

March 2026

Dear Friends in Christ,

While Lent can be kind of a downer, it has its consolations. It may start in Winter, but it brings the reminder that Spring is just around the corner. Each Lenten service sees the sun setting a little later while temperatures gradually rise. Our moods begin to pick up as, each day, life seems to become even a little more bearable. And we get to use the evening hymns.

I have often thought of the evening hymns as my favorite section of the hymnal. And yet we seldom get to use them. They date back to a time when evening services were a common European practice, part of the traditions of the many monasteries and convents. The evening hymns were written in reponse. When our forebears came to this country a problem confronted them: what language should the service be in? Among the Norwegians, the older generation favored Norwegian because it was easier to understand and brought a comforting reminder of the homes they had left. But their children were raised with English and wanted to be more like the Americans they felt proud to be. The tensions that were growing are seen whenever you hear of a church calling itself an "English Lutheran" church. This was not because they were of English ancestry, but because their services were in English. The natural answer for many churches was to begin to hold an evening service in English. But in the 1920's, as the older generation began dying out, younger members started pushing for change. In church after church the morning service came to be in English, while the evening one was now in Norwegian. This continued for many years, but gradually those who spoke both languages became fewer and fewer in number. The evening "Norwegian" services became less and less frequent until evening services died out and were replaced with increasingly occasional ones. (A major part of the problem was the frustration of finding a preacher who could do a sermon in Norwegian.) And so the tradition of evening services died away.

But the evening hymns remained. And for good reason: they tend to speak a unique language of prayers for protection through the night, and the peace that comes of knowing that God will provide it. They often use the metaphor of night as death and day as new life, and can be achingly beautiful as they remind us that God remains faithful through it all. They have the power to bring peace to the troubled soul, and I love them dearly.

I'm going to share one of them with you. This was written by my favorite hymn writer, Paul Gerhardt, in about 1650. It is Christian poetry at its finest:

*Now all the woods are sleeping, through fields the shadows creeping,
and cities sink to rest;*

*Let us, as night is falling, on God our maker calling,
give thanks to Him who loves us best.*

*The radiant sun has vanished, its golden rays are banished
from dark'ning skies of night;*

*But Christ, the Son of gladness, dispelling all our sadness,
shines down on us in warmest light.*

*Now all the heav'nly splendor breaks forth in starlight tender
from myriad worlds unknown;*

*And we, this marvel seeing, forget our selfish being
for joy of beauty not our own.*

*Though long our ancient blindness has missed God's loving kindness
and plunged us into strife;*

*One day, when life is over, shall death's fair night uncover
the fields of everlasting life.*

Tri Parish Events

ELM RIVER SERVING TEAM

<i>Date</i>	<i>Usher & Bell</i>	<i>Communion</i>	<i>Coffee Hour</i>	<i>Church Cleaning</i>
March 1st	Steve & Teresa	Dave & Kathy	Teresa & Lori S	Kristi & Bonnie J
March 4 th 7pm	Kendall	-----	-----	
March 15 th	Ed	-----	Dawn F. & Shawn M.	
March 25 th 7pm	John & Lori	-----	-----	
April 5 th 10:30	Andy & Kayla	Savannah	-----	Kathy & Janice

NORMAN COMMITTEES

<i>Calling Committee</i>	<i>Cleaning Groups</i>	<i>Coffee Hour</i>	<i>Head Usher</i>
Helen Knudsvig	Aarsvold Family	1 st Audrey	Eric Anderson
		8 th Kayla	
		15 th Cindy	
Flowers	<i>Altar Cloths</i>	22 nd Martina	
Shelia Anderson	Shirley Sand		

Time Change Sunday, March 8th. Spring Ahead

CIRCLE NEWS

Norman - Wednesday, March 11th @ 1pm Bertha Sand Hostess

Elm River – Wednesday, March 18th @ 1pm

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO PASTOR PETE ON MARCH 2ND

2026 Council Members

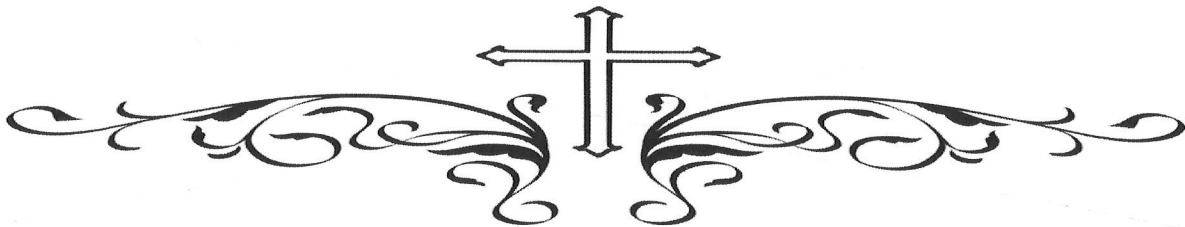
	<u>Norman</u>	<u>Elm River</u>	<u>Stordahl</u>
President	James Aarsvold	Kendall Johnson	Jeff Voltz
Vice President	Ella Mae Satrom	Ed Judish	Alan Paulson
Secretary	Shelia Anderson	Beth Kainz	Kaelin Kylo
Treasure	Kayla Knudson	Lori Paulson	Steve Kylo
Other Council Members	Jack Vadnie	Dawn Flaten	Mike Bring
	Kevin Lyng	Shelly Satrom	Matt Erickson
	Inez Olson	Dave Ust	Jim Halvorson
			Dewey Halvorson

2026 Lent Services

6pm Supper

Free will offering or bring an item
to donate to the food pantry

7pm Worship Service



Wednesday, March 4th Elm River

Tri Parish Council Following Worship

Wednesday, March 11th Stordahl

Wednesday, March 18th Norman

Wednesday, March 25th Elm River