nebraska.

Autumn Renewal 2026 Registration Form
Registration Deadline: Wednesday, September 30, 2026

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State + Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Congregation/City _____ Conference _____

Special Needs _____

Send form and $20.00 payment to:
Check payable to: NSWO

Julie Reiser, NSWO Treasurer
PO Box 64
Butte, NE 68722
nswo.treasurer@gmail.com

Registration fee is transferable, not refundable

A meaningful way to make a difference

In 2025 through the generosity and caring of our brothers and sisters in Christ members of First Lutheran donated to LWR:

- 25 Personal Care Kits
- 54 School Kits

Let's make it a personal challenge to better these numbers for this year! Now is a good time to make purchases since school supplies sales are now going on as well as frequent bath towel sales.

This project is a great opportunity to count our blessings and share with those who have so little! Please drop off kit supplies in the clear tote located in the Narthex.

The deadline to donate items is October 18th

Personal Care Kits

"When LWR distributes Personal Care Kits, it's often to people who have lost everything. In the wake of an earthquake or having fled from violence as their homes were overtaken, they clasp a towel from a faraway place, with a bar of soap, a toothbrush…and washing up, they know that they have not been forsaken by the world. The simple gesture of giving a Personal Care Kit can give someone the encouragement to start anew, starting with a bath!" What to include:

- 1 light-weight bath-size towel (between 20" x 40" and 52" x 27"), dark color
- 2 bath-size bars of soap
- 1 adult-size toothbrush
- 1 sturdy comb (remove packaging)
- 1 metal nail clippers

School 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 woks, even a few required supplies, like pens and paper, may be more than many families can afford. And when parents can only afford to send one of their children to school, girls rarely get priority…yet the education level of mothers has the biggest impact on development." What to include:

- 4 70-sheet notebooks (8" x 10 ½") No loose-leaf paper
- 1 50-centimeter ruler, or a ruler with centimeters on one side and inches on the other
- 1 pencil sharpener
- 1 pair of blunt scissors
- 5 unsharpened #2 pencils with erasers
- 5 black or blue ballpoint pens (no gel ink)
- 1 box of 16 or 24 crayons
- 1 2 ½" eraser

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF



Happy Anniversary to:
Oct. 4 - Shane & Mary Kay Kirchhoff
Oct. 7 - Kirby & Cindy Drake
Oct. 8 - Garry & Barb Hillman
Oct. 9 - Ron & Karen Schweitzer
Oct.11- Scott & Hillary Wiebusch
Oct. 16- Ron & Kim Behling
Oct. 24- Brandon & Natalie Boeckman

Happy Birthday to:
Oct.1 - Reece Brunsting
Oct. 2 - Bill Neumeister
Oct. 5 - Linda Schutz
Oct. 7 - Milton Stubbendick
Oct. 8 - Doug Carlson
Emmy Clifton
Oct. 9 - Levi Rogers
Oct. 11 - Kelsey Stubbendick
Tom Thompson
Oct. 12 - Marianna Kirchhoff
Teresa Pfeiffer
Oct. 14 - Ariel Gartner
Barb Hillman
Colette Farmer
Oct. 15 - Charline Knake
Mitchell Ross
Fred Rumery
Oct. 17 - Barb Ludwig
Oct. 18 - Nicole Mowry
Oct. 19 - Ellie Ross
Quinn Brunsting
Lydia Stubbendick
Oct. 20 - Craig Stephenson
Oct. 22 - Fred Berner
Breck Fischer
Samantha Nieken
Oct. 23 - Trent Stubbendick
Oct. 24 - Dixie Dobbs
Hope Kestler
Oct. 25 - Cassidy Callaway
Jamie Neumeister
Oct. 26 - Eva Brammier
Becky Knake
Oct. 29 - Graham Kreifels

(Any additions or corrections please contact the church office)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
: Accompanists: Cathy Callaway, Donna Crossmyer, Jan Niebuhr Vocalists: Marilyn Kirchhoff, Karen Schweitzer, Amanda Pelzer Altar Guild: Karen Schweitzer, Brenda Brockhoff, Vicki Luptmayer, Cindi Ensign Pastor: Adam Klinker, 402-660-2411 Administrator in Office: Mon. - Thu., 9:00a m. - 2:00p m.				1 7:00a Men's Bible Study 5:30p Bible Study 8p Zoom Bible Study	2	3
4 8:15a Worship 9:30a Sunday School 10:30a Worship	5	6	7 6:00 p Catechism 7:30 p.m. Council meeting	8 7:00a Men's Bible Study 5:30p Bible Study 8p Zoom Bible Study	9	10
11 8:15a Worship 9:30a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Pastor Appreciation Sunday	12 7p Evening Star Circle Parish Hall	13	14 6:00p Catechism	15 7:00a Men's Bible Study 5:30p Bible Study 8p Zoom Bible Study	16	17
18 8:15a Worship 9:30a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Fall Festival	19 Newsletter articles due	20 8p Zoom Bible Study (date change)	21 6:00 p Catechism	22 7:00a Men's Bible Study 1:00 p.m. N. Meiling 5:30p Bible Study	23	24
25 8:15a Worship 9:30a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Confirmation Reformation Sunday	26 Meals on Wheels	27 2:00 p.m. M.M.M. Bible Study	28 6:00 p Catechism	29 7:00a Men's Bible Study 5:30p Bible Study 8p Zoom Bible Study	30	31