

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

March 2025

First Lutheran Church, Gary, South Dakota

(605) 272-5230

## How can I be happy when I'm crying?

*"Blessed are those who mourn."  
Matthew 5:4*

Be happy while you're crying? I don't think so. Most tears come because of sorrow. People usually cry because something important to them has gone horribly wrong. But Jesus says that Christians are happy even when they're crying.

To understand what Jesus is saying, one must first understand why Christians cry. Christians cry for many of the same reasons everyone else cries. They cry at funerals. They cry when someone has been cruel to them. They cry when they hear a very sad story.

Christians can cry when they realize how horribly they have hurt someone. The burden of guilt weighs heavily on their hearts and brings them to tears. Christians can cry when they think of bad things they have done. They know that they deserve nothing from God but a punishment that never ends.

So where is the happiness?

Happiness is in knowing that while we deserve only the worst from God, he has given us only the best. When we mourn because of guilt, our Savior dries our moist eyes. When hearts are heavy with sadness, Jesus puts his hand under our chins and lifts our eyes to see his cross, where he made all our guilt, and all the sorrow connected to that guilt his own. Jesus looks at you and me and says, "Be at peace. Your guilt is gone."



Christians still cry, but Christians find comfort in the midst of their tears. This comfort is for you too.

It is a comfort that brings calm in the face of all kinds of tears. Jesus gives you the peace of knowing that death does not mean defeat. Jesus assures you that being mistreated by others does not mean God has abandoned you. Jesus fills you with the sure hope that all the hurt and evil in this world is not the end of everything.

Can there be happiness even when you are crying? Yes, because Jesus is your comfort.

## Budget Update

General Fund offerings through February 2025 totaled \$12,175.00 compared to \$12,836.96 that was budgeted, a shortfall of \$661.96.

WELS offerings so far in 2025 totaled \$1,690.00 compared to \$2,307.68 that was budgeted, a shortfall of \$617.68. Offerings for GPLHS through February 2025 totaled \$1,050.00 compared to \$692.32 that was budgeted.

## Special Gifts and Memorials

A grant to the congregation from the Thrivent Choice program totaling \$130.00 was made possible by Katie Hunt, Bruce Mueller, and Fay Stone.

## Declaring God's Praises

The night of his betrayal, Jesus washed his disciples' feet, gave them his body and blood, and prayed for them. He expended his last breaths before his death on the cross for us. Even his prayer, recorded in John 17, is communion with his Father on our behalf. In his prayer for himself he asked that "this cup" might be removed from him. Knowing that it could not, he joyfully went to the cross for us (Hebrews 12:2). Just as he came to earth for us, so we remain here on earth for him—that we might declare his praises for the glory of his name and so that others might come to believe in his name.

*Prayer:* Dear Jesus, for the sake of all people, you gave up riches to become poor for me and others. I thank you dearly for your grace and love. Help me to show you my gratitude in how I live my life. Grant me the confidence and the passion to proclaim boldly the gospel to all people. Amen.



## Don't Forget to Direct Thrivent Choice® Dollars

Don't let Choice Dollars expire. Eligible Thrivent Financial members who have Choice Dollars available have until March 31, 2025, to direct any remaining 2024 Choice Dollars to First Lutheran Church, Great Plains Lutheran High School, or another non-profit. Go to [Thrivent.com/thriventchoice](https://Thrivent.com/thriventchoice) to learn more. Or call 800-847-4836 and say "Thrivent Choice" after the prompt.



## Offering Envelope Designations

All offerings received in a regular Sunday envelope are designated as indicated. Any loose plate offerings on a Sunday morning are designated for the General Fund. All offerings received in an Ash Wednesday, Lent, Maundy Thursday, or Good Friday envelope are designated for the Wisconsin Synod. Any loose plate offerings from special services is also designated for WELS unless otherwise indicated.

## Women's Lenten Devotions

WELS Women's Ministry is offering weekly devotions for the 2025 season of Lent, "In the Savior's Steps." During Lent, we're used to traveling with Jesus from the upper room to the cross to the empty tomb. But these aren't the only places Jesus visited during his earthly ministry. This year, join WELS Women's Ministry as we follow in our Savior's steps through a series of weekly devotions. To sign up go to: [wels.net/wm-lenten-devotions/](https://wels.net/wm-lenten-devotions/)



## Reflections on Repentance

This year's Lenten meditation, *Reflections on Repentance*, is based on the great penitential psalm, Psalm 51. As we consider David's words written after he was confronted with his sin of adultery with Bathsheba, we will reflect on the role of repentance in our lives.



- March 5: Realizing Our Need for Repentance
- March 12: Recognizing Against Whom We Sin
- March 19: Revealing Our Sinful Nature
- March 26: Remembering God's Perfect Demands
- April 2: Relying on God's Grace
- April 9: Removing Our Guilt
- April 17: Renewed through the Gospel (Maundy Thursday)
- April 18: Restored by His Sacrifice (Good Friday)

The services March 5 and April 18, 2025, will be held in Hendricks beginning at 6:30 p.m. The services March 5 through April 17 will be held in Gary beginning at 7:00 p.m. A light supper will be served following each of the services in Gary. A brief Bible study will follow the Lenten services in Gary. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

## Congregation Website

The congregation now has its own website. Go to [www.firstgarysd.org](http://www.firstgarysd.org) to access the monthly church calendar or newsletter as well as to read a daily devotion (from [wels.net](http://wels.net)) or Bible verse of the day. You can install the website as an app on your Apple or Android phone, tablet, or other device (go to [www.churchtrac.com/support/connect/install-church-connect-app](http://www.churchtrac.com/support/connect/install-church-connect-app) for installation instructions). You can also sign up for member-only access to modify your personal contact information, to make use of online giving, and more. For more information, please speak to Pastor Mueller.

## Seminary Chorus Concerts

The Seminary Chorus, a 63-voice choir composed of men studying for the pastoral ministry at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, under the direction of Prof. Aaron Christie, will present a sacred concert at Bethel, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Friday, March 28, 2025, beginning at 6:30 p.m. The concert will include hymns and anthems in traditional and contemporary styles, accompanied by various musical instruments, as well as congregation participation. A free-will offering will be taken



The Seminary Chorus Saturday, will also participate in a joint concert with the Martin Luther College Choir in celebration of the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the WELS on Saturday, March 29, 2025 beginning at 7:00 p.m. That concert will be held in the Chapel of the Christ on the MLC campus in New Ulm, Minnesota.

## Camp Registrations Now Open

Registration for the Minnesota Valley Lutheran Camp (a.k.a. Camp Luther), which will be held June 22 - June 28, 2025, at Sibley State Park, near New London, Minnesota, is now open online at [www.campshetek.org](http://www.campshetek.org). This tradition summer camp is intended for youth who have finished grade 3 through grade 8. Register before April 27 to receive the Early Bird rate of \$275. Registration is also now open for Panther Camp, which will be held June 8- 13, 2025, on the GPLHS campus in Watertown, South Dakota. This week-long sports, life skills, and special interests camp is intended for those who have completed the sixth, seventh, or eighth grades. For more information or to register go to [www.gplhs.org](http://www.gplhs.org) and click on the appropriate "Camp Luther" button next to the list of upcoming events on the main page.

