



Friendship Focus

March 2026

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Psalm 51: 1-3, 10-12

God's blessings to you as we journey to the cross of Christ in this season of Lent.

Throughout our Lenten journey, we take on the discipline of returning to the Lord. We are called during the season into a time of repentance, self-examination and fasting from the things of this world that keep us from God. Some go through this Lenten journey by taking on a new spiritual discipline so that they might grow in their relationship with God, others give up (fast from) something that keeps them from growing in their relationship with God. It's a journey of preparation as we experience new life found in the dawn of Spring, in the spiritual growth that happens as a result of our Lenten disciplines, and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It seems to me, at a time such as this, a personal spiritual journey is needed. And I would dare say that we need this journey in the life of the church as well: time to slow down and reflect, time to self-evaluate and prepare, time to return to God through the good news of Jesus' life death and resurrection.

Have you ever thought about what your life would be like if you had never heard the good news of the gospel message? What if the gospel was absent from our lives; if we did not know of the grace that God freely gives his children? If we had not heard the good news of the gospel and we didn't know of God's love, grace and forgiveness then we would be stuck in sin and shame; bonded forever to the vices of this world and our culture. If we didn't know of God's love for us and the grace he offers, we couldn't possibly have hope in something more. We would be lost.

The words that we heard on Ash Wednesday, “remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return,” reminded us of our mortality and our human frailty. Sin and our humanness separates us from God. Because of sin, evil and the devil, our relationship with God isn’t always as strong as it could be. Because of our sinful shortcomings, we do not fully know and trust God and our relationship with God suffers.

Lent is a time for us to be intentional and disciplined as we take a hard look at ourselves and where we have fallen short of God’s calling for us in our lives. But, shouldn’t we do that all throughout the year? Lent is that time when we are called to seek forgiveness and repent from our sinful ways. But, isn’t a faithful rhythm of our discipleship to make regular confession of our sins? Lent is that time when we are called to do these things so that we might prepare ourselves in body mind and soul to hear the gospel news of Easter as if for the first time. But, didn’t Jesus say to keep our lamps trimmed and burning, keep watch and be ready always?

The truth is, we shouldn’t need the season of Lent to convict us to these spiritual disciplines, rather they should be a regular part of our lives in Christ.

The common practices we add to our spiritual disciplines during Lent, challenging ourselves to give up something that keeps us from deeper relationship with God (or to take on something that helps us grow in our relationship with God), are so very important because they help us to see the intentionality of the season. After going through the season and reaching the pinnacle of the church year when we hear the gospel that Christ is risen, it is as if we have heard the good news for the first time. The good news of the gospel shouldn’t bring our Lenten disciplines to a screeching halt, but rather inspire us to live it out, sharing it with others all throughout the year.

I pray that we may all be intentional in this season of Lent; intentional to reflect on who we are, as together we work toward deepening our faith and growing in our relationship with Christ. May you find this season a necessary and needed part of your journey of faith that allows you to experience fully the love God has for you.

In Christ,
Pastor Josh

March News

Fellowship Potluck Supper is **Monday, March 2nd @ 6pm**. All are welcome to join us for great food & fellowship.

Secret Sisters meet **Saturday, March 7th at 9am** to start our new year. Anyone interested in joining, see Daphne Payne for information sheet.

Daylight Savings Time is **Sunday, March 8th**. Remember to set your clocks up an hour.

Mid-Week Lent Worship - each Wednesday in Lent community Lenten services will be held at Noon and 6pm with a meal to follow worship. The theme for these services is “Holy Lament”. This series explores various kinds of lament found in scripture. Together we will discover that many faithful believers have wrestled with grief, sorrow, and questions for God about why the innocent suffer. We will learn, ultimately, that Jesus’ death on the cross– the place to which the season of Lent leads us– is the reason we never mourn as those without hope.

2026 Community Lenten Worship Schedule:

Wed, March 4 - noon at Reformation, lunch to follow
6pm at St. Luke, supper to follow

Wed, March 11 - noon at Reformation, lunch to follow
6pm at Friendship, supper to follow

Wed, March 18 - noon at Reformation, lunch to follow
6pm at St. Luke, supper to follow

Wed, March 25 - noon at Reformation, lunch to follow
6pm at St. John, supper to follow

CARE Team meets **Monday, March 9th @ 6pm**.

WELCA meets **Sunday, March 15th @ 4pm**. All ladies are invited to attend.

Rusha Austin Scholarship Packets are available for pick up at the church office **now thru March 15th**. No packets will be available for pick up after March 15th. The completed packets are to be turned in **no later than April 15th**.

New Member's Class will be held **Sun, March 22nd at 9:15am** in the sanctuary. All who are considering church membership at Friendship or who have questions about the life and ministry here are welcome to attend!



Easter Egg Hunt - Saturday, March 28th,
1- 3pm will be our Easter Egg Hunt! If you are interested in helping with this event, contact Amy Palmer (828) 514-3477.

Messiah in the Passover

As we come near to Holy Week we will welcome Chosen People Ministries to Friendship on **Sunday, March 22nd at 6pm** to present, Messiah in the Passover. This presentation speaks of the past (God's people wandering in the wilderness), Salvation (trust in God's promise through Christ, & the future (the eternal kingdom of God). We will begin the evening with a time of fellowship sharing covered dish style finger foods, snacks, desserts & heavy hors d'oeuvres (drinks will be provided), so please bring a dish to share & invite a friend!



Save the DATE! Lutheroad Summer Day Camp will be at Friendship **June 8-12, 2026**. Registration is now open! See Payton Boyles for registration information.



Holy Week and Easter Services



Come Worship With Us!

March 29th - Palm Sunday - 8am & 10:30 worship

April 2nd - Maundy Thursday service - 7 pm - (Sanctuary)

April 3rd - Good Friday service - 12noon - (FLC)

-Good Friday service - 7 pm - (Sanctuary)

April 5th - Easter Sunday:

Sunrise service @ the cemetery cross - 6:30am

Breakfast in FLC- 7:30am

Worship in the Sanctuary - 10:30

God's Work Our Hands - is coming up on Saturday, April 25th.

On this day we dedicate time to serve in the community, helping our neighbors in need. Please be in thought of what service projects might be the most impactful in our community. If you have ideas for service projects, see a member of the **CARE Team** to share your ideas. More information to come. Mark your calendars to participate!

March Birthdays

| | | | |
|----------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| Robert Farrens | 03/01 | Sam Bowman | 03/10 |
| Cecil Sigmon | 03/02 | Oscar Shepherd | 03/10 |
| Gail Huffman | 03/04 | Margo Elder | 03/12 |
| Bo Gant | 03/05 | Julia Rhyne | 03/14 |
| Don Robinette | 03/06 | Stephen Isenhour | 03/15 |
| Pam Bowman | 03/08 | Jason Icard | 03/19 |
| Cody Bowers | 03/09 | Mia Snipes | 03/20 |
| Phil Mooney | 03/09 | Gary Richey | 03/24 |
| Daphne Payne | 03/09 | Cohen Bowers | 03/28 |



Friendship Lutheran Church Council
January 20, 2026, Regular Meeting in Person

Members present: Jenna Buff, Brian Chapman, Eric Frye, Tyler Hall, Mary Ann Icenhour, Michelle Miller, Kasi Sigmon, Todd Smith, Monica Stafford, Tamara Stafford, Barry Swift, Charlie Sipe, Pastor Josh Tucker, and Dana Frye. Absent: Hannah Bostian

President Mary Ann Icenhour called the meeting to order.

Motion by Michelle Miller; seconded by Tamara Stafford to approve the agenda. Motion carries.

Mary Ann Icenhour shared a devotion.

Motion by Jenna Buff; seconded by Michelle Miller to approve minutes from December 9, 2025 Regular Meeting. Motion carries.

Treasurers report was distributed. Motion by Tamara Stafford; seconded by Monica Stafford to approve. Motion carries.

TEAM ASSIGNMENTS/REPORTS:

Administration – Hannah Bostian – Motion from the Team (no second required) to approve the Policy for Operating the Church Van. Motion carries. Guidelines for renting the family life center was distributed with changes. Council is asked to review before the next meeting.

Care – Tamara Stafford – 43 units were received at the blood drive. Next drive is in April; EMS meal this year was distributing gift cards to Wittenburg Fire Dept., EMS, and the Sheriffs dept.

Learn – Jenna Buff – They have a meeting planned to get started on VBS; Lutheroad Summer Day Camp registration will be opening in a couple weeks; new Sunday School curriculum for preschool age through 5th grade.

Worship – Todd Smith – No report.

Share – Kasi Sigmon – Working on brochures and the website.

Finance – Michelle Miller – No additional report.

Rusha Austin Scholarship – Brian Chapman – Will notify Penny to get packets ready for pick up.

Preschool – Monica Stafford – Motion from the Team (no second required) to purchase a copier from Docutek that will be shared by Sunday School and choir. A space will be made in the room behind the stage. Preschool will purchase the copier (\$3,800) and the church will pay based on number of copies used by the church code. Church will have a code to enter when using the copier. Motion carries.

Building & Grounds (BAG) – Eric Frye – No report.

Technology – Tyler Hall – Cameras are still being installed. Motion from Brian Chapman; seconded by Todd Smith to purchase a TV for the nursery and funds will come from the Tech line item. Motion carries. Tyler will check with Wade Cline to see if an extra TV was purchased for the gathering spaces before another one is purchased.

Cemetery – Barry Swift – No report.

PASTOR’S REPORT:

Pastor Josh shared his report. December was a busy month and now planning begins for Lent. The Events Team will take the lead on Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper; Friendship will be hosting the Lenten meal after the 6 pm service on Wednesday, March 11. Michelle Miller will organize a taco bar and ask council to help with supplies and serving. Pat Payne’s Sunday School class will be responsible for the Easter breakfast. Pastor Josh and Doug Ramsey will work with Duke Energy on a power assessment for the church property. Shoulder surgery will be end of January. Pastor Craig will cover worship on February 1 and 8 and be on call for pastoral care.

OLD BUSINESS:

- ▶ Eric Frye will be in touch with Doug Ramsey and the property team to put information gathered up to this point together for a columbarium.
- ▶ Pastor Josh will work on a policy to have when needs arise for Helping Hands issues.

NEW BUSINESS:

- ▶ Chosen People Ministries: Pastor Josh is waiting to hear back. When he does, council may need to meet or have an electronic meeting.
- ▶ Pastor Craig is scaling back his duties at Friendship. Now is the time for us to look at ways to help with visitation and home bound communion. Pastor Josh will work with volunteers from the Time and Talent sheets to start a group to help where needed.
- ▶ Time and Talent sheets were distributed out to council members.
- ▶ Motion from Finance Team (no second required) to purchase a new computer for the Finance office. The computer there is outdated and will no longer support our financial program. Cost would be approximately \$700 from Microcenter in Charlotte. Motion carries.
- ▶ Motion #1 from the Youth Team (no second required) to host a breakfast fundraiser for Saturday, February 21, 2026 from 7-10, to raise money for their mission trip. Youth and their families will lead the event and counters for the funds will be Leah Hayes, Mollie Sipe, and Michelle Miller. Motion #2 (no second required) will be a game of envelopes. Take an envelope from the board and place that amount of money in the envelope and return it to the offering plate. No counters required. Motion carries for both fundraisers.
- ▶ See motion in Preschool report for shared copier information.

There being no other business the meeting adjourned with prayer.

Our next regular monthly meeting will be shifted to Tuesday, February 24, 2026, at 6 pm. Todd Smith will share a devotion for January.

ELECTRONIC VOTE ON JANUARY 26, 2026

Motion by Eric Frye; seconded by Michelle Miller to invite the Chosen People Ministries to Friendship for Passover Presentation on March 22nd. Motion carries.



Have you considered how big and vast our God is? As the body of Christ, we are connected to so many different ministries, agencies and institutions that serve to shine the light of Christ in the world, share the good news of the gospel and help those in need. Together, we are the church, serving God and neighbor through the works of these ministries for the sake of the gospel!

Each month, we will feature a partnering ministry in our synod and throughout the church. Let's take time to learn more about these ministries and support the work we're called to do in partnership together. This month we feature:

NovusWay Ministries

Whether you're looking for your child's faith-filled summer camp experience, planning a group retreat, or looking for a meaningful year-round program, NovusWay Ministries has what you're looking for. Our unique locations throughout the Southeast provide experiences for all people in God's creation to belong, believe, and become! Learn more at www.novusway.org.

Thank
you 

Dear Church Family,
Thank you all so much for the prayers,
cards, texts, meals & flowers during the loss
of our loved one, Harold Buff. We have truly
felt God's presence through your kindness.
Thank you Pastor Craig & Silsa for a beautiful service and
for all those who helped prepare a delicious meal for the
family.

With Sincere Thanks,
The Buff Family

Our Sharing

OFFERINGS

| | <u>JANUARY, 2026</u> | <u>YTD</u> |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| CURRENT | \$31,697.05 | \$31,697.05 |
| BENEVOLENCE | \$1,857.85 | \$1,857.85 |
| BLDG/IMPROVEMENT | \$1,397.75 | \$1,397.75 |
| PRESCHOOL | \$200.00 | \$200.00 |
| WORLD HUNGER | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| BACKPACK MINISTRY | \$320.00 | \$320.00 |
| CHRISTIAN CRISIS CTR | \$850.00 | \$850.00 |
| LUTHERAN DISASTER RELIEF | \$125.00 | \$125.00 |
| RUSHA AUSTIN SCHLOR. | \$200.00 | \$200.00 |
| YOUTH | \$500.00 | \$500.00 |
| NOISY OFFERING | \$1,241.50 | \$1,241.50 |
| COLUMBARIUM | \$505.00 | \$505.00 |
| MEN IN MISSION | \$51.00 | \$51.00 |
| ADULT MISSIONS | \$50.00 | \$50.00 |
| LUTHEROAD | \$125.00 | \$125.00 |
| LUTHERIDGE CAMPAIGN | \$100.00 | \$100.00 |

SPENDING

| | <u>JANUARY, 2026</u> | <u>YTD</u> |
|---------|----------------------|-------------|
| CURRENT | \$47,134.74 | \$47,134.74 |

Prayers of the Church

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything,
by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your
request to God.”*
~ Philippians 4:6-7

As God’s people we commit to pray for one another, and for all in need.

Please call the church office to add/take someone off this list.

Let us pray for...

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Raegan Davis (L. Hayes-1/29) | Traci Kirby (W. Pearson-2/16) |
| Nikki & Zachary Stevenson (M. Nicholas) | Sam Bowman (P. Josh-2/16) |
| Ginger Annas (B. Icenhour-1/29) | Darryl Adkins (C. Gant-2/16) |
| Guy Chapman (A. Palmer-2/9) | Nicole Davis McNamara (J. Gant-2/16) |
| Noah Manning (S. Icenhour-2/9) | Terri Cook (D. Cook-2/18) |
| Theresa Setzer (R. Bowman-2/9) | Raylie Stafford (M. Stafford-2/19) |
| Maynard Annas III (P. Shealy-2/9) | Brenda Little (W. Pearson-2/19) |
| Jimmy Hayes (M. Stafford-2/9) | Tammy Little (W. Pearson-2/19) |
| Jay Dean Mitchell (D. Ramsey-2/9) | Dennis Johnson (D. Payne-2/22) |
| Ricky Rector (J. Smith-2/9) | Linda Triplett (Mitchell-2/22) |
| Tony Cothren (P. Josh-2/9) | Finlee Norton (A. Palmer-2/22) |
| Jansen Hefner (L. Hefner-2/10) | Steve Sharpe (P. Stikeleather-2/22) |
| Debbie Cline (P. Josh-2/12) | Danny Parks (P. Josh-2/25) |
| David Pearson (W. Pearson-2/16) | Rick Rector (M. Sipe-2/25) |
| Teressa Wallace (W. Pearson-2/16) | Mercedes Teague (D. Hefner-2/26) |
| John & Glenda Hammett (W. Pearson) | |

Family & friends of:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Alan Norton | (D. Frye-1/29) |
| Tod Deal | (J. Gant-1/29) |
| Harold Buff | (P. Josh-2/2) |
| Fate Hefner | (P. Josh-2/3) |
| Carolyn Cline Hines | (W. Cline-2/10) |
| Evelyn Elizabeth Hollo | (D. Ramsey) |
| Dabney Ruth Gant | (P. Josh-2/16) |
| David Miller | (P. Josh-2/22) |
| Betty Rector | (M. Sipe-2/22) |
| Roy Bolick | (P. Josh-2/24) |

Please be in daily prayer for our Home Bound/Extended Care members:

Fate Hefner, Steve Icenhour,
Joyce Deal, Reba Bolick,
Dallard Lail, Phil & Ruth Lackey.

Church Council and Staff

| <u>Council</u> | <u>(Term ending)</u> |
|---|----------------------|
| <u>Officers</u> | |
| Mary Ann Icenhour - President | ('27) |
| Todd Smith - VP | ('27) |
| Jane Gant - Treasurer (non voting) | ('26) |
| Dana Frye - Recording Sec (non voting) | ('26) |
| Charlie Sipe - Financial Sec (non voting) | ('26) |
| Brian Chapman - RA Scholarship | ('27) |
| Tyler Hall - Tech | ('27) |
| Barry Swift - Cemetery | ('26) |
| Michelle Miller - Finance | ('26) |
| Todd Smith - Worship | ('27) |
| Hannah Bostian - Administration | ('26) |
| Eric Frye - Bldg. & Grounds | ('26) |
| Kasi Sigmon-- Share | ('27) |
| Monica Stafford--Preschool | ('26) |
| Tamara Stafford--CARE | ('26) |
| Jenna Buff - Learn | ('27) |

Staff

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Josh Tucker | Pastor |
| Craig Sigmon | Associate Pastor |
| Penny Stikeleather | Parish Secretary |
| Denny Teague | Sexton |
| Ian Elkins | Choir Director |
| Silva Moore | Organ/Piano |
| Lori Overcash | Preschool Director |

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Penny is in the office Mon-Thurs,
9:30-4:30 (Lunch-12:30-1:30)
The office is closed on Friday.

You may reach Pastor Josh
on the his cell phone: **828-461-4688**
or his email: **pastorjoshtucker@gmail.com**

Please do not hesitate to be in touch if you have a pastoral concern, or if there is something the pastor needs to know.