

# The Herald

## April 2026

First Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN, established 1854



Vol. 172, No.4

## **Holy Week Worship**

**Maundy Thursday, April 2, 2026**

**Worship In Person at 7:00pm**

**Contemplative worship with communion**

**Traditional stripping of the altar**

**Good Friday, April, 3, 2026**

**Worship In Person at 7:00pm**

**with five Eastside Lutheran Churches**

**Retelling the passion story**

**Easter Sunday, April 5, 2026**

**“Alive Again: Hope Made Visible”**

**Worship In Person at 10:00am**

**Festive traditional worship**

**With Brass, Bells, Choir, Easter Garden**

**And many signs of new life!**

## **What's Next After Easter Sunday...Over the Six Weeks of the Easter Season...**

### **Alive Again: From Sacred Space to Living Faith**

This Easter, we arrive at a moment of both celebration and invitation.

After a season of rebuilding and renewal—tending to our sacred space with care and vision—we gather to proclaim the good news at the heart of our faith:

**Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

And yet, Easter does not simply call us to celebrate what has been.  
It invites us to step into what is becoming.

Our Easter theme this year is “**Alive Again: Sacred Space to Living Faith.**”

It is a reminder that resurrection is not something that stays contained within walls, even beautiful and beloved ones. The risen Christ meets us on the move—out in the world, already at work in our neighborhood, calling us to follow. This season of Easter, we will explore what it means not just to *believe* in resurrection—but to *live it*.

### **The Journey Through Easter**

Over the six weeks of Easter, our worship will follow a movement:

- **Belonging Before Belief** – Making space for questions, doubt, and belonging
- **Recognizing New Life** – Noticing where hope is already breaking through
- **The Good Shepherd** – Becoming a community where all are seen & valued
- **Love in Action** – Practicing faith in tangible, visible ways
- **Abiding and Becoming** – Growing, pruning, & making space for the new
- **One Body, Many Stories** – Deepening connection across difference

Together, these weeks invite us into a deeper question:  
*What does it mean for us to be alive again—not just as individuals,  
but as a community for the sake of our neighbors and the world?*

**Then comes the Season of Pentecost: A Turning Point. On Pentecost, we will mark a shift.**

The Spirit that meets us in worship also sends us outward.  
Together, we will take part in a shared sending moment—naming where  
we feel drawn, where we see need, and where we sense possibility.  
Pentecost will launch us into something new!

### **A Summer of Listening, Dreaming, and Becoming**

- This summer, we will enter a season of intentional discovery:
- Listening to our neighbors and community
- Dreaming about where God is calling us
- Experimenting with small, meaningful ways to show up

**Season of Pentecost continued...** This is not about having all the answers. It is about paying attention—trusting that God is already at work, and that we are being invited to join in.

### **An Invitation**

Where do you see signs of life?

Where do you feel a pull—toward a person, a place, a possibility?

What might it look like for us, together, to become *living faith* in this moment?

This Easter, we celebrate resurrection. And then—we follow.

**Alive again.**

**Becoming living faith.**

**We go in peace to be love in the world. Thanks be to God.**

## **Gathering, Growing, and Looking Ahead—Together**

As we move through this season of renewal and new beginnings, we are invited not only to celebrate how far we've come—but to take part in shaping what comes next. In the coming weeks, we will hold our **second congregational meeting of the year**, along with an important forum designed to help us listen, learn, and prepare together. On **Sunday, April 12**, we will gather in the sanctuary immediately following worship for a **Congregational Forum**. This time will include:

- A presentation of the **budget for the remainder of the year**, the **election process for new Church Council members**, and a **preview of programmatic and outreach goals as we begin life in our renewed space**

There will be time for questions, conversation, and shared reflection. This forum is an opportunity to deepen understanding and ensure that everyone feels informed and connected as we move forward. Then, on **Sunday, April 19**, we will come together again—this time for the **Congregational Meeting**, held in the lower level following worship. And in true community spirit, we will pair this important gathering with something we've been eagerly anticipating: Our **first congregational potluck since the completion of renovations!** This will be a time to celebrate not only the work that has been done, but the life we are growing into—sharing food, laughter, and connection as a community. Together, these two Sundays offer a meaningful rhythm: a time to listen and learn and a time to decide and celebrate! Your voice matters in this process. Your presence matters. This is how we become the church together—alive in faith, rooted in community, and looking outward in hope. We hope you will join us for both gatherings as we continue this journey—**alive again, and becoming what God is calling us to be.**

# Faith Under Fire:

## Stories of Courage, From Nigeria to Minnesota

*A Reflection for First Lutheran Church*

*Pastor Stanley Ayashim*

In times like these—when the world feels uncertain, divided, and often overwhelming—it is easy to believe that our challenges are isolated. Yet across the globe, there are communities for whom uncertainty is not occasional but constant; for whom faith is not simply comforting, but costly.

I write to you from a deeply personal place—shaped by my experiences and relationships in Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions, where many Christians live out their faith under daily threat.

Over the years, I have tried, at times, to set aside this part of my story—to focus on the present, on ministry here, and on the blessings of safety and stability. But the truth has a way of returning. It comes back whenever I hear that someone I know has been killed or kidnapped. It comes back in quiet moments when memory refuses to be silenced.

I have heard many of you ask me about what is happening in Nigeria—often after reading something in the news and wondering what the reality truly is. Permit me to be honest: there have been times when I have responded as though nothing significant was going on. At other times, I may have offered a brief response that unintentionally dismissed the seriousness of the situation. For that, I ask your understanding.

My silence has not been because I do not know. It has been because I have been carrying two worlds at once. On the one hand, I remain deeply connected to what is happening back home—receiving calls, hearing stories, and knowing people directly affected. On the other hand, I am here, seeking to remain present, focused, and faithful to how God is calling me to serve in this community. At times, the weight of these two realities has led me to say less than I carry.

But I also recognize that silence can create distance where there should be understanding.

And so, I want to take a step forward. I hope to create space this Summer where I can share more intentionally about what is happening in Nigeria. You are warmly invited to come—and to bring a friend—so that together we may listen, learn, and grow in awareness as members of the global Body of Christ.

What I share is not abstract. In Northern Nigeria, there are children who have witnessed what no child should ever see. Some have seen their parents killed because of their faith. Some women have watched their husbands and children taken from them. These are not distant stories—they are real lives, still unfolding.

Scripture gives voice to such pain:

“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice” (Psalm 130:1).

And yet—even in these depths—faith persists.

Children who have seen violence still pray. Families who have lost everything still gather for worship. Their lives echo the words:

*“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair”*

*(2 Corinthians 4:8).*

## “Faith Under Fire” continued...

Just this past week, I was reminded again of how close this reality remains to me. A professor of mine—Rev. Dr. Sunday Agang—was kidnapped. For days, there was fear and uncertainty. Thanks be to God, he was released, though at great cost.

For many, Psalm 23 is not metaphor but daily life: *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me.”*

And yet, as I reflect on these realities, I must also confess something: this understanding of vulnerability did not remain in Nigeria alone.

Here in Minnesota, my journey was shaped by hope—a hope for a safer and better life for myself and my family. But that sense of safety was shaken during what has been known as *Operation Metro Surge*, a large-scale immigration enforcement effort that brought thousands of federal agents into communities across the Twin Cities. I was not afraid because I came here illegally but we know why everyone who looks like me was afraid. During that time, many families lived in fear. People were stopped, questioned, and in some cases detained. Communities were disrupted, and trust was shaken.

I, too, felt that fear. I felt unsafe. I watched my children struggle to understand what was happening around them. I saw confusion in their questions I could not easily answer. The worst was when my son came home and cried so hard, because kids were making fun of him in the bus and asking him questions that felt to him as though he was being profiled. And in that moment, something became clear to me: **Safety is not found in a place. It is found in the Lord.**

What I had hoped to find in geography, I was reminded is only fully found in God. And yet—even here—this is not only a story of fear. Because in the midst of it all, I saw something else.

I saw a people who showed up. I saw a community that made sure we were fed. A community that created spaces of care. A community that reminded us we were not alone. And in that, I saw the Church.

If we are wondering what life can feel like for Christians in parts of Northern Nigeria, there are moments where the fear experienced during the surge offers a glimpse—where people feel hunted, not because of where they are from, but because of who they are and what they believe.

And yet, both here and there, we also see something powerful: **God shows up through people.**

Scripture reminds us:

*“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”* (Psalm 46:1).

That presence is not abstract—it is lived out in communities that care, in people who stand together, in acts of love that refuse to let fear have the final word.

And now, as we enter the season of Spring, we are reminded of something even deeper.

Spring tells us that death does not have the last word. That what seems buried can rise again. That hope is not foolish—it is faithful.

The prophet Isaiah speaks this promise:

*“See, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”* (Isaiah 43:19).

This is our hope. Not a denial of suffering—but a declaration that suffering will not define the end of our story.

## “Faith Under Fire” continued...

Whether in Northern Nigeria or here in Minnesota, whether in grief or uncertainty, we hold onto this truth: God is still at work. God is still bringing life out of death. God is still making a way where there seems to be none.

So we respond:

**We pray**—for those who suffer and those who fear.

**We listen**—so that stories are not lost in silence.

**We stand together**—as one Body in Christ.

**And we live with hope**—because our hope is rooted not in circumstances, but in God.

May their stories—and ours—transform us.

May their courage deepen our faith.

And as this new season begins, may we all be reminded:

**Spring is coming. Hope is alive.**

**And God is not finished with us yet.**

Grace and peace, *Pastor Stanley Ayashim*



**SPIRIT QUEST CONFIRMATION** will be a time of learning this Summer for Jr. & Sr. High youth! This includes Camp Wapo in the Summer and a Fall Rite of Passage confirming your faith!. Contact Pastor Chris, Pastor Stanley, or Jess Grams to participate. We celebrate the beginning of a lifelong search for meaning and a spiritual life. Watch for an Adult Version of Spirit Quest this Spring!



**LITTLES AND PEEPS!** A Children’s, Parents, and Siblings group focused on the “Littles” in our midst and the “Peeps” who love them! Stick around after worship & join in. There will be crafts, music, and fun and time for parents and other adults to engage with each other! If you have ideas, let Pastor Chris know.

**STITCH ENRICH!** A Sewing/Mending/Craft Group led by Laura Rose Paradis — our resident mender and sewing expert will be on hand Saturday, April 18th, 9:30am - Noon. Learn a new craft and/or bring some mending as we learn about the “slow clothes” movement. Call or text Pastor Chris, 651-247-8926 if you have questions.



# april 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>Sunday, April 12th</b> Congregational Forum <b>Sunday, April 19th</b> Congregational Meeting			M&M's 1 9-Noon  Bells 6pm	2	3	4
5 Easter Worship 10am	6	7 Bible Study 10am	M&M's 8 9-Noon  Bells 6pm	9 Bible Study on Zoom- 7pm	10	11
12 Worship - 10am & Bells	13	14 Bible Study 10am	M&M's 15 9-Noon  Bells 6pm	16 Bible Study on Zoom- 7pm	17	18 Stitch Enrich 9:30 am
19 Worship - 10am	20	21 Bible Study 10am	M&M's 22 9-Noon  Bells 6pm	23 Bible Study on Zoom- 7pm	24	25
26 Worship - 10am	27	28 Bible Study 10am	M&M's 29 9-Noon  Bells 6pm	30 Bible Study on Zoom- 7pm	M&M's = Movers & Makers" volunteers	



# THE NAMING PROJECT

LOCATION: MINNESOTA  
JULY 26-31, 2026

Register at: [WWW.THENAMINGPROJECT.ORG](http://WWW.THENAMINGPROJECT.ORG)

A Christian Camp for LGBTQIA+ youth



## 2026 Youth at Camp Wapo July 7-9, Grades 1-3 July 19-24, Grades 4-9

Summer is fast approaching and youth from First Lutheran will once again have a chance to spend a week at Camp Wapo for faith-filled fun and learning! Last year we had 6 youth attend, and we're looking forward to those six youth becoming more and growing our opportunities for young families at First! Camp is outreach! Camp

is evangelism! Camp is hope for the present and future of the church! With this in mind, we're trying to raise money for camp scholarships, so that no one is turned away from camp. We had a successful breakfast to raise scholarship dollars for camp on Palm Sunday. Thank you to all! We have an individual that has offered to match funds raised, up to \$3000! Will you help us reach our goal of \$6000? We're already more than half way there!

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