



# First Word

The monthly newspaper of First Lutheran Church

## In this issue:

- The Uncomfortable Church . . . . . 2
- 100th Anniversary Concert & Choir Opportunity . . . . . 2
- WELCA Hosts Harmony South Dakota Group . . . . . 3
- Meet the Ruth Circle . . . . . 3
- New Church Directory Underway . 4
- Pickleball Day of Play . . . . . 4
- Care and Health Board Survey . . . 4
- Did You Know? . . . . . 5
- Milestone Minute . . . . . 5
- Thrivent Choice Dollars Deadline . 6
- Council Highlights . . . . . 6
- Financials and Memorials . . . . . 7
- Covering the Light of Christ with a Basket . . . . . 8
- March Special Offering: Emmaus Road Ministry . . . . . 8

## Listening Carefully for [God's] Word in Lean Times

By John Christopherson, Senior Pastor



*"Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under [the mentorship of the priest] Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision."* (1 Samuel 3:1; RSV. Emphasis added.)

### Listening carefully for God's Word in lean times.

This message is really at the heart of the well-beloved Old Testament story of a young lad named Samuel, who would later become the first—in a long line of prophets—in Israel. And . . . it's also a message that's imperative for the hearing of many a congregation in our time, as much of the divisive toxin in our culture and politics (think Washington, D.C. these days) is seeping into the church—as pastors and parishioners are increasingly 'exchanging their religion for socio-political and personal agendas' (cf. Robert D. Putnam's *American Grace*). As you see by the title of this article, the question is: "Are we listening to an emphasis on God's Word, centered in Christ and Holy Scripture, or is God's Word *bracketed-out* by our delusions of grandeur and thinking *our* words, *our* thoughts, *our* agendas, *our* politics are to be emphasized?" As Jesus would remind us: "A divided house will not stand" (Mark 3:25; cf. Putnam's *American Grace* p.493f).

In Samuel's day, lean times did not only refer to economic depression (though folk *were* dirt poor), or the threat of war (though wars *were* going on all around them). But there was a deeper, spiritual leanness: "*that the word of the LORD was rare in those days*" (cf. Amos 8:11-12). In large part, the reason for this spiritual leanness was because the people of Israel had fallen prey to the temptation that's with us in our own time . . . to state it one more time for emphasis: politics had become their religion (cf. Martin Marty's *Politics, Religion, and the Common Good* or Os Guinness' *The Case For Civility*). They wanted a king, like all of their neighboring nations, who would be a visible symbol of prominence. They got what they wanted. And sadly, Israel and her new kings began to grow deaf and dumb to the one true King who'd given them life and all creation (cf. 1 Samuel 8:4-9; 10:19). They lost their center (Exodus 20:1-6). To paraphrase Tom Simmons' epilogue at our Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 26: 'Let's not lose our sense of purpose, our mission, as to why we're

here—as a congregation of First Lutheran Church' (cf. Genesis 12:1-3; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 3:10).

**Lean times.** Curious how two-faced our media is these days. I can watch TV for 30 minutes and hear both a death-toll ringing on the economy and then see a glitzy commercial for buying a six-figure car. We cringe at the crime rates escalating in Sioux Falls and denounce the wars in the Middle East. But mayhem on the gridiron is how 70 million Americans spent Super Bowl Sunday last month (including the Minnesota Vikings for yet another 50 years). We have such low energies (with the exception of some wonderful new mission starts growing out of, or connected with, our *Evangelism and Outreach* and *Pastoral Care* ministries—such as "Church on the Street" or "Kin Ministry" through First Lutheran) for helping the mentally ill, the hungry and homeless, the imprisoned or unemployed, or the refugee or aged of society. Too often we simply want to throw up our hands in frustration and just forget about "all this tough stuff" in our entertainment culture. YET this is exactly when the church—that's us—needs to have our priorities and our guiding center in place, with *high definition*. When "**the Word of the LORD was rare [and lean] in those days; there was no frequent vision.**"

Written in the aftermath of WWI, the Irish poet, Wm. Butler Yeats, spoke prophetically of our 20th century spiritual malaise in these words from his poem, "The Second Coming." They bear repeating. Listen . . .

*"Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
are full of passionate intensity."*

When we can no longer hear the Word of God, we fly aimlessly with Yeats' falcon. With all of our technology, which can be such a blessing in so many ways, it can also become distracting (see MIT professor, Sherry Turkle's recent critique in *Alone Together*). We struggle for direction because the homing center of God's Word can so easily become lost by us. We've become terrible listeners

See LISTENING CAREFULLY p. 7

## First Lutheran Property Board Spring Clean-up



The Property Board invites all church members and friends to join them for two opportunities to get the Sanctuary ready for Easter: Saturday, April 4, 8:30-11 a.m.; and Monday, April 6, 5-6:30 p.m. Men and women of all ages are invited to help clean the inside of the church. If you can help, please come! Bring a hand-held vacuum if you have one.

## DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME SPRING FORWARD SUNDAY, MARCH 8



## Witnesses: The Drama Wednesday, March 4, at 11:15 and 6:30

Join us for this special worship service with Pastor Jonathan Swenson of Paraphrase Theatre as he performs *Witnesses*, a powerful drama written by Curt Cloninger. Jonathan will portray eight different characters (historical and imagined), and we'll see how each has responded to his encounter with Jesus. Through the eyes of these characters, both comedic and serious, the audience is challenged to see Jesus from a fresh perspective. This drama will set the stage for the remaining weeks of Lent as we reflect on Jesus' interactions with others in the Gospel of Matthew, making them witnesses to his glory.

This event is appropriate for all ages and is not to be missed! Bring a friend! We are pleased to host this unique performance free of charge through gifts from Lutheran Men in Mission, a private donor, and Thrivent Choice.

## Lent 2020 at First Lutheran

Throughout the season of Lent at First Lutheran Church, we will encounter some of the witnesses to Christ's ministry throughout the Gospel of Matthew. As we examine the stories of those who interacted with Jesus on earth, we will contemplate the many ways we witness to the power of Jesus in our own lives.

The congregation is encouraged to participate in discussion groups throughout Lent and will be publishing discussion guides for each week's topic. Discussion guides can be found at [flcsf.org/lent](http://flcsf.org/lent)

Watch News Notes, eNews or visit [flcsf.org/lent](http://flcsf.org/lent) for information about Lenten Study small groups – coming soon.

March 4 – "Witnesses" Pastor Jonathan Swenson  
Worship at 11:15 a.m.,  
Soup Lunch at 12 p.m.  
(Ham and Potato Soup)  
Worship at 6:30 p.m.,  
Dinner 5-6 p.m. (broasted chicken, cheesy hash browns)

March 11 – "The Healed" Pastor Katherine Olson preaching  
Worship at 11:15 a.m.,  
Soup Lunch at 12 p.m.  
(beef and barley stew)  
Worship at 6:30 p.m.,  
Dinner 5-6 p.m. (pulled pork, potato wedges)

March 18 – "The Humbled" Pastor Jeff Backer preaching  
Worship at 11:15 a.m.,  
Soup Lunch at 12 p.m.  
(turkey and wild rice soup)  
Worship at 6:30 p.m.,  
Dinner 5-6 p.m. (turkey, mashed potatoes)

March 25 – "The Children" Pastor Lars Olson preaching  
Worship at 11:15 a.m.,  
Soup Lunch at 12 p.m. (chicken noodle soup)  
Worship at 6:30 p.m.,  
Dinner 5-6 p.m. (ham, baked potato)

April 1 – "The Forgiven" Pastor John Christopherson preaching  
Worship at 11:15 a.m.,  
Soup Lunch at 12 p.m.  
(ham, broccoli, cheese soup)  
Worship at 6:30 p.m.,  
Dinner 5-6 p.m. (lasagna, salad)



## The Uncomfortable Church

By Lars Olson, Executive Pastor



Last month I read a two-page article entitled “5 Lies We Like to Tell About Church Growth” by Dan Hotchkiss, a church consultant.

At the heart of each of his “5 Lies” was the uncomfortable truth that congregations prefer their comfort above everything else, including the mission of Christ’s church, and therefore perpetuate a number of false narratives that protect comfort at all cost. For example, “Growth isn’t about numbers” is used to protect us from the hard work of making ministry available to more people. After all, if it is important for 15 people, why wouldn’t we want 25 people to take part? Maybe because we prioritize personal comfort at the expense of the uncomfortable changes required when more people are included.

It’s a good question to wrestle with because it gets to the heart of the nature of church. The church is created by and lives on God’s Word. This Word is a comfort because it reassures us of God’s promise, but that is not comforting in the way we would choose. It’s comfort that in the midst of changing, turbulent, and challenging situations, God’s love and mercy and grace are gifts to us to give to all whom we find in need.

So, one of Dan Hotchkiss’ conclusions is striking. “No one who understands what growth involves would ‘want’ it, in the sense that we ‘want’ pleasure or consumer goods. The only reason a sane person would want a church to grow is because they believe it has something of importance to offer other people. For that goal, some people will accept the hard work, sacrifice, and inconvenience growth requires.”

prayer welcoming  
hospitality fellowship relationships  
**Community Building**  
friendship joy of knowing Christ training  
care for others connecting

### Community Building

In discussions over the past four months, the First Lutheran Church Council has identified a ministry focus area for the coming year: Community Building. We have noticed that First Lutheran has a strong history of offering great programming. Furthermore, last year the council decided to ask boards to work together to pool our outreach efforts in order to offer six community events. So far we have had three such events (Block Party, Trunk-or-Treat, Christmas Eve), each receiving over 1,000 guests. We seem to be pretty good at outreach and inviting new people, and by the grace of God, they have shown up here. So there is great hope that by enhancing our community building (welcoming, hospitality, personal connections), all our ministries would benefit from deeper connections between people and various groups across First Lutheran Church.

Improving our “Community Building” means making helpful changes to our ministries to remove barriers of participation and allow us to include more people in the hope and joy we receive from God through First Lutheran Church. This includes inviting and making space for new people (current members or new faces), listening to people’s needs, then helping them get into the right ministries for them (training, follow up with guests, new and current members), and providing care and comfort (hospitality, friendship, fellowship, prayer, the joy of knowing Christ).

It means getting used to getting beyond our personal comfort zones, being uncomfortable and taking the risk of building new relationships, in order to offer comfort to someone else.

### Ministry Plan 2020

Over the next four months, the council and boards of First Lutheran will suggest changes to all of our ministries to improve how this happens throughout the congregation. As a starter, the Welcome & Community Board has been visiting with all the other boards to start a conversation on hospitality, gather ideas on being more welcoming, and begin the process of asking what each board can do better in building community. Watch for updates about this process.

But that’s just the start. And even though it may be uncomfortable, building up this community with God’s Word is not just the job of pastors, staff, boards, and council. It is who we are as the church of Jesus Christ, who gives us his promise and sends it with us to our family, friends, neighbors, and the world. For as Jesus promises, “I am with you even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). That is both our greatest comfort and the promise that carries us beyond our comfort zone.



## “Let Everything That Hath Breath, Praise the Lord!” Anniversary Concert Premieres New Music

By Zachary Brockhoff, Director of Music Ministry



Throughout 2020, First Lutheran Church celebrates 100 years of ministry as a congregation. In addition to inviting former pastors and musicians to lead us in worship, the worship and music board has worked

diligently over the past two years to present a Centennial Concert on September 13, 2020. The concert is this year’s Lankford Arts Series event and provides the first opportunity for us to gather as a congregation in celebration. Please plan to join us for a unique afternoon of music.

### Musicians

In celebration of 100 years of ministry, familiar faces to First Lutheran, including musicians from South Dakota and around the country, will join us for the concert. These include:

- Grammy-award winning organist Paul Jacobs of The Juilliard School, who rededicated the Aeolian-Skinner sanctuary pipe organ in February of 2011.



- Maestro David Gier and members of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra.



- *Transept*, a South Dakota area vocal ensemble and Artistic Director Dr. Timothy Campbell, who also serves as Assistant Professor of Music at The University of South Dakota.



- First Lutheran Church Choirs, who will premiere new music for organ, orchestra, and choir alongside these guest musicians.

### Music - Old and New

For years, new music has marked significant milestones in the life of congregations and communities. Handel’s *Water Music* and a number of Johann Sebastian Bach’s sacred and secular cantatas were written for such celebrations.

To honor this anniversary, First Lutheran Church commissioned composer Wayne Oquin of The Juilliard School to write a new piece of music, “Reflections on Two Psalms: Psalm 23 and Psalm 150,” for organ, orchestra, and choir. Both Psalms are likely familiar, with Psalm 23 beginning “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...” and Psalm 150 calling for “everything that has breath” to “praise the Lord!”



Commissioning new choral music around congregational anniversaries is common; the addition of writing for organ and orchestra made locating a suitable composer especially challenging and unique. Having collaborated with organist

### Free Tickets Required

Reserve your ticket today! As part of the Lankford Arts Series, the concert is free, but complimentary tickets are required.

Tickets are available exclusively to members of the congregation from March 1 until May. On May 1, tickets will be made available to the general public. We anticipate tickets will be claimed quickly, and seating is limited.

Tickets can be reserved at the church Information Desk or by calling the church office Monday - Thursday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. or Friday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Paul Jacobs on past projects with symphony orchestras around the country, composer Wayne Oquin has written a wonderful piece of music. Accompanied by strings, harp, woodwind quintet, percussion, and organ, it is our hope this music will be premiered in 2020 and later shared with the wider Church across the country.

This new music also provides a unique opportunity for you to join in singing. If you enjoy music, you are invited to community-wide rehearsals to learn, rehearse, and prepare this new piece. Consider joining us for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. See below for more details.

In addition to a fabulous new piece, organist Paul Jacobs will provide solo organ music. As the only organist to win a Grammy award in 2011, Jacobs tours extensively throughout the United States and around the world each year and frequently collaborates with symphony orchestras alongside solo concerts. This marks his second time at First Lutheran Church, as he previously dedicated the restored Aeolian-Skinner sanctuary organ in 2011.

Known for presenting concerts entirely from memory, Paul Jacobs made musical history when he performed the complete organ works of Johann Sebastian Bach on the 250th anniversary of the composer’s death. The pipe organ is often called the “King of Instruments” in music circles; Paul Jacobs has the distinction of being named the “King of the King of Instruments.” His work and musicianship is generational and not to be missed.

Alongside Paul’s work, a relatively new South Dakota vocal ensemble, *Transept*, will offer a cappella choral music. Directed by University of South Dakota Associate Professor Timothy Campbell, they are a vocal ensemble of elite professional singers and select local musicians based in Sioux Falls and are already recognized throughout this community and state for their exquisite work.

### Sing as Part of the Festival Choir

If you enjoy music, you are invited to sing as part of the festival choir for this event. Rehearsals will be held at First Lutheran Church after Easter. Come, and invite other musicians!

### Rehearsals

Sunday, April 26, 1-3 p.m.  
Sunday, May 17, 24, and 31, 1-3 p.m.  
Sunday, September 6, 1-3 p.m.

### Dress rehearsals:

Wednesday, September 9, 7-9 p.m.  
with Transept and Maestro David Gier  
Sunday, September 13, 1:15-2:30 p.m.  
with the full ensemble



## Meet the Ruth Circle

By Tracie Osthus

The women of Ruth Circle meet at 6:30 p.m. in the Trinity Room at First Lutheran Church on the third Thursday of each month (except June, July, August, and December). June finds us meeting for a picnic; August takes us out for lunch at one of the many dining options in Sioux Falls; and in December we met for many years in the home of Jane King for dinner, fun games, and gift exchanges. This past December we decided to change it up and went to the Nora Store where we enjoyed Christmas music.

Each month we have a Bible study from the Gather magazine with various circle members taking turns leading it, a business part of the meeting, and always a snack and coffee. These are times of sharing our faith and our knowledge of the Bible as well other relevant topics.

We help serve funerals and are involved with many aspects of the bazaar (both individually and as a group) from crafts to food. The last couple of years some have been perfecting their sandbakkel and ris krem (rice cream)-making skills. We are also available to help with other WELCA and church events as needed.

Several of our members are a part of the quilt ministry team as well.

There are many Ruth Circle memories to share such as salad suppers where not everything always went as planned but always ended up okay, Swan Lake outings at Mansfield's cottage, picnics in Ruth's pansy garden, recipe books, and so many more.

When asked, the things Circle members want people to know most about Ruth Circle are:

- We feel like sisters.
- We are here for and pray for each other in the good and bad times.
- God's love keeps us together.
- We are fulfilling a service to God and church.
- We are mentors to each other.

We (Phyllis Beuckens, Jan Boettcher, Rachel Burggraaf, Linda Christensen, DeAnn Clark, Darlene Colwill, Marilyn Haddorff, Jane King, Phyllis Knutson, Rose Larson, Eunice Mansfield, Thelma McElhaney, Tracie Osthus, Wanda Sanfleben, Julaine Walker, and Ruth Werner) invite you to join us and share in the good news of Jesus Christ. Blessings!

## Women of First Lutheran...

Looking for a fun group of women of all ages with varied interests, and a dedication to service, mission and study of God's Word? Come join a First Lutheran Church Women's Circle. Circles meet monthly at various days and times at church or in member's homes. Please call WELCA president, Kathy Stelzer at (605) 595-8442, for more information.

## 2020 WELCA Officers Installed



This photo was taken during the February WELCA general meeting where Pastor John assisted with the installation of officers.

Pictured left to right are: (seated) Karen Anderson, Pastor John Christopherson, Kathy Stelzer, Lola Coon, Charlene Stebritz (standing) Ione Pereboom, JoAnne Goldammer, Arlene Bich, Rachel Burggraaf, Sandy Christopherson, Connie Nelson, Carmen Reinholt, Jeanne Buren, Gloria Simpson, Marcia Huffman, Jo Ann Gibson, Carol Knapp, Jean Hoff, Kathrine Clark, and Hazel Wek.



## WELCA Hosts Harmony South Dakota-March 5

By Kathy Stelzer, WELCA President

Dan and Heidi Goeller have put together an amazing thing! When Hazel Wek, our FLCW accompanist, attended a performance of Harmony South Dakota, she was so impressed that she said this was a must for the WELCA program schedule. Please join us on March 5 at 12 p.m. in the Gathering Room, for our monthly WELCA meeting. Hear the Goellers present an explanatory card trick with slides and performance video of Harmony South Dakota.

This organization was incorporated on July 25, 2013. Harmony's methodology is based on El Sistema, a program in its 45th year in Venezuela, currently serving over 980,000 of that country's poorest children. El Sistema has demonstrated the power of ensemble music to dramatically change the life trajectory of a nation's youth while transforming the communities around them. Harmony's co-founder, Dan Goeller, witnessed the effectiveness of Mexico's Sistema program in April 2013 while conducting concerts there. He became determined to bring the transformational power of this program to Sioux Falls. Thus, on January 2, 2014, Harmony began its pilot program with 21 students from Hawthorne Elementary School. It has now grown to 78 students from 12 different Sioux Falls schools for the 2019-20 school year.

Harmony South Dakota, under their leadership, empowers underprivileged children. This free afterschool program gives children, age seven and up, the opportunity to transform their lives through immersive music education and performance. The Goellers will share about their teaching of positive life skills leading to healthy and compassionate young citizens through music.

Lois Circle will host this noon luncheon. Before the event, the WELCA board meeting will be in the Friendship Room at 10 a.m. All First Lutheran Church women, their friends, and guests are welcome to come hear Dan and Heidi share the story of this learning experience now available locally.

social transformation through music.



## CARE AND HEALTH MINISTRY



### New Church Directory Underway

To celebrate our church family's 100th Anniversary, we encourage you to be a part of our upcoming new pictorial directory. A new directory is important because it

- Preserves this special time in the life our church
- Becomes a lasting record of our current membership
- Helps us connect faces with names

We are partnering with Lifetouch for this important project. Lifetouch is providing the directory at no cost to our church. Every family photographed receives a complimentary directory and an 8x10 portrait. There are three convenient ways for you to schedule your photography appointment:



1. Fast and easy online sign-ups begin March 1. Visit [flcsf.org/members](http://flcsf.org/members).
2. On-site sign-ups will be held in the First Lutheran atrium. Wednesdays, March 4, 11, and 18, 5-7:30 p.m. Sundays, March 8, 15, and 22, 7:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
3. Call the church office at 336-3734 during regular business hours, Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. and Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

#### Photography dates

April 14-18 and April 21-25

Additional dates will be offered in May to include families who have out of town college students or those who are away for the winter months; May 12-16 and 26-30.

For your convenience, appointment times vary throughout the day and evening hours. All photography and portrait viewing will take place at our church with no sitting fee. You will have a variety of poses taken, and one pose will be selected for the directory. In addition to your complimentary 8x10, you will have the opportunity to purchase additional portraits on the day of your portrait session.

### Pickleball Day of Play

Sunday, March 15



Calling all pickleball players to come to a *Day of Play* on Sunday, March 15! Our Savior's and First Lutheran will host a fun afternoon of pickleball from 3 to 5 p.m. and fellowship for players in both congregations and any interested guests.

All novice players will play at First Lutheran, and advanced players will be at Our Savior's. Pick the place where you might be most comfortable. Balls and paddles, if needed, will be available. After play ends at 5, we will all come together in the Gathering Room at Our Savior's (909 W. 33rd St.) to share stories and pizza!

Since March 15 is so close to St. Patrick's Day, all are encouraged to wear some type of green in honor of the day. There might even be a prize for the most creative greenery!

This event is free. Registration is appreciated but not required. Please let John Hegg, [johnhegg@sio.midco.net](mailto:johnhegg@sio.midco.net), or Jordan Stone, [jstone@flcsf.org](mailto:jstone@flcsf.org), know if you'll join us.

This pickleball event is open to all, so please help spread the word! What a great way to celebrate fun, fitness, and fellowship!

## SURVEY SAYS...



### Care and Health Board Survey

The Care and Health Board seeks your input on the ministries of our congregation that promote the health of body, mind, and spirit. **Take the survey online at [flcsf.org/caring](http://flcsf.org/caring)** between now and March 20. Paper surveys will be available before and after worship services in mid-March.

### Grieving with Grace March 7

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 are held 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 are 10-11 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 out loud is not required. Our topic in March will be "Recognize You Are Not Crazy." If you have questions about Grieving with Grace, reach out to Pastor Katherine Olson, the group's facilitator, at [kolson@flcsf.org](mailto:kolson@flcsf.org) or call 339-1983, ext. 214.



### Faithfully Fit

The Care & Health Board re-introduces Faithfully Fit, a health initiative to help people of all ages improve balance and prevent falls. Join us Wednesday mornings at 9 beginning March 4 in the Pentecost Room. Please contact Jordan Stone at [jstone@flcsf.org](mailto:jstone@flcsf.org) or 339-1983 ext. 237, to let us know you are interested.

### Visitation Ministry for the Hospitalized

Every weekday, a member of the pastoral staff visits members and friends of First Lutheran who are hospitalized. The pastors 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! We encourage you to call the church (336-3734) if you or someone you love is in need of this type of care.

### Yoga at First Lutheran

*"Yoga's incorporation of meditation and breathing can help improve a person's mental well-being. Regular yoga practice creates mental clarity and calmness, increases body awareness, relieves chronic stress patterns, relaxes the mind, centers attention, and sharpens concentration. Body- and self-awareness are particularly beneficial because they can help with early detection of physical problems and allow for early preventive action."* —Natalie Nevins, DO

Come be a part of a community that gathers each week at First Lutheran Church for yoga. Re-center and relax your mind, body, soul, and spirit for whatever life throws your way. Bring your own mat, or use one of ours. Cost for each class is a suggested \$5 donation to help cover instructor fees. Classrooms are on the second floor and accessible by elevator or stairs.

#### Class Schedule

Mondays, 5:45-6:45 p.m., Upper Room  
Thursdays, 1:30-2:30 p.m., Pentecost Room, chair yoga  
Fridays, 12-1 p.m., Upper Room

## Kin Ministry

Kin Ministry is an outreach program through the Care and Health Office at First Lutheran. Trained Kin Ministers (volunteers) are matched with individuals who desire more connection with their community. It is more important than ever to embrace new solutions and foster meaningful relationships while sharing God's love.

"It is time to re-imagine our outreach and visitation ministries and build new connections with those who are becoming isolated" (<https://kinministry.com/>). This is the driving force behind our partnership with Kin Ministry. Through Kin Ministry's partner, BeFriender Ministry's training to become a listening presence and Kin's simple, safe, and reliable technology, we are reimagining outreach and ending isolation. First Lutheran currently has eight active kin ministers, but we are always looking to add more! If you have questions about this ministry or would like to get involved, please contact Jordan Stone at 336-1983 ext. 237 or [jstone@flcsf.org](mailto:jstone@flcsf.org).

#### Births

Nov. 23 Elijah James Bechtold, son of Baron and Jennifer Bechtold  
Nov. 24 Ellis Leo Rezac, son of Dan and Christina Rezac  
Jan. 7 Andrew Robert Margarit, son of Edward (Ted) and Elizabeth (Atchison) Margarit

#### Baptisms

Jan. 11 Jonah Lee Deutsch, son of Aaron and Sarah Deutsch  
Jan. 12 Rory Faye Plucker, daughter of Josh and Betzi Plucker  
Jan. 26 Kaynen Dean Kyle, son of Korey and Abby Kyle

## Life Transitions

#### Deaths

Jan. 7 Harvey Nelson  
Jan. 11 Robert P. Larson  
Jan. 16 Phyllis Berkland  
Jan. 17 Elva Brudvig  
Jan. 18 Leonard Bauman  
Jan. 19 Cheryl Grevlos  
Jan. 27 Eileen Quanbeck  
Jan. 28 Peggy Uthe



## Did You Know?

By Marnie Dahle Backer,  
Youth & Family Director



This month's article is a little sneaky! It could also be a "Do You Know" title. You could say it's a two-for-one! You've heard us talk about milestones; we have at least one milestone every month (excluding July), and some months there are two or even three—note the March Milestone Minute to the right. In total we have over 20 different milestones each year. These are amazing moments to gather with children, youth, and families to learn about faith and God's amazing word together!

Most milestones, like all good celebrations, gather around the table with a meal. Often, it is the wildly popular breakfast pizza! But other times, it is something simple like breads and fruit or something a toddler might enjoy—like applesauce. Then we have a learning component with one of our pastors or Youth & Family staff, where the gospel is shared and families can see how faith milestones are a part of our everyday lives. And we have a take-home of some sort—a craft, a photo, a quilt or maybe a cross, and almost always a milestone pebble.



Pictured left-right are Kim Srstka, Bob Srstka, Jean Colon and Sandy Fink

There is a lot to prepare for some of these milestones! Did you know to help with that we have a Milestone Ministry Team?! A-ha! The "Do You Know"! Please meet Jean Colon, Sandy Fink, Bob Srstka, and Kim Srstka. What an amazing group of volunteers they are! These empty nesters, teachers, software programmers, grandparents, generous people help us plan out the meals, the crafts, the hospitality. They make every milestone all the more special with their kindness and attention to detail. And it is so very lovely to have their insight, suggestions, and care to make each milestone extra special.

Now... twenty milestones and one small team can get a bit overwhelming. Perhaps you are a recent or long-time empty nester and would like to meet and visit with some of the young families we have in our congregation. Perhaps you have a friend or two who might want to join you. If you might hear God calling you to be a part of our milestone ministries, please reach out to me. I'd love to sit down with you and tell you more.

Please continue to pray for our FLC families; we come in all shapes and sizes... We pray for you to know God's loving arms wrapped around you so very tightly, never letting you go. We pray for you as you manage time and priorities and give your precious children all they might need to fly out into the world. We pray that your church will be a home for you to learn about faith and be a community of believers together. God's blessings on you today.

### INTRODUCING Junior Money Matters Milestone



On Sunday, March 29, 5-7 p.m., high school juniors and their parents are invited to this brand new milestone. As these youth are inching toward graduation, money values, stewardship, and finances are important items for our children and parents to have a handle on. Join us as we continue to celebrate the growing independence of these amazing youth.

## Milestone Minute

### Second Grade Confession and Forgiveness – February 2



Clockwise from top-left: Dane Kyte decorates his sign, Sophie Hessel proudly shows her finished sign. Claire Hebner blesses her parents, Leah and Ryan. The children lead the congregation in the Confession with the help of Pastor John and the band.



### Coming Up this Month

#### First Grade Lord's Prayer Milestone

Sunday, March 1, all first grade families are invited to come to a breakfast at 9:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. The Lord's Prayer will carry us throughout our lifetimes—in times of worship, joy, sorrow, and when we can think of nothing else to pray, we will always have the prayer Jesus gave us. The children will help lead the congregation in the prayer at the 11 a.m. worship service.

#### Kindergarten Ten Commandments Milestone

Sunday, March 8, First Lutheran kindergarten children will be introduced to the laws given to us by God through Moses. We will talk about how the first three are about our relationship with God and the last seven are about our relationships with each other. How's your Ten Commandment memorization? Might be time to quiz yourself? Circle Yes or No to indicate which phrases below belong to the Ten Commandments given to Moses. (Exodus 20:1-17) Written in language for a kindergartner.

- Yes No 1. Don't take things that aren't yours.
- Yes No 2. You should not smoke
- Yes No 3. Love and respect your mom and dad.
- Yes No 4. Always tell the truth.
- Yes No 5. Do to others as you would have them do to you
- Yes No 6. Always say God's name with love and respect.
- Yes No 7. You must obey God rather than people
- Yes No 8. Don't be jealous of other people's family.
- Yes No 9. Don't hurt others.
- Yes No 10. In God we trust
- Yes No 11. Worship only the one true God.
- Yes No 12. Remember the Sabbath and keep it Holy.
- Yes No 13. Be kind to the poor
- Yes No 14. Be faithful in marriage.
- Yes No 15. Don't be jealous of other people's things.

#### First Communion Classes for fifth grade families

First Communion Classes for fifth grade families (and any middle school youth who have not yet attended) will be held during Lent. The preparation for First Communion will take place on the five Wednesday evenings during Lent: March 4, 11, 18, 25 and April 1, 5:30–6:15 p.m. March 4 is for fifth grade families only – we will meet in the Gathering Room (parents) and Fellowship Hall (fifth graders). All other nights we will meet all together in Fellowship Hall. You will then receive First Communion on Maundy Thursday, April 9, during the 7 p.m. worship service.



If you have younger children, we will have childcare available during this time (no Wednesday Scripture First in Lent). Please let us know if you need childcare so we plan.

## 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

facebook.com/flcsf

@FirstLutheranSF

@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](mailto:jhoyt@flcsf.org). Reader feedback is always welcome.

First Word is available online to read or download at [flcsf.org/firstword](http://flcsf.org/firstword).



## Senior Luncheon – March 10

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, March 10, at noon, the menu will be tator tot casserole, salad, and a roll. The program will be about the Bowden Youth Center. Please RSVP for the luncheon by calling the church receptionist at 336-3734, by Wednesday, March 4. Need a ride? Please call Project CAR, 332-2777, by 9 a.m. on Monday, March 9.

## Designate Your 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](mailto:jbacker@flcsf.org) or Marilyn McNeill, [mmcneill@flcsf.org](mailto:mmcneill@flcsf.org), call Marilyn at (605) 339-1983 ext. 236.

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

## 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](mailto:mmcneill@flcsf.org). Meetings are held the fourth Thursday of each month. First Lutheran Church members are welcome to visit meetings.

### January 16, 2020

- Randy Eide, Treasurer, reported that we had very good fourth quarter, and we ended with \$9,889 of income over expenses. This was due to the generosity of the congregation after a letter was sent to the encouraging members to give. FLC received 101% of the pledges.
- Deb Nelson of the Welcome & Community was thanked for visiting the boards discussing hospitality and what that means for each board.
- Pastor John gave a brief capital campaign update. Visits are ongoing during the lead phase of the campaign. The cash that has been received has been applied to the HVAC debt. Jim Sturdevant has graciously decided to paint two paintings to be auctioned off with the proceeds going to our capital campaign.
- Pastor Jeff reported that he and his board are continuing to find ways to work in the community. He shared the St. Francis House's new facility hosted its first meal. Necessities for Neighbors is going well, and many families are being helped. Over Christmas break, FLC partnered with some neighbors and served approximately 350 meals to families of Lowell Elementary.
- Pastor Lars thanked the boards, staff, and congregation for all their help in December. Community building is ongoing. He shared a draft of the 2020 Ministry Plan focusing on building community. Community building means making helpful
- changes to our ministries to remove barriers of participation and to allow us to include more people in the hope and joy we receive from God through First Lutheran Church.
- There was an update regarding the sound system and ceiling in the sanctuary. James Moore summarized a report from the acoustician working with FLC. Gypsum board will work with just a small increase of reverberation (from 1.52 to 2.36 seconds). The entire ceiling does not have to be replaced with gypsum board. The property board will continue to work on this matter.
- The Annual Meeting and Capital Campaign kickoff will be held on January 26, 2020, at 12:15 p.m. There will be a lunch prior to the meeting at 11:30.
- Randy Eide and Marilyn McNeill presented the proposed 2020 budget to the council. After discussion, the motion to approve the 2020 budget was unanimously passed.
- Michael Kedik of the property board gave an update of what their board has been doing and projects proposed for 2020.
- Aaron thanked the outgoing board members: Ben Ready, Terri Carlson, Mindy Moore, and Cami Jacobson. Aaron shared that he is not seeking a second term as president of First Lutheran Church.

## 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,  
FLYGHY 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



## Gifts and Memorials, January

### Gifts to the First Lutheran Church Foundation in memory of:

Harvey Nelson: Paul & Barbara Halstenson

### Gifts to the First Lutheran Church Foundation, Youth Ministry in memory of:

Harvey Nelson: Betty Pfeifle

### Gifts to the FLC Capital Campaign in memory of:

Harvey Nelson: Roger & Janet Noer

### Gifts to Media Ministry in memory of:

Marilyn Baldwin: Barb Matson

Phyllis Berkland: Don & Judy Erickson, Don & Arlene Hoek, Brent & Mary Ann Hohman, Carol Lerdal

Jerry Bruget: Barb Matson

Sandra Earl: Barb Matson

Alice Engebretson: Janyce Skorpik, Mary Sweetter

Jan Erkes: Clara Mae Ranschau

Cheryl Grevlos: Augustana University Music Department, Jim & Sandy Fink, Tom & Jeanne Grevlos, Tom & Kristi Murtaugh, Roger & Jan Noer

Harvey Nelson: Larry & Marilyn Anderson, Gerald & Dorothy Budgett, Pr. Jim & Dorothy Christopherson, Darlene Colwill, Don & Judy Erickson, John & Elizabeth Fawcett, Peter & Marilyn Hegg, Robert Mathiesen, Barb Matson, Dave & Linda Munson, John Odney, Larry & Marcella Olawsky, Martin & Mary Lobb Oyos, Howard & Lou Ann Paulson, Robert & Marilyn Van Demark

Marit Pudas: Betty Gednalske, Barb Matson, Philip & Sharon Rabon, Darlene Weis

Doris Salem: Orrin & Karen Anderson, Wauthena Brooks, Phyllis Day, Mary Eich, Lyle & Jean Eidsness, Brent & Mary Ann Hohman, Stephen Johnson, Roger & Bev Lamp, Barb Matson, James & Mindy Moore, Howard & Lou Ann Paulson

### Gifts to Outreach Ministry, Lowell Elementary, in memory of:

Harvey Nelson: Jeff & Sarah Herbert

### Gifts to Quilters in memory of:

Jan Erkes: Barb Matson

### Gifts to Volunteer Shop in memory of:

Harvey Nelson: Larry & Marilyn Anderson

## 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 January 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.

**January 5:** Radio and closed captioning were sponsored in loving memory of Dick Matson as well as Margaret and Martin Sommervold by their family. Television was sponsored in loving memory of Ruth Johnson by her family and friends. Ruth's 98th birthday would have been January 4.

**January 12:** Radio was sponsored in loving memory of Samantha Kramer,

made possible by earnings from a gift by family and friends to the First Lutheran Church Foundation.

**January 19:** Radio was sponsored in honor of Ed and Eunice Mansfield by their son, Paul, and his wife, Kyle Mansfield.

**January 26:** Radio was sponsored in loving memory of Leo Roti by Alta Roti.

## COMMUNITY NEWS



The Sons of Norway Torsk and Meatball Dinner will be held on Friday, March 27, 5-7:30 p.m. at First Lutheran. To reserve tickets, call Beth at (605) 553-7699 by Thursday, March 26—All tickets are pre-sale only.

Lefse and frozen torsk will be pre-sold "to-go." Order deadline of Monday, March 23, and pick-up on Friday, March 27, after 4 p.m. A bake sale and silent auction featuring Scandinavian items will be held during dinner. Proceeds from the dinner provide scholarships for youth to attend cultural heritage summer camps or college.

**Sons of Norway Annual  
Torsk and  
Meatball Dinner  
with  
Bake Sale and Silent Auction**

### Please Join Us

Come celebrate Dorothy Mikkelson's 90th birthday on Saturday, March 21, at an open house, 2-4:30 p.m., hosted by her family. A program will be held at 3 p.m. at the Mikkelson Family Auditorium in the lower level of the Froiland Science Center at Augustana University.

Please park in the Froiland parking lot, Summit and 33rd Street, or in the lot west of Our Savior's on 33rd Street. Or use the convenient drop-off lane that brings you right to the west door of Froiland Science Center on 33rd St.



## Financial Update as of January 2020

### Total Revenue, year-to-date

2020 Budget . . . . . \$158,087  
2020 Actual . . . . . \$148,379  
2019 Actual . . . . . \$136,233

### Total Expenses, year-to-date

2020 Budget . . . . . \$202,977  
2020 Actual . . . . . \$202,548  
2019 Actual . . . . . \$202,131

YTD Net Profit/Loss . . . . . -\$54,169

Contract For Deed Ideal . . \$198,987

HVAC System . . . . . \$1,054,082

Worship Attendance . . . . . 2,340

## 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.

### March

**March 1:** Radio sponsor needed.

Television and closed captioning full.

**March 8:** Closed captioning sponsor needed. Television and radio full.

**March 15:** Radio, television and closed captioning fully sponsored.

**March 22:** Radio, television and closed captioning fully sponsored.

**March 29:** Radio, television and closed captioning sponsors needed.

### April

**April 5:** Radio and television full.

Closed captioning sponsor needed

**April 12:** Radio, television and closed captioning are fully sponsored.

**April 19:** Radio and Television full.

Closed captioning sponsor needed

**April 26:** Television fully sponsored.

Radio and closed captioning sponsors needed.

## Listening Carefully continued from page 1

(cf. Dr. M. Scott Peck's *The Road Once Traveled*, p.121f). Interrupting and interrupted. In a recent issue of the *Wall Street Journal*, a University of Wisconsin professor of communications (!) is quoted rather humorously: "At our house we warn new friends to be careful because we treat conversation as a competitive sport! The first person to take a breath is considered to be the listener." However, it's not so humorous when it comes to matters of the spirit. Where do we hear God's Word for us in the "lean times" of our own 21st century? When "the Word of the LORD is rare [and lean] in these days."

If you read a bit further to v.3 from the opening passage of this article (i.e. I Samuel 3:3), you'll hear these words: "The lamp of God has not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying where the ark of God was." There it is! There it is! In times when God appears to have withdrawn and grown silent in the face of his people's interruptions and idolatry, Samuel was still close to the Ark. The point? Stay within the range of that source of our spiritual life and guidance even though the source may seem silent at times; that is, God's Word (cf. Habakkuk 2:3; also, Barbara Brown Taylor's *When God Is Silent*). God does indeed speak to his world and to his people even when times are lean. And such times can become most defining ... As Christians we claim this truth because Jesus Christ has come into our world as God's Word incarnate (John 1:14)—identifying with us in all of our sufferings even onto the leanness of a cross. In Jesus, the silence of God finds voice, a voice that says, "You're precious to me. You're not alone. I'm with you. I'll never let you go" (Psalm 23:4; Matthew 28:19-20; John 10:28-30). Why is this so important? Because our American culture today is shot through with fear. And fearful people have a hard time listening because when we're afraid, all we can hear is ourselves, our own pounding heartbeat. And the more afraid we are, the harder listening becomes.

**Family and friends of First Lutheran Church:** like Samuel, stay close to the Ark of God's Word when fear would try to flood your ears or heart. Stay close to God's Word in regular worship. Become involved in one of our many Bible studies or small group ministries. Participate in one of our many mission outreach ministries. Surround yourself in the upcoming Lenten study, with special thanks to Pastor Katherine's creativity (entitled "Witnesses" with its various worksheets for small group study and podcasts each week) with some of our family members in the faith, here at First Lutheran and beyond. Stay tuned in. "Be still," says the LORD, "listen, and know that I am God [who is always with you and for you]" (Psalm 46:10). **And the word of the LORD was not rare or lean, but ... FAT in these days!**

Let us pray... "Lord, open our ears to hear anew the word of your prophets: "[To] say to those who are of a fearful heart. 'Be strong, fear not! Behold our God will come and save us. For then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ear of the deaf unstopped.'" (Isaiah 35:4-5)

j.r. christopherson  
Senior Pastor



## Covering the Light of Christ with a Basket

By Jeff Backer, Associate Pastor of Evangelism & Outreach



I have recently been in conversation with a group of pastors, deacons, and lay leaders from all around the South Dakota Synod, as well as some leadership from other synods as we have been conversing about how to lift up leadership in our churches.

This conversation began last fall as I was contacted again and again about how it is that First Lutheran has had, and currently has, so many people engaged in the seminary process. Now, I will admit that I do not know the silver bullet answer to this question but trust that the Holy Spirit continues to call people through the gospel, and through you as well, to encourage people to discern a vocation in ministry. I know for me it was a few people in this congregation who planted the thought and encouraged my own discernment though I did not begin taking classes to become a pastor. I merely had a curiosity about the doctrine of faith that we call the Lutheran tradition and what it meant to be Lutheran. Be careful what God may be calling you into...you too might be a pastor! But for certain, you are now a minister.

Our conversations have led to the development of a new initiative that First Lutheran will host this year on June 4 where the 209 congregations from around our synod will be asked to send one person from their congregation who exhibits gifts and qualities for being a leader in the church. This conference is called Confluence Leadership Summit 2020. The idea is to bring in keynote speakers to facilitate a conversation centering on vocational discernment and encouraging leadership. This is not just an opportunity to help identify and accompany those who might be discerning a call to professional ministry but is even more so for people who are or can be effective leaders in their own congregations. This can be recently elected church council members, ministry volunteers, church camp staff, even everyday pew sitters. The conference will host breakout sessions to tackle more detailed subjects like what is involved in the candidacy process, church council membership, or how to make a functional ministry budget.

The whole of this initiative is about moving people and congregations from maintenance ministry mentality to exploring ways in which God calls individuals and whole congregations back into mission in the world. What we have recognized is that many congregations have adopted a mindset that limits their function to only worship services and coffee afterwards because they are convinced that they do not have something unique for the world to hear. What fuels this is fear, and it presents itself in several ways.

The most common is simply the fear of change, and I would assert that this is commonly heard in our midst. Here at First Lutheran we have our routines and traditions that we have clung to for a long time. I often hear, I remember when \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank), and it is often followed by the comment, "We need to do that again." The risk of inviting new people into our

midst is that they might bring about some new ideas and an element of change. If you want an example, bring up video screens in the sanctuary. There are two camps on this discussion, and both sides are represented in this discussion. I dare say, this is also the passionate discussion around some parts of the current capital campaign. However, without sounding cliché in today's world, if you build it, they may still not come. This is because being the church is about people and relationships. The real fear is that we do not have something to say or do not know how to say it. This is the devil working in our midst to shut us up. Each of you is a minister of the Church, Christ's church. Each of you has been called through the gospel, gathered and enlightened by the work of the Spirit, and are sanctified in true faith; then you are sent back out into the world to share His good news.

But if you come here and gather for worship and you receive God's Word of truth and then go back out into your lives, into the world, and do not live and speak that gospel truth in the world—the devil wins. Even more so, if you come to this place and only stick to your routines and only talk to the same people each time you come and do not take the opportunity to look around you to greet the guests who are in your midst, or make space and invite people into the things you love here, the devil wins. There are new people and families who come here regularly who are never engaged because we are fearful of what to say or do.

This is a dangerous statement, but we have to be better. This is the work of EACH person who gathers in this place to reach out to others, to invite others, to welcome others, to encourage each other in faith. This is not "somebody else's job." This is about the kingdom of God coming near for all people who the Holy Spirit calls into our midst. It is what we are called to do as Christians, and when we do not do it, the devil wins.

Friends and family of First Lutheran Church, each of you was given a unique voice to be a leader in the Church, Christ's church. And that is to invite, welcome, and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with guests who visit and with people in your life. This is not just the job of the pastors and staff. It is not enough to come to worship, only to go back out into the world and not think about what the gospel calls you to do or say. You have been given a unique voice in the world, and that is a voice of truth and hope. God's Word and his Son is the voice of light in a dark world. Do not put a basket over this light by fear. If you do, the devil wins.

Thanks be to God...

Pr. Jeff

## Marilyn McNeill Announces July Retirement

After nearly 18 years of enjoyable ministry at First Lutheran Church, I have decided to join my husband, John, in retirement effective July 31 of this year. We are working on a downsizing plan for our home to something smaller in Sioux Falls and hope to spend winters in a warmer climate. Also, our grandchildren in Minneapolis, Lauren (11 years) and Nolan (8 years), are growing up way too fast, and we miss too many of their activities.

I will certainly miss the pastors, staff, and the many wonderful members who I have had the privilege to serve with. It has truly been a blessing for me to be on staff here at First Lutheran Church.



## March Special Offering: Emmaus Road Ministry

During the month of March, the gifts for the special offering envelope will support Emmaus Road Ministries. This organization is a scholarship ministry started by Pastor Nate Lizarazo and Pastor Barbara Wangness, who served at First Lutheran Church until 2014. Emmaus Road is now housed and administered in the national church offices of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Colombia (IELCO) in Bogota, Colombia. Emmaus Road Ministries, Inc., operates with the mission that "Education is the passport to a better life." They fulfill this mission by providing scholarships for students in Colombia, South America, to attend formal education ranging from elementary to the university level—including formal technical education. Scholarship recipients are also required to provide leadership within their church congregations.



Above: First Lutheran mission group met students who received scholarships through Emmaus Road Ministries.

Below: FLC group visited with students at St. Luke's Lutheran School.



Additionally, Emmaus Road Ministries provides opportunities for Christian leadership development and people-to-people mission relationships through Casa Emmaus (Hospitality House). At Casa Emmaus, national and international groups (including groups from First Lutheran Church) experience transforming hospitality, mutual mission reflection, and a shared mission commitment. We as the First Lutheran congregation provided major funding through our last capital campaign to build Casa Emmaus and continue to provide a budgeted amount each year.

All gifts and prayers have an incredible impact to this mission!

Please consider supporting Emmaus Road Ministries by using one of the special offering envelopes provided by the church or by writing "Emmaus Road Ministries Support" on the memo line of a check made out to First Lutheran Church. Even if you are unable to make a monetary donation, please remember Emmaus Road Ministries and their special mission in your prayers.

The students who have and are receiving scholarships through Emmaus Road Ministries are grateful for your gifts and 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](http://flcsf.org/give) to donate online.*

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