



First Word

The monthly newspaper of First Lutheran Church

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Witnesses:

A Preview of Lent

By Pastor Katherine Olson



The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on February 26. On Wednesday, March 4, we kick off our Lenten theme of “Witnesses” with a special drama performed by Pastor Jonathan Swenson of Paraphrase Theatre. Written by Curt Cloninger, *Witnesses* is an innovative, humorous, and deeply moving re-telling of the Gospel. In this

dramatic and intimate performance, Jonathan portrays eight different characters (historical and imagined), as each responds to Jesus. Through the eyes of these characters, both comedic and serious, the audience is challenged to see Jesus from fresh perspectives—not cold and distant, but as one who was intimately involved in the nitty-gritty of life.

My family and I have been privileged to see Jonathan perform this and other faith-based dramas many times over the years, and we can't wait for Jonathan to come to our congregation and share his ministry here among us.

Matthew: The Royal Gospel

For 2020 [A]nno [D]omini (“The year of our Lord”)

By John Christopherson, Senior Pastor



If you've ever wondered why the New Testament is at once the best selling and least read book in our culture, you'll find the answer on the very first page of St. Matthew's gospel.

“Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Judah, and Judah begat Perez, and Perez begat Hezron, and Hezron begat Aram, and Aram begat . . .” (Matthew 1:1-3)

Matthew must have been an anesthesiologist! I mean, how many “begats” can you count before you fall fast asleep? Starting out any book with a family tree, as Matthew does, is about as exciting as watching your next-door neighbor's vacation videos. (Even though it *is* a step up from the old “slide shows” of my generation.) And so, lots of folk pack it in right there: “*Good night.*”

But as with anything worth working at . . . stifle that yawn. Keep reading. . .

“Nashon begat Salmon, and Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Jesse . . . and Jesse begat David, and David the king . . .” (Matthew 1:4-6)

King David? Ah, now we're getting somewhere. As witnessed by all the hoo-hah over Prince Charles and Princess Diana in recent history, there's just a kind of . . . well, magical “something” about royal family trees that wakes us back up. Perhaps it's the lime-lighted “they-should-have-known-better-juiciness.” For the first century Jewish readers of Matthew's gospel, this opening passage has already reminded them of two rather juicy snippets that at least the pious Jew would have wanted to forget. First, this family tree includes some women. No, not the obvious heroines like Sarah and Rebecca and Rachel, but rather dubious ones like Tamar (who seduced her father-in-law) and Ruth (a happy Dane at an all narcoleptic Norwegian gathering) . . . moving on to the Scarlet Letter of them all, Bathsheba, the bathing bomb-shell.

Now, the point of this genealogy is not only to “*build character*” (pun intended) . . . but to demonstrate how history is moving toward one special, defining moment in time. The first page of the New Testament (recorded in Matthew, chapter 1) – although perhaps the biggest yawner for any casual browser – is jammed with a charge so potent that underneath the bland exterior of all the begetting . . . *yadah, yadah, yadah (ala S"einfeld)* . . . is an explosion that can wake the dead for miles around.

Today I came upon a fascinating insight by one of my favorite British theologians, N.T. Wright: “The first page of Matthew's gospel reminds me,” he observes, “of Handel's great Coronation Anthem, *Zadok the Priest*” (*Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship*, p.24). Prof. Wright explains how this composition of Handel starts out: a sequence of broken chords, harmless enough, with a few little variations. At one point you begin to think it will grow and swell into something important, but then it turns away and goes on with its broken chords, this way and that, including some in a minor key. But then again, you'll notice how, little by little, you have a sense that it's really going somewhere; it grows and grows, with harmony working its way back in, and then a swelling that becomes unbeatable, and the whole thing explodes as the choir crashes in:

“Zadok the Priest – and Nathan the Prophet – anointed Solomon King. . .”

Prof. Wright ingeniously suggests that this is precisely the orchestrated form by which Matthew's prologue is seeking to tune-up and affect our ears [and lives]. Abraham . . . David; ah, we're getting somewhere? No, we seem to be going back to the *arpeggios*. Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah . . . and then, to our alarm, it goes into a minor key . . . as Josiah, Jehoniah, and others go off to exile in Babylon! Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! What's that doing in a royal family's tree? Well, wait a moment, back comes the rhythm, the broken chords – and now, yes, it's built up at last: Zadok (not the same one as in Handel's anthem, of course), Achim, Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan, Jacob, and then at last Joseph, the husband of Mary, *of whom was born Jesus, who is called Messiah, King of the Jews*. One might say that Matthew's whole gospel is, in fact, a Coronation Anthem.

See MATTHEW: THE ROYAL GOSPEL, p. 2

**Ash Wednesday
Worship February 26**
11:15 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.
Pastor Emeritus Dave Johnson

Imposition of ashes and a solemn reminder of both our mortality and God's eternal life for us.

The Ash Wednesday worship service will be broadcast on KSFY at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, February 26.

Do you know someone who is unable to attend worship at First Lutheran? Please let them know about the television broadcast.

Wednesday Lenten Worship and Meals
March 4–April 1 Worship will be held at 11:15 a.m. followed by a soup and bread lunch at noon. Wednesday night meals remain the same, 5–6 p.m. followed by Lenten worship at 6:30.



The other themes of *Witnesses* will unfold throughout the rest of Lent as we reflect on Jesus' interactions with:

- “The Healed” (March 11)
- “The Humbled” (March 18)
- “The Children” (March 25),
- “The Forgiven” (April 1)
- “The Deserters and Betrayers” (Maundy Thursday)
- “The Bystanders” (Good Friday)
- “The Witnesses” (Easter)

Capital Campaign Update

By Jean Hoff, Campaign Coordinator

The capital campaign pledges are growing each week. Our pledges at this time total \$1,435,652. Thank you to those of you that have committed to helping to eliminate the debt, help with the building maintenance, including the steeple, windows and tuck pointing. The ceiling in the sanctuary needs to be replaced as we had some of those ceiling tiles fall down. We sure don't want any of our members hurt by something falling. Security is still a big item of concern at our downtown church. It is not pleasant to think about someone coming into our church to do harm but in today's world, it is a reality, we need to prepare for and plan accordingly.

Members of the congregation are now working on making calls and scheduling home visits. This is a time for you to ask questions, make comments, and share your thoughts with those that make the visit. I have found that individuals don't just comment on the capital campaign but share other concerns with the individual(s) visiting. Your comments, concerns and thoughts are passed on to the appropriate staff member.

We are working our way through the members of the congregation for home visits but this will take us a number of months. If you would like to schedule a visit, please contact me at 339-1983, ext 242. I will be happy to have one of the teams contact you for a visit.

Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow!



The church will be closed on Monday, February 17 in honor of Presidents' Day



A Splash from the Past

Together With God's Ongoing Word of Salvation

By Pastor John Christopherson

After much enthusiastic discussion over the past few months, there is agreement among the Worship & Music Board and pastoral staff that our original baptismal font from 1920 be placed once more in the main sanctuary (just in front of the communion railing and chancel steps) – especially during this year of celebrating First Lutheran's 100th Anniversary. Our hope is to have it safely in place by February 16 when the first of many returning musicians and preachers return "home" – to join in a variety of worship experiences that celebrate this centennial year. The first guest preacher will be Pastor Jason Burggraff who will preach at the worship services on February 15 and 16.

The following article regarding our original baptismal font was originally printed in the January issue of First Word in 2005, by the late Warren Day. On behalf of the family of First Lutheran, our heartfelt appreciation for Warren's careful research – along with his beloved wife, Phyllis – in bringing this part of our history to light.

"A Link to the Past"

It is a visible connection with our First Lutheran heritage. The old baptismal font standing in the narthex is a relic from the former St. Olaf and Grace congregations that merged [on September 23, 1920] to create First Lutheran Church. Upon this merger, all assets of the

two congregations became the property of the new congregation. This font stands as a reminder from whence we came.

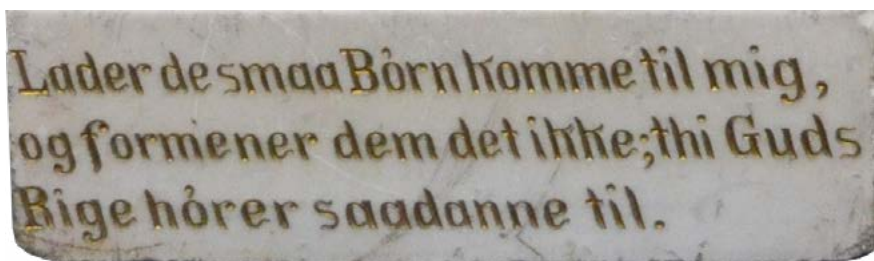
The years have not treated it well – as its once polished surface reflects the passing of time. Eventually a beautiful new wooden baptismal font replaced the old marble one which was sent into near oblivion. Relegated to the darkness of a storage closet, it lay broken and neglected awaiting a time when it could be restored and once again be used.

Reuben Bragstad, a founding father of the congregation, discovered the broken and discarded font, salvaged the pieces, and sought someone who could make the needed repairs. A marble craftsman at Syverson Tile skillfully patched and polished it until it was once again a beautiful work of art. It was used from time to time until it was again broken and sent to the marble shop for another restoration.

It has now found a site where it is not used as originally intended, but where everyone can see and appreciate this piece of our heritage. The font is signed by Ballard and Son, the firm whose craftsmen created it in 1903.

This Sioux Falls firm ceased operation in the late 1940s.

The message engraved on its base is a verse from the Gospel of Matthew and written in Norwegian, the language of the founding church. "Let the little children come unto me, and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of Heaven" [Matthew 19:14].



Thrivent Choice Dollars

Thrivent Choice Dollars are used for a variety of events at First Lutheran such as the 100 year anniversary as well as outreach ministries. Please remember to designate First Lutheran Church if you have Thrivent Choice Dollars. When designated to First Lutheran, these dollars support all ministries of the church. If you have dollars available, you must make an annual request for them to be distributed. The last date to apply for 2019 Thrivent Choice Dollars is March 31, 2020. Please contact Pr. Jeff Backer, jbacker@flcsf.org or Marilyn McNeill, mmcneill@flcsf.org, or call Marilyn at (605) 339-1983 ext. 236.



The Gospel of Matthew Experience

Each church year, our weekly scripture readings are based around one of the "synoptic gospels" of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, while the Gospel of John is used on certain weeks throughout each of the three-year cycle. This year is Year A, which means that the Gospel of Matthew will give shape to our worship, preaching, and teaching.

Join us on Sunday mornings through February 9, at 9:30 or 10:45 a.m., in the Friendship Room for a four-week introduction to the Gospel of Matthew.

- January 19 - Overview of Matthew (with Pastor Lars Olson)
- January 26 - Jesus' Teachings and the Sermon on the Mount (with Pastor Jeff Backer)
- February 2 - Jesus in Jerusalem (with Pastor Jeff Backer)
- February 9 - Resurrection and Great Commission (with Pastor Lars Olson)

Continued from page 1

Matthew: The Royal Gospel cont.

But who is being crowned King? Matthew gives him two names and then explains them both. First, he is called "Jesus," which in Hebrew means "God saves" – because, says Matthew (1:21), Jesus will save his people from their sins. He is a king who will deliver them from bondage and exile; no, not that of Pharaoh in Egypt, or from an exile in Babylon, but rather, a saving from the powers of sin and death. A King who enters into their very bondage and then leads them to freedom.

The second name is "Emmanuel," which means "God with us" (1:23). Matthew has drawn together the two threads of Jewish expectation. First, God will save his people from their sins, yes, and he'll do it through the King, Jesus. Second, God himself will come and dwell with his people. The book of Matthew celebrates the coronation of the Savior: the God-with-us King. If you turn now to the end of Matthew's gospel, you'll see how this theme is worked out in a soaring "sending movement." The disciples come to the risen Jesus on the mountain in Galilee. And what does Jesus say to them?

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me [the King who reigns over all creation]; so go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ... and teaching them ...; and look, I am with you always [the King who abides with us every step of the way], even to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Here we see how Matthew has joined his whole gospel together with the Emmanuel theme. Jesus is to be called Emmanuel, "God with us"; now, he says, I am with you always. And the one who says it is the one who has died on the charge of being the king of the Jews, and who has been raised again. In other words, Jesus is the one who has saved his people from their sins. The Coronation Anthem ends with the same chord with which it began. Jesus is the long expected Messiah, the Savior, the King of all Creation.

And so where does this leave us? It leaves us in the mid-season of Lent. It leaves us with the question that's at the heart of Matthew's gospel: "Who do you say that I am?" asks Jesus (Matthew 16:13). A personal response of committed discipleship is called for: to follow, to worship and praise, and to serve the one who has died and was raised for us. As Prof. Wright observes: "Matthew's gospel, with its Coronation Anthem, contains a line of music for every creature, and the harmony will not be complete until all join in" (N.T. Wright, p.30).

Yes, there's always a welcoming place, waiting, just for you... among the family of First Lutheran Church. In this New Year of 2020, come, join the chorus...

In the name of Christ the King, who reigns from the cross,

j.r. christopherson
Senior Pastor



Sadao Watanabe, Christ Carrying the Cross, c. 1968



Women - The Art of Giving Back – Then and Now

By DeAnn Clark



Last March I took a pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Israel and Palestine. It was beyond explanation. When I arrived home and was telling my experience to my mother, she said, “Did you just read the article about the Holy Land in the April issue of the Gather magazine?” I

said, “No, I’ve not seen it. What are you talking about?” She simply said, “I think you need to read it.” I did, and if you want to know about my experience, it mimics

exactly what Rev. Meghan Johnston Aelabouni wrote in her article entitled “Encountering Jesus in the Holy Land.” So jumping right to the point, where did I see and encounter Jesus in the Holy Land? I saw JESUS in the people, but especially I saw Jesus in the WOMEN. Women much like you and me. Women cooking meals, cleaning (the Passover was coming, and the women must remove all leaven from the house so clean, clean, clean), studying God’s Word, being baptized in the Jordan, laughing, singing, and praying—REALLY praying at the Western “Wailing” Wall! All women like you and me!

One of my favorite sites was Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. This entire area was Jesus’ home base and where many significant events took place. Reading from Luke 8:1-3 “After this (Jesus has just forgiven the sins of the sinful woman) Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, and ALSO SOME WOMEN who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases; Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and MANY OTHERS. These women were helping to support Jesus and the twelve out of their own MEANS (or SUBSTANCE as said in the King James’ version).”

Did you hear it? Jesus was traveling with the twelve and also some women who were helping to support them out of their own means!

What fabulous sisters in faith and matriarchs we have to follow after...they knew and lived THE ART OF GIVING BACK. To retreat a bit, just think about these women...we know there are the three—Mary Magdalene, Susanna, Joanna, and MANY OTHERS. How were they traveling around with the 12? Did they have their own camp at night? Did they share their curling irons and swap outfits? Did they always get along? They were very much like you and me.

So did these women just give to Jesus out of their means for a little while, or what happened to them? Let’s look ahead to Mark 15:33-41 “At the 6th hour darkness came over the whole land until the 9th hour. And at the 9th hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’—which means, ‘My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?’ When some of those standing near heard this, they said, ‘Listen, he’s calling Elijah.’ One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ‘Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,’ he said. With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. ... Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James

the younger and of Jesus, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.”

Further on in Mark 15:46-47 ... Then they rolled the stone against the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he laid.

And....

Mark 16:1—When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. Mark 16:16 “When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, HE APPEARED FIRST TO MARY MAGDALENE, OUT OF WHOM HE HAD DRIVEN SEVEN DEMONS.”

Our Lord is so full of mercy and LOVE for us women that he gave us the honor of seeing his risen body first. He is there for you in your heartaches, when demons are chasing you and capturing you. He is there when you are sick and in pain. He loves us all so much that he took our sins upon the cross and died so that we might live. He loves ALL of you, dear Circle Sisters....

Dorcas – who had a great illness, dies and is restored to life. She served the poor.

Elizabeth – who is barren for most of her life and wants a child and then blessed with John the Baptist!

Hannah – also barren and promises that she will dedicate her son to the Lord and she faithfully does when Samuel is born.

Katie Luther – who left her career and married Martin Luther, need I say more?!

Lois – mentioned only once in 2 Timothy 1:5 as Timothy’s grandmother (she must have been special and important to Timothy).

Lydia – who opened her home to Paul and was the first convert and member of the Church of Phillippi.

Rachel – who also weeps for children and God provides.

Martha – who opens her home to Jesus and prepares the meals.

Mary-Mary-Mary – she gives him life, she faithfully follows and gives to Jesus of her means even after death.

Rhoda – mentioned only once in the NT Bible in Acts 12:12-15 and was a girl who was a maid/servant and opens the door to Peter when he arrives.

RUTH – who is a woman from a foreign land, a widow, and homeless and the Lord provides to her and ultimately she is the great-grandma to King David and ultimately here lineage leads to JESUS!

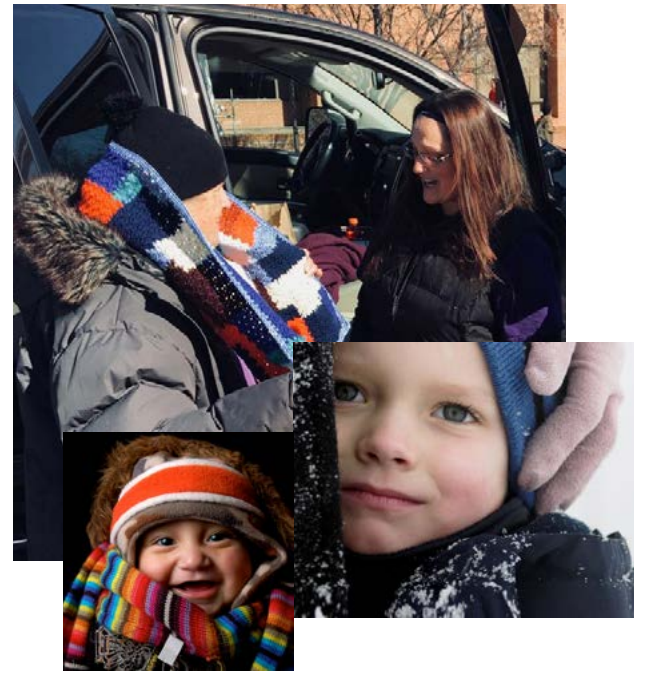
Sarah – childless for most of her life but again the Lord provides a child Isaac, the child of the promise.

The Lord has been good to all of us to have these many matriarchs in the faith. Father, we thank you for the women who have played so many important roles in our past. Today we especially pray for all women who presently lead our church: Pastor Katherine Olson, SD Synod Bishop Constanze Hagmaier, Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, women who lead our nation, city and state Governor Kristi Noem. Please bless each one in a special way this year and help us to find ways to express to them our love, gratitude and support for THE ART OF GIVING BACK.



Above: DeAnn, Lama (Palestinian tour guide), and tour mate, Lynn Nyhus.

Below: Woman in a Palestinian refugee camp.



FLCW Winter Gear Collection for Church on the Street

Do you have extra gloves, hats, scarves, masks, socks, coats or other winter gear? At this time of year, many people are in need. Barb Hudelson, a FLCW member, suggested that it would be a good time to help others with our extras or any special finds we may have. Discipleship leaders, Rachel Burggraaf and Norma Hofer, will be heading up our collection of these items through February. Church on the Street will be a major benefactor of these items and will help to distribute them. In advance, we thank everyone who is willing to help those in need!

WELCA Meeting Hosts An All-Time Favorite

Thursday, February 6, 10 a.m., Gathering Room

Last year, weather and health interfered with his visit, but in February, we will have John Cerwinski as our WELCA speaker. He was born in Minneapolis and lived in Sioux Falls from age one, the youngest of three boys. Self-taught, he started playing drums when he was just seven years old. He continued through all grades, and in high school, he also directed a girls chorus at Washington High School.

In 1978, he wed a wonderful gal, Nancy Schuler, whom he met at First Lutheran. Soon after, in 1980, he began his career as a full-time custodian with FLC. His time then also included youth work and his musical ministry of drumming. Eventually, his children were born. Today Ben is an Educational Assistant in Spearfish, and Jacinda is part of EmBe’s preschool staff. Jacinda is special, as we all enjoy her singing. She has another distinction to her father and family—she is the first girl in the Cerwinski family in 70 years!

Join us February 6 at 10 a.m. in the Gathering Room with Martha Circle serving to hear more from John. His topic is “My Life at First Lutheran – Vacuums, Drums, and Whatever.” For 31 years, we have enjoyed his smile, enthusiasm, and great effort in service to our church and its congregation. Even in his retirement, he is involved, especially in volunteering for Project CAR on Thursdays and Fridays. We love the fact that we just cannot escape from his active presence! Come hear the stories about FLC and us and his timely historical stories. Immediately following will be the WELCA Board meeting, in the Gathering Room.



CARE AND HEALTH MINISTRY



What a Vision! What a Ministry!

By Jean Hoff

Meals from the Heart celebrated 10 years in November. The joy of this ministry touches many lives and there are many people to thank. We need to be thankful for Paula Bartels, our Parish nurse at the time, and the members that went to visit other churches that had this type of ministry. These individuals had the foresight to see a need and were guided by the Holy Spirit to start this ministry. A special thank you to the member that created the labels, put the recipes together from other churches, and guided the group through the first 6 months.

We can't forget to thank the members of First Lutheran who have shared recipes and the members that have over these 10 years made the meals. Our most popular meal is First Lutheran bazaar meatballs over buttered noodles. This meal was started a couple of years ago. When people hear about this meal being available, they fly out the door. It's wonderful to be able to share this piece of our heritage with others. A few years ago we tried a corned beef hot dish in March that went over well. Chicken, beef and pork are used in a variety of recipes.

About six years ago we added desserts. I grew up in a family that always had dessert so it was natural for to start adding desserts for Meals from the Heart. We have had apple pies, bars and cookies. If you want to donate a dessert item that would freeze well, please contact Jean Hoff, 941-7352.



Meals from the Heart is for anyone you might know. You could take a meal to a friend, to a family member, to a co-worker. The meal is to be uplifting. We want the person receiving the meal to know they are loved by God and certainly cared for by the person delivering the meal. In each meal we have a prayer that is included. When meals are prepared we pray for those receiving the meals and those delivering the meals.

We certainly can't forget those individuals and groups that have given financially to this ministry. Meals from the Heart continues because of those gifts. This ministry began because people in the congregation wanted to help share in a joy, like the birth of a child, to bring food to someone experiencing an illness or a loss. Food connects us in many ways. It expresses our love for others and is a way that God calls us to serve His people. This ministry has provided 7,753 meals to both members of our congregation and for those outside our congregation. How Awesome! Praise God for this ministry!

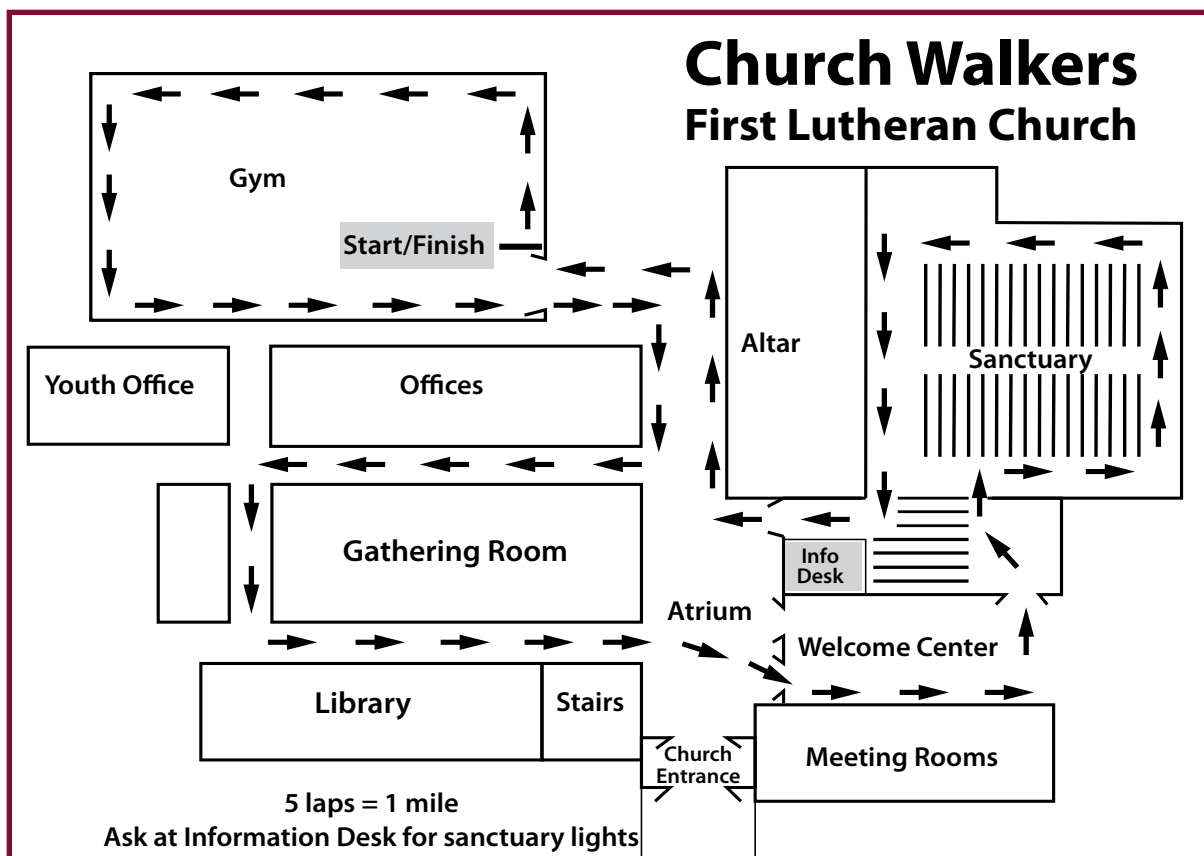
Grieving with Grace Continues February 1

Grieving with Grace is a support group where adults learn about the grieving process and how to care for themselves as they work through the grief of a loved one's death. Sessions usually take place on the first Saturday morning of the month in the Gathering Room of First Lutheran Church. Social time begins at 9:30, and the group sessions last from 10 to 11 a.m. For the next several months, we will continue journeying through the book "Understanding Your Grief," written by noted grief expert Dr. Alan Wolfelt. Participants in our class will receive a free copy of the book as well as their own grief journal. All sessions are open to first-time participants, and talking aloud is not required. Our topic in February will be "Explore Your Feelings of Loss." If you have questions about Grieving with Grace, contact Pastor Katherine Olson, the group's facilitator, at kolson@flcsf.org or 339-1983, ext. 214.



Valentines for Homebound

Through February 9, please join us in a special Valentines for Shut-Ins project at First Lutheran Church. Pick up your assignment from the Valentines for Shut-Ins Tree in the Atrium, or call the Reception Desk to receive your assignment by phone (336-3734). You'll receive the name and address of a homebound member of First Lutheran and will be asked to mail a friendly valentine (store-bought or homemade) to them by February 11. This project is a great ministry opportunity for Christians of all ages, and families are especially encouraged to participate.



Hey, We're Walkin'... Top 10 reasons why

Walking has so many benefits, but it can be hard to get your steps in when it is so cold outside. If you are looking for a good walking path, consider checking out the path First Lutheran has mapped out in the church. Anyone is welcome to walk it during staffed church hours. If you have any questions, contact Jordan Stone at jstone@flcsf.org.

1. Walking is the most popular form of exercise in the U.S.
2. To burn off one plain M&M candy, you would need to walk the length of a football field.
3. The average human walks 3.1 miles per hour.
4. A typical pair of tennis shoes last for 500 miles of walking.
5. Less than 50% of Americans exercise enough to see significant health benefits.
6. Walking 6,000 steps a day will help improve your health and walking 10,000 will help you lose weight.
7. A person walks 65,000 miles in their lifetime – which equals walking three times around the earth.
8. Walking increases blood flow to the brain and improves your mood.
9. Walking for 10 miles every week would eliminate 500 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions a year.
10. Walking an extra 20 minutes a day will burn 7 pounds of body fat per year.



Faithfully Fit Returns

The Care & Health Board would like to re-introduce Faithfully Fit, a health initiative to help individuals of all ages improve balance and prevent falls. We're thinking about offering this on Wednesday mornings at 9 but are open to other days and times. Please let us know if you're interested by contacting Care & Health Coordinator Jordan Stone at jstone@flcsf.org or 339-1983 ext. 237.

Visitation Ministry for the Hospitalized

Every weekday, a member of the pastoral staff is available to visit members and friends of First Lutheran Church who are hospitalized. The pastors are there to listen, pray, read Scripture, and administer communion during a time of vulnerability and need. No matter what health care system you are part of—Sanford, Avera, or the V.A.—be sure your medical record indicates you are a member of First Lutheran so the staff can release your name to us when we make our calls! Additionally, we encourage you to call the church (336-3734) if you or someone you love is in need of this type of care.

YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY



Do You Know?

By Marnie Dahle Backer,
Youth & Family Director



Let's get to know someone "new" or maybe not so "new." Sometimes, when we introduce ourselves to one another at church, we use the tag line "Are you new to First Lutheran?" Oh dear! This seems like a lovely entry point to a conversation, but sometimes it can go bad quickly. Someone might be offended because they're lifelong members or even members for the last ten or twenty years. A better quip for conversation might be: "How long have you been a part of First Lutheran?" Whew!

I've said this before—I've worked here nearly 20 years, and every week I meet new people!

It's a large community we are blessed to be a part of, so don't be afraid to meet someone new, and throw a little grace out there just in case someone asks you the wrong questions. It's ok. No matter what, God has his claim on you and knows you completely!

This month meet FLC member, Katie Bossman! Here's our interview:



Tell us about yourself, your family, where you work, what you like to do for fun.

My name is Katie Bossman. I have two amazing daughters, Priya and Miriam. I grew up near Parker, SD, and went to college at USD. I've worked in Sioux Falls; Washington, DC; and Pierre, SD. The past five years I've worked at PREMIER Bankcard/First PREMIER Bank in the Human Resources department specializing in compensation and data analytics. Priya and Miriam attend Susan B. Anthony elementary and participate in soccer, piano, swimming, Sunday School, and Carol Choir. We enjoy ice skating, golf, bike rides, swimming, making lefse (and other yummy treats), spending time outside, and watching movies.

How long have you been a member at First Lutheran? Share with us the ways you have been involved in the life of the church. I've been a member of First Lutheran Church for just over 13 years. Both Priya and Miriam were baptized at First Lutheran and have participated in several milestones already. Priya and Miriam enjoy Sunday School and participating in the Christmas Pageant. We even got to be a part of the Epiphany tableau a few years back. Priya is active in Carol Choir, and Miriam is excited for next year when she gets to join as well. I am blessed to be the secretary of the Youth and Family Board as well as a Sunday School Shepherd. I've helped out the past few years making rommegtrot during the annual Bazaar, and I hope to do more with the Bazaar in years to come. I also participate in Bible studies and 4:12 Young Adult events at FLC. I try to be an active church member, and I'm excited for the future of FLC.

What is your favorite thing about being a part of FLC?

My favorite thing about FLC is the people.

I've tried to meet more people and expand my circle the past year. I've met some truly amazing people and got to share in some fun adventures. I enjoy walking into church or even Sam's Club and running into people I know from church.

Is there something you have wondered about when it comes to your church or your faith? Like any person whose job it is to find anomalies and discrepancies, I've questioned my faith and questioned God. I enjoy the Ask the Pastor sessions where people can ask the questions and hear from the individuals who are leading our church. I'm always in awe of their knowledge and deep faith; I continue to try and grow my faith by learning from the pastors and the other members of the church. One question I've often thought about is: "How can I truly understand my beliefs?" or am I "doing it right?" So I continue to read and learn but also recognize that I might not know everything, and sometimes you just have to have faith.

With two little girls at home, how do you all incorporate faith into your daily lives?

I find that incorporating faith into the little things in life is how I can best show my girls that God is always with us and has blessed us with many things. We talk about being fortunate to have our health, family, and a roof over our heads. And we talk about sharing our talents God has given us with others. We don't always have money to donate, but we can donate our time and our talents to help others. We are often held captive by the hustle and bustle of the day, driving here and there, so being in the car together allows us some time we can talk and reconnect.

One thing we've adopted from Pastor Katherine is saying a quick prayer whenever we hear or see an ambulance or fire truck. We pray that the people are safe and get better soon. Normally this is when we are driving in the car, so we also use that time to sometimes ask the hard questions and share.

Your life is very full (or busy); how do you manage to prioritize your faith with everything else?

I had a troubled marriage, and the one thing that really helped me through was the faith I saw in the mentors around me. These are some strong women who showed me that God will be there for me and to continue to pray, not to change the situation but to understand how I can change me because of the situation. This time in my life showed me that God has a larger plan for me and that sometimes it is not the plan I had envisioned for myself. Faith is what got me through—and a strong nudge from God to move back to Sioux Falls. I want my girls to know that no matter what, God and the FLC family are there for them. They are stronger than they think because of their faith.

What is a favorite Bible verse or story, and how do you hear God speaking to you in it? My favorite Bible verse is Psalm 141. This verse was in a Taizé song I would sing in college, and it always centers and grounds me. I enjoy when we sing the Psalm at church, especially during Advent. I think God speaks to me in this verse by asking God to help me and have me be one of his instruments to do good. There are times that I can see God's good in the world through a sunset, a crisp morning, or the laughter of friends. He is all around us and blesses us in many ways.

Thank you, Katie. Beautiful answers to the questions. Look for Katie on Sunday morning and introduce yourself! Blessings to you all as we continue to grow as a community of believers.

Milestone Minute

Second Grade Confession and
Forgiveness Milestone
Sunday, February 2.

All second grade families are invited to come to a breakfast at 9:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. We will learn that even though we all sin and make mistakes, God sent his son so that we may be forgiven! The children will help lead the congregation in the Confession and Forgiveness at the 11 a.m. worship service.



2020 Camp FLC



Camp Registration Deadline February 13. All prices of camps/trips go up \$50 or more after that date. Sign up today! flcsf.org/camps



Bella Noche
Dinner & Auction

Sunday, February 23 ♦ 5 p.m.

First Lutheran Church, Reformation Hall

Dinner ♦ Live & Silent Auctions

Tickets are \$25 each or \$175 for a table of 8. Available in the Youth and Family Office.

Join us for this spectacular night of food, community, plus silent and live auctions!

Auction items are needed – ideas include: vacation stays, adventure experiences, hand-crafted items (wood, quilts, pottery...), framed artwork, theme baskets (meals, family fun, sports packages, grilling, etc.)

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Feed & Carnival

Join us on February 25 from 5 to 7 p.m. in Reformation Hall. All-you-can-eat pancakes, Mr. Twister, face painting, and family craft. Cost is \$5 per person.



Mission

First Lutheran Church welcomes all people into the community of Jesus Christ, equipping and sending them forth to serve and witness in Jesus' name.

Guiding Principles

We are grounded in the great commandment of Jesus.
(Matthew 22:34-40)

We are grounded in the great commission of Jesus.
(Matthew 28:16-20)

We are committed to welcome and minister to all people.

We are committed to equipping people for ministry.

We are committed to service in our community and world.

We are committed to a ministry of relationship building.

We are committed to our heritage and identity as a reforming church.

We are committed to excellence in broadcast ministry.



Worship Services

Saturday (Chapel)

5 p.m. Vespers/Communion

Sunday (Sanctuary)

8 a.m. Traditional Worship with Communion

9:30 a.m. Traditional Worship

11 a.m. Contemporary Worship

Media Ministries Broadcasts

8 a.m. KELO-FM Radio (101.9)

11 a.m. KSFY (Sioux Falls), KPRY (Pierre) and KABY (Aberdeen)

youtube.com/flcsf

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@firstlutheransf

First Word

First Word is the monthly newspaper of First Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, SD. It is distributed to members of the congregation and others upon request. Opinions expressed in First Word are those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by the First Lutheran Church congregation or staff. The editors of First Word reserve the right to edit submissions.

Newsletter submissions are due the first business day of the month. Please submit articles or questions regarding First Word to Communications Director, Jodi Hoyt, at jhoyt@flcsf.org. Reader feedback is always welcome.

First Word is available online to read or download at flcsf.org/firstword.

Senior Luncheon – February 11

All First Lutheran senior adults and their friends are invited to join us for a delicious catered lunch and an entertaining program on the second Tuesday of each month. On Tuesday, February 11, at noon, the menu will be Garlic-herb chicken breast, wild rice, tossed salad and roll. Program will be by the Sioux Falls Lutheran High School Choir. Please RSVP for the luncheon by calling the church receptionist at 336-3734, by Wednesday, February 5. Need a ride? Please call Project CAR, 332-2777, by 9 a.m. on Monday, February 10.

Thrivent Choice Dollars

Please remember to designate First Lutheran Church if you have Thrivent Choice Dollars. When designated to First Lutheran, these dollars support all ministries of the church. If you have dollars available, you must make an annual request for them to be distributed. The last date to apply for 2019 Thrivent Choice Dollars is March 31, 2020. Please contact Pr. Jeff Backer, jbacker@flcsf.org or Marilyn McNeill, mmcneill@flcsf.org, or call Marilyn at (605) 339-1983 ext. 236.

With the 100 year anniversary in 2020, all Thrivent Choice Dollars will be directed to offset the expenses connected with the celebration.



Listings are through December 2019

Baptisms:

Dec. 22, Thomas Van Billion, son of Tim and Kelsey Billion

Deaths

Dec. 2 Alice Engebretson

Dec. 4 Leawatha Rierson

Dec. 4 Marit Pudas

Dec. 13 Janice "Jan" Erkes

Dec. 28 Doris Salem

Council Highlights

If church members wish to add to an upcoming Council meeting agenda, please contact Marilyn McNeill, Business Administrator, at 339-1983 ext. 236 or mmcneill@flcsf.org. Meetings are held the fourth Thursday of each month. First Lutheran Church members are welcome to visit meetings.

December 19, 2019

- Randy Eide and Marilyn McNeill gave the council an update regarding offerings for the past month. Weekly offerings have been good and the financials seem to be improving.
- Pastor John offered thanks to many people. Thanks to Pastor Jeff for article in the First Word regarding the 100th Anniversary Celebration which shows the calendar of pastors and musicians coming to FLC in 2020. Thanks to Jean Hoff on her continued work on the Capital Campaign. Thanks to Zachary Brockhoff for the time spent on the midweek Advent services. Pastor John asked for prayers for all members at FLC who have lost loved ones this past year.
- USD law professor Jon VanPatten will be holding a forum on Palm Sunday in 2020 about the trial of Jesus.
- Pastor Lars thanked the boards, staff and volunteers for their continued hard work in December. It is a very busy month for everyone.
- Deb Nelson of the Welcome and Community Board shared what they are doing and what their goals are for 2020. A great discussion was held on how we at FLC can be more hospitable to all current and new members. Many ideas were shared.
- The 2020 FLC budget was discussed including the direction of the boards for next year. Pastor Lars shared a handout called "Toward a Ministry Plan" outlining community building hopes for the FLC church community. This starts with the boards 2020 directions and goals.
- The nominating committee is making good progress.
- The railing on the north balcony is finished and the bell tables have been set up.
- Pastor John gave an update regarding the Capital Campaign. Things are going well with visits continuing.
- Pastor John gave an update regarding the 100th Anniversary Celebration which has been named "A Heritage of God's Grace." Sunday, November 1, 2020, will be the church service for the 100th Anniversary.

CHURCH COUNCIL

Officers/Executive Committee

Martin Oyos President
Michael Paulson Vice President
Randy Eide Treasurer
Suzie Hernes Secretary
John Christopherson Senior Pastor
Michael Kedik Member-at-Large
Lenae Schwartz Member-at-Large

Council Representatives

Care & Health Barney Brandenburg
Education & Discipleship Lindsey Olson
Evangelism & Outreach Colleen Kokenge
Finance, Admin. & Property Lyle Eidsness
FLCW Kathy Stelzer
Foundation Somer Anderson
Stewardship & Giving Birgit Peterson
Welcome & Community Deb Nelson
Worship & Music James Moore
Youth & Family Suzy Schramm

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH STAFF DIRECTORY

Pastoral Staff

(203) Dr. John Christopherson . . . Senior Pastor
(210) Rev. Lars Olson Executive Pastor
(209) Rev. Jeff Backer Associate Pastor
(214) Rev. Katherine Olson* . . . Associate Pastor
(202) Rev. Bob Chell* Visitation
(202) Rev. David Houck* Visitation
(202) Rev. Roger Noer* Visitation
(202) Rev. Dennis Tranberg* Visitation
(202) Rev. Dave Johnson Emeritus

Administrative Staff

(236) Marilyn McNeill . Business Administrator
(211) Jody Bymers Finance Administrator
(202) Donna Jahr Secretary to the Pastors
(225) Kristy Zuraff* . . Admin/PM Receptionist
(201) Cleo Sorensen* . . . Receptionist/Secretary

Care and Health Ministries

(237) Jordan Stone Caring Coordinator
(202) Cheryl Satterlee* . . Wedding Coordinator

Media Ministry

(231) Jodi Hoyt Director
(213) Susan Bell . Communications Coordinator
Kathy Hein* Broadcast Director
Garrett Masters* Broadcast Director
David Palmer* Broadcast Director
Hons Oakland* Broadcast Director
Tanner Wangsness* Broadcast Director

Facilities

(201) Dave Wilson Facility Manager
Rick East Custodian
Jeff Hartnett Custodian

Worship and Music Ministries

(260) Zachary Brockhoff . . . Director/Organist,
FLYGHOT and Jubilant Singers Director
(261) Shirley Barlow* . . Administrative Assistant
Larry Olson* Contemporary Worship
Dr. Paul Nesheim* Adult Choir Director,
Women's Choir Director
Bonnie Lindgren* Carol Choir Director
Donna Hamilton* Accompanist
Sue Severson* Accompanist
Mary Ryrholm* Agape Ringers Director
Pam Sonnichsen* . . . Instrumental Coordinator
Marcia Kittelson* Organist Emerita

Youth and Family Ministries

(204) Marnie Dahle Backer Director
(235) Elias Johnson-Youngquist . Youth Minister
(228) Mark Nassen* Coordinator
(238) Heather Smith Children's Minister
Nancy Henrichsen* Nursery Attendant
Gayle Johnson* Nursery Attendant
Irma Rodriguez Leon* Nursery Attendant
Kris Stark* Nursery Attendant

() = Direct dial phone extensions. If no extension is listed, please call the Director of the ministry area.
* Part-time staff

Main phone (605) 336-3734
Direct dial to extensions (605) 339-1983
Toll-free (800) 425-9899
Fax (605) 336-8370
Pastoral emergency (605) 610-9431
Custodian cell (605) 351-8281
Project CAR (605) 332-2777

FINANCIAL SERVICES



Financial Update as of December 2019

Total Revenue, year-to-date	
2019 Actual.	\$2,147,316
2018 Actual.	\$2,074,279
Total Expenses, year-to-date	
2019 Actual.	\$2,137,427
2018 Actual.	\$2,036,007
Contract For Deed Ideal	\$204,290
HVAC System	\$1,104,082
Worship Attendance	5,197

Gifts and Memorials, December

Gifts to the FLC Foundation in memory of:

Dorothy Bahnson: Dr. Howard & Sandra Peterson Jr.
Sandy Earl: Dorothy Grevlos
Jan Erkes: Betty Pfeifle
Pr. Dennis Griffin: Betty Pfeifle
Houston Haugo: Stephen Johnson
Marit Pudas: James & Sandra Fink, Dorothy Grevlos

Gift to Care and Health Ministries in memory of:

Eunice Hovland: John & Carol Nordaune

Gifts to the FLC Quilters in memory of:

Jan Erkes: Larry & Marilyn Anderson, Orrin & Karen Anderson, Jerald & Sylvia Berg, Cliff & Bea Dvoracek, Sandy Holleman, Lloyd & Donna Knutson, Marilyn McLeod, Dorothy Mikkelson, Mary Nicolai, Tracie Osthus, Sandra Pedersen, Terry & Dianne Roisom, Ruth Werner

Gifts to Lankford Arts Series in memory of:

Marit Pudas: Sandra Thompson

Gifts to Meals From The Heart in memory of:

Irene Kvien: Leonard & Pamela Block, David Kvien

Gifts to Media Ministries in honor of:

Pastor Jim Christopherson's 90th birthday: Orrin & Patricia Townswick
Eleanor Emmel: D.C. Emmel

Gifts to Media Ministries in memory of:

Marilyn Baldwin: First Lutheran Church Women
Jerry Bruget: Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce, Paul & Barbara Halstenson, John & Enid Kinkead, T.E. & L. J. Pryor, Lottie Rollag
Jean DeZotell: Jeff & Edna Husman
Sandy Earl: Larry & Marilyn Anderson, Pamela Best Johnson, Carol Bormann, Pat Bruget, Doris Bushard, Stan & Sandra Christopherson, Bob Doescher, Don & Judy Erickson, Eugene & Betty Erickson, James & Sandra Fink, First Lutheran Church Women, Jean Hoff, Mary Ann Hohman, Sandra Holleman, Janet Lyso, Jack & Lona Miller, Marilyn Moseson, Dr. Gary & Roseaan Olson, Abbie Pagone, LaMoyné & Karyn Pederson, Betty Pfeifle, Pr. Franklin Pudas, Irene Rezac, David & Pamela Sonnichsen, Orrin & Patricia Townswick, Paul & Karen Van Bockern
Delmar Emmel: D. C. Emmel
Alice Engebretson: Kathy Stelzer
Jan Erkes: Roger & Karen Braaten, Faith Christiansen, Don & Sharon DeHaan, Jerry Drake, Jeanette Edman, Don & Judy Erickson, Ruth Ewoldt, Wanda Heisel, Jake & Norma Hofer, Mary Ann Hohman, Mary Jo Jaqua, Allan & Phyllis Knutson, Bill & Nancy Olson, Monica Rudiger, Dale & Janet Sample, Mike & Gloria Simpson, William & Beverly Simpson, Wayne & Norma Steinocker, Wisconsin Metal Parts Inc.
Jill Greenfield: John & Enid Kinkead
John Hillgren: John & Enid Kinkead
Eunice Hovland: Dwane & Maxine Boxdorfer, Mary Eich, Mary Ann Hohman, Don & Florence Toft, Doug & Carol Uthe

Irene Kvien: First Lutheran Church Women

Elizabeth Mendelson: First Lutheran Church Women

Marit Pudas: Barbara Adams, Rod & Kristi Albertus, Larry & Marilyn Anderson, Donald & Alice Anderson, Joan Anderson, Orrin & Karen Anderson, Lowell & Paula Bartels, Jon & Tonja Beach and girls, Pr. Ron & Linda Beckman, Rex Bishman & Mary DeVany, Ross & Janet Blank-Libra, Mark & Jean Bubak, Lonnie Burns, Lillian Carlson, Faith Christiansen, Pr. Jim & Dorothy Christopherson, Jim & DeAnn Clark, Darlene Colwill, David Danielson, Dave Danielson, JoAnn & Joni Davis, Pr. Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl, Karl & Vickie Dieters, Bob Doescher, Gary Earl, Jeanette Edman, Mary Eich, Lyle & Jean Eidsness, Marilyn Eikanger, Norman Eitrheim, Marvyl Eldal, Don & Judy Erickson, Pr. Don & Alta Gaarder, Judy Green, Joanne Hagen, Frank & Joan Hansen, Willis & Phyllis Hanson, Roger Haugo, Pr. Marlin & Ellen Haugrud, Don & Joyce Helberg, Don & Arlene Hoek, Jake & Norma Hofer, Mary Ann Hohman, Sandra Holleman, Burt & Gladys Horsted, Todd & Cami Jacobsen, Charlene Jarratt, Rich & Margie Jensen, David & Glenice Johnson, Donna B. Johnson, Stephen Johnson, Richard & Maura Johnson, Janice Julson, Alma Kallesen, Emil & Carol Knapp, Roger & Bev Lamp, Pr. Duane Larson, Rose Larson, Carol Lerdal, Rolland & Ella Loon, Duane & Linda Lund, Janet Lyso, Edward & Eunice Mansfield, Dennis & Cheryl McGuire, Larry & Kathy McHenry, Dorothy Mikkelson, Dr. Wayne & Doris Mitchell, Ron & Judi Mueller, Mary Nicolai, James Olson, Dr. Gary & Rosaaen Olson, Tom & Marty Olson, Wayne & Elaine Oolman, Tracie Osthus, Howard & Lou Ann Paulson, Sandra Pedersen, LaMoyné & Karyn Pederson, Charlotte Peters, Betty Pfeifle, Rich & Nancy Pudas, Carmen Reinholt; Bill, Peggy, Meredith & Will Reynolds; Don & Denise Schaefer; Robert, Sara, Cora, & Grace Schreiber; Mike & Gloria Simpson, James & Bonita Sopoci, Robert South, Shari Spilde, Kathy Stelzer, Stan & Betty Stephenson; Jordan, Lindsay, Jon & Jade Storevik; Richard Sundem, Don & Florence Toft, Mary Lou Tollefson, Doug & Carol Uthe, Robert & Marilyn Van Demark, Helen Van Liere, Barb Vandever, James & Sherri Wald, Barbara Wiczorek, Karel Williams, Lilly Womeldorf
Lee Ferrin Rierson: Conrad & Helen Rice, Paul & Barbara Halstenson
Bev Stoeckmann: Jim Stoeckmann
Beverly Winter: First Lutheran Church Women

Gifts to Music Ministries in memory of:

Marit Pudas: Mark & Jean Bubak, Beverly Hallstrom, Dennis Knutson, Stan & Norma Schmidt

Gifts to Music Ministries, Handbells, in memory of:

Chuck Osthus: Roger & Betty Wolff

MEDIA MINISTRY



Become a media Sponsor

Support First Lutheran in providing a weekly worship experience for people who are unable attend worship in person. Sponsor a radio broadcast, television broadcast, or closed captioning in honor of or in memory of a loved one, to celebrate a special life event, or to the glory of God. Contact First Lutheran at (605) 336-3734.

Thank You December Sponsors

First Lutheran Church's worship can be seen every Sunday at 11 a.m. on KSFY, KPRY, and KABY in South Dakota; southwest Minnesota; northwest Iowa; and northeast Nebraska. The Sunday 8 a.m. worship service is broadcast live on KELO-FM, 101.9.

December 8: Radio was sponsored in loving memory of Roger Schneekloth, who died one year ago on December 7, 2018, by his wife, Jan Schneekloth, and his family.

Telecast was sponsored in loving memory of Ernest & Emma Tiede and John & Clarice Yttreness by their children Don E. & Karen Tiede.

December 15: Radio was sponsored in memory of Ralph and Priscilla Hillgren, and in memory of their daughter, Sonja Hillgren. It is made possible through a gift to the First Lutheran Church Foundation.

Telecast was sponsored in loving memory of Margaret Doescher by her family.

December 22: Telecast was sponsored in loving memory of Verlyn & Corinne Petersen

and Robert & Sandra Aamlid by Brian & Denise Aamlid.

December 24: Telecast was sponsored by Lori and David Melemseter.

December 25: Christmas Eve rebroadcast and closed captioning was sponsored by Judy Jasper in memory of her parents, Jack and Mabel Jasper.

December 29: Radio was sponsored by Sandy Holleman in loving memory of her parents, Bernice and Melvin Backens; and her brother, Scott.

Closed Captioning was by Sandy Holleman in honor of her daughters, Mary Beth and Heidi, and her brother, Bruce.

Telecast was sponsored by the First Lutheran Church Women as a tribute to the pastors and staff of First Lutheran.

Sponsorships available

Help us share the good news of Jesus Christ beyond our sanctuary into peoples' homes. Please consider sponsoring a radio broadcast (\$155), television broadcast (\$1300), or closed captioning (\$140). To learn how you can be a Media Ministry sponsor to honor or remember a loved one, or celebrate a special life event, please call the church at (605) 336-3734. Additional open dates may be available.

Please note: Effective January 1, 2020 the cost of radio sponsorships has increased to \$155 and effective January 2021, television sponsorship will increase to \$1,340.

February

February 2: Television and closed captioning sponsors are needed. Radio is fully sponsored.

February 9: Closed captioning sponsor needed. Radio and television are fully sponsored.

February 16: Television sponsor needed. Radio and closed captioning are fully sponsored.

February 23: Radio, television, and closed captioning sponsors are needed.

February 26 (Ash Wednesday): Television and closed captioning are

fully sponsored. (No radio needed)

March

March 1: Radio sponsor needed. Television and closed captioning are fully sponsored.

March 8: Closed captioning sponsor needed. Television and radio sponsored.

March 15: Television sponsor needed. Radio and closed captioning fully sponsored.

March 22: Television sponsor needed. Radio and closed captioning fully sponsored.

March 29: Radio, television and closed captioning sponsors needed

EVANGELISM AND OUTREACH MINISTRY



Being Lutheran: Understanding Who(se) We Are

By Jeff Backer, Associate Pastor of Evangelism & Outreach

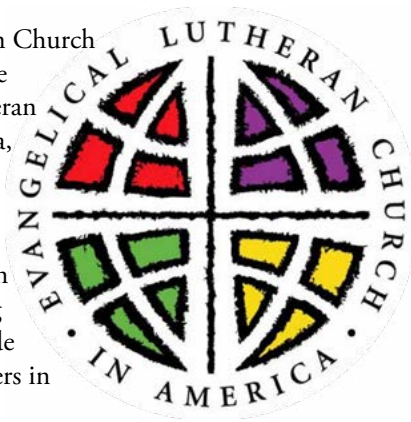


Throughout the month of January, I facilitated a book discussion on the book "Being Lutheran." Written by a Missouri Synod pastor, we had some great discussions about what it means to be Lutheran, and more so to understand what makes the Lutheran confession different in an ever changing church.

One part of our discussion was to deal with some of the fanaticism that the author asserts through his Missouri Synod understanding. What emerged was a dialogue about what makes up the difference in the varying flavors of the Lutheran church.

The Lutheran Church is the second largest worshiping body in the world with approximately 59 million members. There are over 40 different Lutheran church styles in North America that span the spectrum of belief and understanding. There are 6 or 7 different flavors of Lutheran just in the Sioux Falls area. I cannot lay out every comparison, but thought it might help to have a basic understanding of our other Lutheran brothers and sisters.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is the largest body of the Lutheran church in North America, and is the affiliation of First Lutheran Church. The ELCA is generally considered the most open and liberal of the varying Lutheran styles. It is made up of 3.4 million members in 9,091 congregations.



The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) is the second largest Lutheran church body and is more conservative in scope. It is comprised of 2.6 million members in 6,105 congregations.

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) is the third largest and generally the most conservative style of Lutheran in our area. The WELS church has approximately 400,000 members in 1,281 congregations.

The fourth biggest is Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) and is a conservative spin-off of the ELCA. The LCMC churches are comprised of approximately 300,000 members in 944 congregations.

In the Sioux Falls area, there are several churches that affiliate with the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC). The whole membership of the AFLC is less than 45,000 members across the continent in 280 congregations.

While all Lutheran churches share a common history and put vital importance on music as a part of worship, what makes each flavor unique are the differences in beliefs about biblical inerrancy (the belief that the Bible is without fault or error in all of its teaching), fellowship and Communion with other Christians, the role of women in the church, and the view of same-sex marriage.

According to Janet Mulroney Clark¹, these are the primary differences in the various Lutheran confessions.

Biblical Inerrancy

The ELCA believes the Bible to be "the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith and life," according to the ELCA Confession of Faith. ELCA members believe God communicates with believers through the Bible, and that by reading and studying it, people learn more about God. While the Bible is respected as the book of faith, the ELCA does not hold to the doctrine of biblical inerrancy as the other main synods do.

Fellowship and Communion with Other Churches

All Lutheran churches consider worship and Holy Communion to be essential parts of their religious tradition. Each synod has formed statements of belief about sharing worship and Communion with other Christians. Members of ELCA churches are encouraged to worship with Christians from other denominations, and Communion is open to all who have been baptized. The LCMS, AFLC and WELS practice closed Communion; only people who belong to those synods or to churches that are recognized partners may receive Communion. In their belief, closed Communion is necessary in order to protect the integrity of the sacrament.

The Role of Women

In the ELCA, women serve at all levels of leadership, from lay leaders, to ordained pastors, and bishops. The LCMS, AFLC and WELS believe only men can serve as ministers. These three synods believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible, which states in Timothy 2:12 that a woman cannot have authority over a man. Their belief is that women have a vital but subordinate role to play in the life of the church.

Same-Sex Relationships

Within the ELCA, same-sex marriages are generally accepted. Parishes are free to choose ministers who are in a committed same-sex relationship. The LCMS, AFLC and WELS teach that homosexuality is a sin and is not encouraged. They do not recognize same-sex marriage and believe that homosexual people need to repent to receive the grace of God.

No matter our differences, being Lutheran is understanding that we are all sinners for God's redeeming, which has been accomplished in Jesus Christ. We often focus on the why and how of things, but being Lutheran asserts who is in control and at work in our lives. We go through life seeking holy moments, and yet, in our Lutheran perspective, we understand that God is speaking into our lives through the Holy Spirit every day. Being Lutheran is about knowing that God has claimed you in your baptism, marked you forever with the cross of Christ, and made you one with Christ. This is good news for us today!

Thanks be to God.

Pr. Jeff Backer

¹Janet Mulroney Clark, "Differences in Lutheran Churches and Synods", <https://classroom.synonym.com/differences-in-lutheran-churches-and-synods-12087208.html>, September 29, 2017

February Special Offering: Local Missions

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." – Matthew 25:35

More than 800 men, women, and children in Sioux Falls are without a home. This month's special offering envelope will go to support four local missions that provide crisis support to members of our community experiencing poverty or homelessness: Union Gospel Mission, Bishop Dudley House, St. Francis House and The Banquet.

Union Gospel Mission has been working in Sioux Falls since 1900 to provide spiritual nourishment, housing, meals, clothing and household items to needy folks in our community. Lodging for up to 70 men and 48 women and children is available for individuals who find themselves without shelter and needing a place to rest and get out of the elements. In addition to providing three meals a day, UGM also provides daily chapel, adult learning, medical care, and more. Learn more about this ministry and how you can volunteer at ugmsf.org.



Bishop Dudley Hospitality House

is an ecumenical ministry in Sioux Falls that provides



a central, first stop resource for those in crisis. The Bishop Dudley House offers daytime and overnight emergency shelter for the homeless and vulnerable, housing some 80 men, 20 women, and 7 families nightly at the House. Like Union Gospel Mission, their programming also serves the whole needs of the person. To learn more about this ministry, as well as explore volunteer duties and donation options, visit bdhh.org

St. Francis House is an emergency and transitional housing program for up to 120 men and women, and 7 families whose mission is to move people from homelessness to hope. SFH's programming requires guests to obtain and maintain employment; place 50 percent of every paycheck into a savings account; remain alcohol, substance and gambling free; uphold household chores; and attend two self-improvement classes each week. SFH provides guests with shelter, food, debt management, basic essentials, case management, and HOPE! Visit stfrancishouse.com to learn more.



The Banquet aims to equip volunteers as they provide food and fellowship to the many community members served through this ministry. By hosting meals at their facility, The Banquet provides a safe place where people can gather, receive nourishment, and experience love in action. Volunteer groups come from churches, businesses, service clubs, schools and individual families. Learn more at thebanquetsf.org.



Please consider financial support of these ministries by using one of the special offering envelopes our church provides or by writing "February Local Missions" on the memo line of a check made out to First Lutheran Church. Unless otherwise indicated, your donation will be divided equally among these four organizations.

No matter what you do, please remember the ministries of Union Gospel Mission, Bishop Dudley House, St. Francis House, and The Banquet in your prayers. Thank you for your support!

Special offering envelopes are included with your regular offering envelopes. If you do not have one, please use the yellow envelope in the pew, bring your donation to the Information Desk at church, or visit flcsf.org/give to donate online.

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