



THE FIRST FRUITS

Serving Christ by proclaiming Christ crucified in the
Minnesota North District of the LCMS



First Evangelical Lutheran Church; Grand Rapids, MN
A member of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

astor's Corner

WHAT IF?

You all know that I have not been very successful at being retired, or at least in staying retired. I am, however, of an age where my health issues, my energy levels, and my longing to be more involved in the regular activities with our family are causing me to make retirement a “done deal” sooner rather than later. As I ponder this I cannot help but be reflective about nearly 50 years of ministry.

What changes I have seen over those years! Values have shifted. Attitudes have changed. Commitment levels have shrunk. Social life has retreated. Church life is certainly not what it used to be. I know – I am sounding like an old guy, but the whole focus of our culture has drifted far away from the days of Ozzie and Harriet when life was more basic, more grounded, more black and white. Then wrong was wrong and right was right. This lined up closely with what the Bible taught us. Indeed, the Bible had a more prominent influence in the lives of people across the board.

What has become more standard in our times is an attitude that the teachings of the Bible are not as relevant anymore. Those ways of looking at life are too narrow and exclusive. Society today has become much more “inclusive,” which shifts many of our cultural values as being in the “gray” area – neither right nor wrong, just “acceptable.”

This is all following a natural progression which would be understandable *if* God also changed His mind about things and altered His values. The Bible is quite clear

in telling us that “there is no variation or shadow due to change (James 1:17) or when we are told by God “I the Lord do not change” (Malachi 3:6). Should we

April, 2020



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take lightly the warning pronounced by God's servant Isaiah which says, "woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter" (Isaiah 5:20).

Can you see that it all comes down to a huge gamble so many people are willing to take that the Bible does not have any authority over them and God has no right to expect them to follow His "old fashioned" ways? Or, to put it another way, "who does God think He is to tell *me* what to do?" This is the direction our culture is drifting toward.

Each and every one of us should take an honest look at where we stand in this regard. It is so evident that many people, especially among the younger generations, have spent little time learning about God and are not exposed to His ways. There is also another wave of people who grew up learning about the Bible's teachings but have allowed them to be pushed to the back of their thoughts and actions.

If we look at just the small sampling of our church membership roster, we can see these trends among us. We literally have hundreds of people who are connected to the church on paper, but seldom, if ever, seen among those who see the value in gathering to worship the Lord God or to support the mission of the church with their prayers or resources. Hundreds! They have become

disconnected from the church. Are they (*you*) still connected to God? If so, is it on His terms or yours?

WHAT IF? What if every one of us did do a serious inventory of our spiritual life and actions? What if everyone among us paid more attention to what the Bible teaches than to what our world is dictating? What if everyone saw the need to gather in worship to thank God for His blessings, draw His strength in the midst of our trials, benefitted from the sharing of our common faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. What if we all got back to valuing what God values? What if every one who claims a faith in Jesus was boldly committed to modeling and sharing that faith with others who do not know our Lord?

Wouldn't that be something if the Holy Spirit put this challenge so strongly on everyone's hearts and we all showed up in church next Sunday? There wouldn't be room for everyone! Should we realistically say, "we don't have to worry about that" or would we be prepared to welcome one another with open arms and with joyous hearts to God for showing Himself strong and mighty in so many people's lives?

I'm just saying, "what if?"

**IN CHRIST'S,
PASTOR ZEIGE**

WHAT IF? (Part 2)

As you are reading these articles it should be very apparent that part 1 was written before our social structure collapsed because of the coronavirus. Suddenly my “what if everyone showed up to worship in church at the same time” becomes “what if no one can come to church to worship” for who knows how long?

Our government has asked churches to practice “social distancing,” asking for health reasons that we not gather in groups of more than 10 until we are given the all clear signal. In my heart and mind, I want to shout out to the world that God is in control and we choose not to live in fear and “what if.” At the same time, the Bible teaches us that as Christians we have an obligation to obey the governing authorities – as long as they are not commanding us to do that which is sinful. So, we are bound to comply with this request as a way of trying to contain the spread of this virus. In a very realistic way we can see that if we choose to go against this guideline and decided to meet for worship as we normally do, we know that the people most likely to show up would be our elderly members who are also the most vulnerable to be exposed to the possibility of serious, and even deadly disease.

In light of these factors we will not gather until the dangers have subsided. That, by no means, means we have to stop

being the church. How good it is that we have the technology to broadcast our worship services on television and post them to be viewed on our website (www.flcgr.org). We will provide this form of worship and we truly hope that you will use these means to worship the Lord. “What if” everyone thoughtfully, purposely set aside the valuable time to keep listening to God’s Word and finding His strength and encouragement in these trying times?

Let us remind you again of the opportunities you have to view our worship services on television. If you have Mediacom they broadcast us on Channel 2. Paul Bunyan uses Channel 32. You have your choice of three different times: Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., Wednesday at 4 a.m. or Wednesday at 12 noon.

During this time, however long it is, please be mindful of ways that we can be a gospel light shining in the darkness. If you have had enough “hunkering down” at home and would like to volunteer, Elder Circle and the Second Harvest Food Bank could use helpers. Perhaps you can reach out by phone to one or more people who cannot get out of their homes. Let the Holy Spirit direct you to ways you can make a positive difference for others.

Please also be mindful of the ways you can be supportive of our on-going ministry at First Lutheran. This crisis will pass in time. In the meantime, we still have financial obligations that require your

generosity. Please avoid what I call “the theatre mentality.” What I mean is, if I don’t go to see a movie at a theatre I don’t feel a need to send them some money. We are a church. We are a part of the kingdom of God. We want to continue to pay our staff at church, pay our light bills, support our missionaries, and do what we normally do. That does not stop. Isn’t it nice that every offering envelop in your packet *is* an envelope with the church’s address on it. Just add a stamp and mail it in. We plan on keeping office hours Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. If you need to stop in, please try to make an appointment.

**IN CHRIST’S,
PASTOR ZEIGE**



Happy Spring!

The days are getting longer, the sun feels warmer and we eagerly await the glorious celebration of our Lord and Savior’s resurrection. What a promise we have....because Christ lives, we too will live forever and with Him! Our children continue to hear and learn that truth through songs and stories. That is why it is so necessary for them to come to Sunday School each week and to worship with their families as well. All of us need to be continually growing in our relationship our Lord and Savior. Release Time has ended, but we need to keep all of these students in our thoughts and prayers so they continue to know and believe in Jesus. We pray they will have the opportunity to attend youth events and also be a part of our VBS this summer. Please continue to keep our children, their families, and our dedicated staff in your thoughts and prayers.

*In Christ, Mary Buech
Sunday School Superintendent*



**MAY
“FIRST FRUITS”
ARTICLES**

May “First Fruits” items are
Due by April 15th.

**ALL ARTICLES NEED TO BE
EMAILED TO
Debbie.Robertson@hotmail.com**

ATTENTION USHERS

March 20, 2020

With all other meetings having been cancelled or postponed, the **Ushers Training and Review Meetings** scheduled for this week have also been postponed. Scheduling for the future is yet to be determined, but the dates will be published in the weekly bulletin as soon as possible.

Ed Ames and David Storrs



Church Bake Sale Fundraising Event!

Don't miss this special opportunity on Sunday, April 19 to be a part of helping New Beginnings Pregnancy Care Center and Grace House in Grand Rapids.

Get your homemade goodies for a Free Will Donation!

Help us meet our fundraising goals for these two non-profits!

Set up will be Saturday, April 18 from 12 noon until 2 pm. Please have your baked goods packaged to sell.

May God richly bless you!

The Board of Human Care

Easter Flowers are Cancelled



African Choir at First Lutheran

On Wednesday, August 19th the Imani Milele Choir from Uganda, Africa will be at First Lutheran to do a choir concert for our congregation and also Our Redeemer Lutheran.

This choir is a talented group of children that tour the U.S., raising awareness of the plight of orphaned and vulnerable children. The choir concert features uplifting and inspirational songs that share stories of the joy that they have received through God's love, and songs that are an exciting blend of original compositions, praises and worship; and unique African drum routine and dance.

There will be a potbless at 5:00 and the concert will begin at 6:30. There will also be a free will offering on Sunday, May 10th to help cover their travel expenses. Checks can be made Payable to "Imani Milele".

We will need 13 families who are able to provide housing for 2 students and 1 adult for that Wednesday evening, plus a breakfast and bag lunch on Thursday.

There will be forms for host families to complete. A sign-up sheet will be provided to sign up in June.

If you have any questions, please call me, Mary Buech 999-7408. Thank you.

Christ
is
Risen!



Youth News

While a stay at home order is in place, we have found some online resources for you to stay connected to the church. Now is a great time to start new practices if you don't already have them in place. If you are unsure of where to start, don't hesitate to reach out.

"Like" our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/firstlutherangrandrapids>

Subscribe to our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwND1-aRw1fC5MW9naWtZGQ>

Follow us on Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/firstevlutheranyouth/>

Lutheran Island Camp is offering morning devotions for school age children on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/lutheranislandcamp>

Minnesota North District LCMS is offering daily Bible devotions at

<https://www.mnnlcms.org/home>

Or you can sign up for their emails.

Portals of Prayer app is available for download and costs \$9.99 for the year. They offer daily scripture lesson and devotion. They are also free right now on cph.org

CPH.org is offering free resources for a little while. From devotions to Bible studies to free issues of Happy Times (a magazine for children) and more.

YouVersion is a free Bible app that has daily verses, many devotions, and Bible studies. You can even do them with your friends. This app also reads the Bible to you.

Jessica Pellinen
Family Ministry Program Director
218-244-5365
218-999-4102
firstteyouth@gmail.com

Are you interested in k-12 Christian Education? Foundation Christian School in Taconite is looking for board members and volunteers. We have openings in k-3 for the remainder of this school year. If interested please contact the school at 218.360.8000 or Diane Meyer at 612.799.0642.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.
Colossians 3:15



“Sharing the Love of Jesus”

CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES –
UNAPPROVED MARCH 10, 2020

Present: Gary Rosin, Les Flem, Jennifer Flem, Joan Roessler, Debbie Robertson, Greg Taylor, Dwight Kessler, Mary Buech, Tom Lattimore, Pastor Zeige, Jessica Pellinen, Linda Urevig

Call to order: Dwight Kessler called the meeting to order at 5:30PM.

Opening devotion and prayer: Pastor Zeige opened with devotion and prayer from 2 Corinthians 4 starting at verse 5. We are like cracked pots. We are broken. We have cracks. God made light shine out of darkness. God’s light shines through our cracks.

Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Approval of Minutes

***Motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the Agenda with the addition of #4 Archival to New Business and to accept the Minutes.

Oral Reports of Boards and Committees

1. Boards of Christian Education & Youth: Report in Packet. Jessica P.
2. Board of Elders: No Meeting
3. Boards of Human Care & Missions: Report in Packet. Mary B.
4. Board of Stewardship: No Meeting

5. Board of Trustees: Report in Packet. Gary R.
6. Revolving Trust Fund Committee: Greg T. Next meeting will be in April
7. Wiebe Grant Committee: No Requests
8. Direction and Planning Committee: No Meeting

Family Ministry Program Director's Report: Report in Packet. Jessica P.
 Pastor's Report: Report in Packet. Pastor Zeige

Financial Secretary's Report: Report in Packet. Debbie R.

YTD income 2020: \$45,595.27 YTD
 income 2019: \$44,886.07

Treasurer's Report: Report in Packet. Jennifer F.

As of: February 29, 2020

General Fund Chkg: \$33,613.89

Building Fund Chkg: \$48,948.81

Mortgage loan balance: \$82,580.56

Revolving trust fund Chkg: \$120,054.95

***Motion was made, seconded and passed to accept oral and written Board and Committee reports.

Correspondence - None

Unfinished Business

1. Call Committee Update – Tom L.
The committee is waiting on a new list of names.
2. Youth Tithe Account Update – Jessica P. They are going back to

drawing board regarding how to use the Youth Tithe Account.

3. AV Committee Update – Tom L. Training has started. There was no committee meeting this past month.
4. Weather Cancellation of Church Services Update – Tom L. & Jessica P. They are looking at options and discussed the need to update current member information. June Completion Date.
5. Technology Workshop Update – Jessica needs to know who is going on April 25th.

***Motion was made, seconded and passed for the church to pay the registration for whoever wants to go.

6. Personnel Manual – The manual has been updated but needs to be looked over one more time before it goes to the Council. On March 31st there will be a meeting to go over the manual.
7. LED lights under overhang (passed 8/2019) – The electrical is a problem. Nothing will be done at this time.

New Business

1. Amazon Smile – Jessica P. has been looking into an account for our church.
***Motion was made, seconded and passed to have Jessica set up a donation account for First Lutheran Church on Amazon Smile.

2. Showing of “Passion of Christ” – Jessica P.

***Motion was made, seconded and passed to show the “Passion of Christ” movie on April 3rd at 6:30PM.

3. Electrician Work – Gary R. The trustees will be spending \$385 from their budget for installing a breaker box, various light switch replacements and shelving in the garage.

4. Archival – Joan Roessler, who volunteers at the Historical Society, talked to us about organizing, scanning and preserving our church files. She already has been working on our files and told us that we need to have fireproof file cabinets in a designated area (heat-controlled room with no windows). Jennifer has been talking to American Bank about fireproof file cabinets that they may have for sale.

***Motion was made, seconded and passed to move forward with buying the fireproof cabinets at a total cost of \$1,200.00. Gary R will do the moving.

Caring and Sharing

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 7:15PM.

The meeting was closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Linda Urevig,
Recording Secretary

COMING EVENTS

April 7th – Board Meetings 6:30PM or as decided by each Board

April 14th – Council Meeting 5:30PM



Mar 23, 2020 Wow, what a difference a few weeks can make. COVID-19 has changed things in our lives and for those we love. God is still in control. At New Beginnings we are running things a bit different, but we are still open. God lead us to set up the Bright Course just a few months ago which allows us to streamline our classes via text to our clients. This has given us the ability to continue to operate and help our clients without them having to come into the Center. Who would have seen this being a necessity in such a short time? Only God. Clients can still earn points and earn much needed items for their babies. We really need your support even more in our outreach to our community as the needs are even greater now. Here are a few Statistics for you over the past 3 years

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
<i>Services</i>	505	677	1064
<i>16 Ultra</i>	16	45	31
<i>New Clients</i>	74	79	103

We are also forming a Quilting guild for a Quilting demonstration for Itasca County Fair to raise funds, please contact Kathy Metzger. Our Boutique is in need of 6 to 12-month size clothes for boys & girls (mostly pants), newborn and size 2 *diapers*. Thrivent members, we are on the nonprofit list for Choice Dollars.

We are so thankful that you are a part of helping families in our area! New Beginnings can reach more people because of your generosity. May God keep you safe, healthy and strong!

“9If you make the Lord your refuge, if you make the Most High your shelter, ¹⁰ no evil will conquer you; no plaque will come near your home. ¹¹For he will order his angels to protect you wherever you go.” Psalms 91:9-11

Kathy Metzger 218-326-0404 www.newbeginningspregnancy.com

Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health, shares his expert knowledge about the coronavirus pandemic, highlighting what families need to know and encouraging us all to respond to this crisis with faith and common sense. <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/episodes/broadcast/responding-to-the-coronavirus-with-faith-and-common-sense/>