

The Friendly Visitor

First Lutheran Church

March 2024



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Pastor's Message

When I was growing up, my high school youth group used to take a choir tour during spring break. We would travel to different destination points. I can't remember all of them, but New York City was one that comes to mind. Along the way there and back we would perform for congregations and they would house us for the night. There were roughly 80 youth involved.

One of the musicals performed in years prior to my high school years was "Celebrate Life", written by Buryl Red and Ragan Courtney. Throughout the musical there is a song that repeats with the words: After this he [Jesus] went journeying / From town to town and village to village / Proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom / The Kingdom of God.

Often in the scriptures during Lent, we hear stories of Jesus on the move: journeying from village to village, proclaiming the good news. This is in stark contrast to what the church has been teaching for several decades: build it and they will come.

Christianity is no longer just in a decline. According to recent surveys, Christianity is headed towards extinction in the next couple of decades. The challenge that Christianity is facing is how to engage the "nones." These are people who are religious but have "no" religious affiliation. They don't belong to a particular denomination or church.

It seems to me that if we are to connect and engage with our neighbors, we will need to rethink church. Particularly, we will need to rethink how we share the good news of Christ. Will we fortress in place within the confines of a building that feels a bit daunting to enter for the first time? Or will we find ways to move out into the community and build relationships with our neighbors and neighborhoods?

And, just in case you were wondering ... no one has the answer to this problem. We are definitely in a trial-and-error time of history. I've spent most of the last decade trying to fully comprehend the paradigm shift we are experiencing and experimenting with different ideas. The experiments involve finding ways to build relationships with people while taking into consideration the reasons people give for leaving the church and becoming "nones."

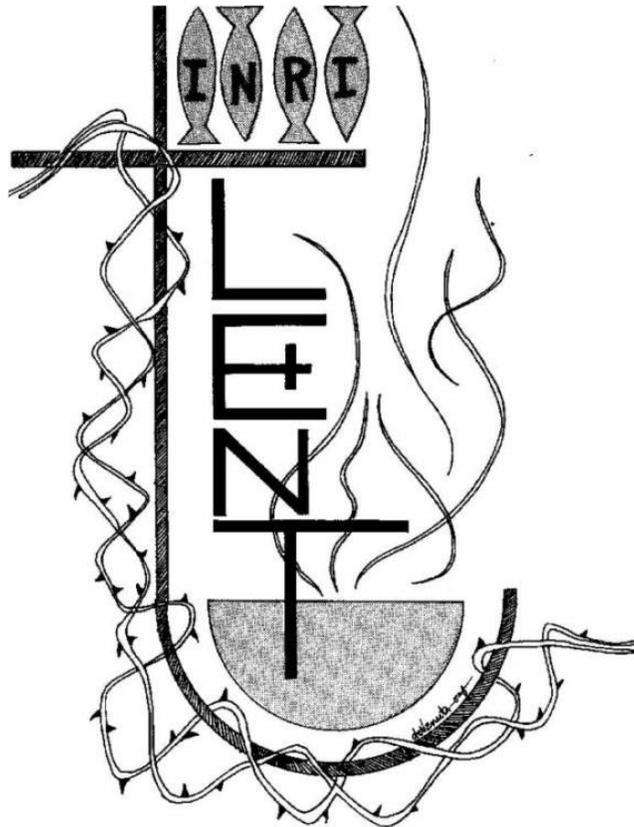
Church members often fear that we will get rid of what they hold dear. We certainly don't want to throw out the baby with the bathwater (which is such a curious phrase. Who does that?!) But we do have to find ways to live in the tension that we find ourselves in.

What does it look like to be better connected to our neighborhood and community (to get outside of our church building) and still retain our identity and mission as a congregation? This is a good question for meditation, bible study, conversation and praxis. I look forward to hearing your ideas.

May your Lenten practices and this congregation continue to be a blessing to you on your faith journey towards Easter and the fulfillment of God's love for all of creation. I am grateful for the ways each of you continue to be a blessing to me.

Blessings!

John



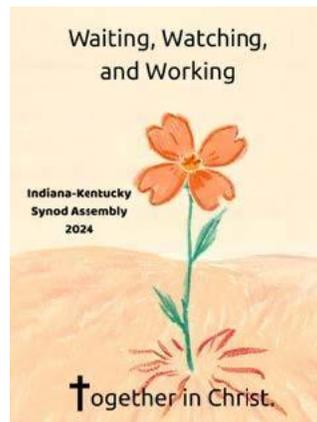
We send condolences to the family and friends of Vaira Otvars, who passed away February 5. Vaira was a longtime member of First Lutheran. She originally came to Louisville from war-torn Latvia, and lived with her family, attended school, and became a certified pharmacist. She enjoyed an independent life and was a wonderful aunt to many nieces and nephews, and was

honorary aunt to our members Karen and Alex Feldmanis. She was able to spend her last few months with family in Kenosha WI.

Thank you to everyone who sent their Trivent Choice Dollars to the church. Every little bit helps!

A huge thanks to everyone who attended the Congregational Annual Meeting. I have enjoyed being President this year, but am happy to pass the baton to Vicky Frank and move to treasurer. Thank you also to everyone who brought food to the potluck lunch. Potlucks are one of my favorite ways to have a meal, because there is always something new to try!

Sharon Lillie



The Annual Assembly of the Kentucky/Indiana Synod will be held in Louisville this year! June 7-9, delegates will gather at the Crown Plaza Hotel on Phillips Lane to listen, worship, learn and speak facing the Lutheran Church today. As a member of the Synod, we are allowed to send our pastor and two laypersons, who must be one male and one female (but not necessarily a couple). The expense of attending the assembly is covered, but not the lodging this year since it's in town.

From the Editor: Since Easter falls on March 31, I'm making the commitment to get the next newsletter out before Good Friday instead of mashing together Lent and Holy Week. I

encourage everyone who has a reflection on the season they'd like to share to email it to me (goeswithness@yahoo.com) so that I can include it. Of course this is true every month, but this is a special time!



THE FRIENDLY PUZZLER

Find the underlined words amongst the letter grid at the bottom.

The remaining letters will reveal a hidden message.

Mark 11: 1-11

When they were **approaching** Jerusalem, at **Bethphage** and Bethany, near the Mount of **Olives**, he sent two of his **disciples** and said to them, "Go into the **village** ahead of you, and **immediately** as you enter it you will **find** tied there a colt that has never been **ridden**; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this: 'The Lord needs it and will **send** it back here immediately.' " They **went** away and found a **colt** tied near a door, **outside** in the street. As they were untying it, some of the **bystanders** said to them, "What are you doing, **untying** the colt?" They told them what **Jesus** had said, and they **allowed** them to take it. Then they **brought** the colt to Jesus and threw their **cloaks** on it, and he sat on it. Many people **spread** their cloaks on the **road**, and others spread **leafy** branches that they had cut in the **fields**. Then those who went ahead and those who **followed** were shouting,

"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming **kingdom** of our **ancestor** David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Then he entered **Jerusalem** and went into the **temple**, and when he had looked around at **everything**, as it was already **late**, he went out to Bethany with the **twelve**.

A L L O W E D A E R P S E V I L O I
N E A S B E T H P H A G E T E A U R
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F R D Y E I S T D I S C I P L E S N
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L I S D L E I F V K I N G D O M A L

March 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25 10:30am Worship Service	26 Food Pantry closed 5:30pm NA - Why Are We Here 7:30pm LYG	27 10:00am Food Pantry	28 10:00am Food Pantry 6:00pm NA - Escape from Denial 6:30pm LYG 7:00pm Chancel Choir rehearsal	29 4:00pm Food Pantry	1 Food Pantry closed 6:00pm LYG	2 12:30pm NA - Lose the Desire
3 10:30am Worship Service	4 Food Pantry closed 5:30pm NA - Why Are We Here 7:30pm LYG	5 10:00am Food Pantry 7:30pm NA	6 10:00am Food Pantry 4:30pm LYG Staff Meeting 6:00pm NA - Escape from Denial 7:00pm Chancel Choir rehearsal	7 4:00pm Food Pantry	8 Food Pantry closed 6:00pm LYG	9 9:45am NAMI meeting 12:30pm NA - Lose the Desire
10 9:30am Breakfast 10:30am Worship Service	11 Food Pantry closed 5:30pm NA - Why Are We Here 7:30pm LYG	12 Food Pantry closed	13 10:00am Food Pantry 12:30pm Craft Day 6:00pm NA - Escape from Denial 6:30pm LYG 7:00pm Chancel Choir rehearsal	14 4:00pm Food Pantry 7:00pm Worship and Music Committee Meeting	15 Food Pantry closed 6:00pm LYG	16 12:30pm NA - Lose the Desire
17 10:30am Worship Service 1:00pm Council Meeting	18 Food Pantry closed 5:30pm NA - Why Are We Here 7:30pm LYG	19 10:00am Food Pantry 7:30pm NA	20 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 10:00am Food Pantry 4:30pm LYG 6:00pm NA - Escape from Denial 7:00pm Chancel Choir rehearsal	21 4:00pm Food Pantry	22 Food Pantry closed 6:00pm LYG	23 12:30pm NA - Lose the Desire
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