



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



*P*astor's Corner

I would like to dedicate this month's newsletter article to the women of the congregation who respond to the call to serve the church in a very meaningful and practical way. I am focusing on all of you who answer the call to provide food or volunteer to prepare and serve the food at funerals.

We have had our share of funeral services recently. In the two years I have been here there have been 15 members who left us to go onto their heavenly homes. There have also been other funerals for people distantly connected to the church. Just in these last couple of weeks the Lord called home Jeanene Christianson, Florence Swenson, Eleanor Larson, Ruth Bauer, Margaret Larson's son Greg, and former members Ron Flinck and Diane Sweeney. In most of these cases the ladies of the congregation are called upon to serve. Traditionally in our culture families find great comfort and encouragement in gathering after the service to visit while sharing a meal together. This is a vital part of gaining closure at such a traumatic time of loss. Family and friends, often not seen for quite some time, share stories and memories and "catch up" with one another. If you have never experienced the death of a loved one you may think it odd to "celebrate" over a meal. If you have "been there" you know the big difference this can make in adjusting to your recent loss.

March 2020



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In a very realistic way we all know that when you are contacted to bring a pan of bars or are asked to help serve, there is often that urge to think “again?” or “I don’t have time for that!” That may be an initial response, but hopefully it fades quickly and is replaced by a sense of compassion for the family suffering the loss. Does it really matter if you know them or not? The point is – there is a need and you can step in and help in that need in the name of Jesus.

While we are being realistic, let no one forget that at some point in everyone’s life each of us will be in that position of need for comfort and support. In that greatest time of weakness would you like to hear, “sorry, no one was available to help”? Our lives are not just about me, myself, and I. Our Christian life is a calling to be a compassionate follower of our Lord who cares for each and every person enough to sacrifice Himself to provide for their eternal well-being. What a privilege to be part of that process of helping and serving one another.

Back to my original thought. Thank you to all of you ladies and men who step up to be there for others at their most vulnerable times in life. Thank you for looking beyond your busy schedule because you know how much it will mean for others. Thank you for being the hands of Jesus who serve, the feet of our Lord who run to

help, the compassionate heart of Jesus to reach out and touch the hearts of brothers and sisters who need to experience the presence of their Savior and Lord.

Being a member of a church is not just about coming to church whenever you can. It is about learning how to be a member of the Body of Christ and using the gifts and talents God has given you. It is about putting your faith into action. This helps people and it reflects the glory of God working in us and through us. Thank you for being a follower of Christ.

**IN CHRIST’S,
PASTOR ZEIGE**



LENTEN
SERIES:

Beginning on Ash Wed., February 26th, we will once again offer an invitation to one and all the gather for a special mid-week worship service. Our general theme will be: “We Are the Body of Christ.” We will examine each week: Jesus’ feet, eyes, hands, mouth, ears, and heart and make connections with how our Lord draws us into loving service for Him. Join us at 6:30 p.m. each Wednesday.

Vacation Bible School

Over the past several months, there have been a lot of conversations around VBS. Last year we had an average of 33 children attend. We had more volunteers (including the 16 youth volunteers) than we did children. We have a budget of \$2,000 that we spend on VBS, so we wanted to really look to see if this is the right way to share the love of Jesus with the resources we have. After a survey of VBS parents and volunteers went out, the board of education and the board of youth decided to try hosting VBS out at Camp Bluewater during our family camp this year. This decision was not made lightly. We knew we had a lot of things to work through, so we started by having a creative planning session in February.

There were about ten people that showed up to the VBS Creative Planning Session, all with wonderful ideas and suggestions. You could feel the Holy Spirit was at work in our conversation. We decided to start from the beginning, so our first questions were why we hold VBS. What's our mission? What's our purpose?

After some discussion we decided that it is very important to reach out to the community to share the love of Jesus with them. Our mission

statement is "To reach the children in our community by sharing the love of Jesus with them through Bible Stories." We also took some time to look at our community. Second Harvest Food Bank helps over 4,400 people with food each week¹. Our community also has a lot of opportunities all year round for children. Parents are working at least one if not two jobs just to make ends meet. Not all children have both parents living at home.

Understanding our community helps us realize that the traditional 9-12 Monday through Friday isn't feasible for most families. We also looked at our volunteers, most of them either need to be stay at home parents with no babies or have daycare available, be retired, or need to take a whole week off work to volunteer their time. Not everyone can take a week off to spend their time at VBS. With this information we looked at other options. We could hold a one-day VBS, two days, three days, or a weekend. They all hold advantages and disadvantages. After great discussion the group settled on two full days of VBS. Then we discussed the option of allowing the kids to stay overnight.

A few months back when the idea was first brought up of having VBS out at Camp Bluewater, I told myself no way are going to allow anyone else to stay overnight other than our own members children. We can't handle more kids and we are already

low on volunteers. I put up a wall and was determined that was how it was going to be. Every time I prayed for VBS, I asked God to show me what we need to do. I asked Him how can we give the kids in our community a memorable VBS experience? Over and over He made me realize the need in our community and the resources we already have. When this concept was brought up at the creative planning session, let's just say it didn't go over so well. They were all thinking what I was thinking before. Everyone put up a wall and said "no, it is just too much work."

At what point do we put our own feelings aside and look at what God is trying to tell us? Take a minute and look past at how much work this is going to be and look at the unique opportunity we have where we can change children's lives by sharing the love of Jesus with them. We don't hold VBS for ourselves, we do it for the children. Once we put our own feelings aside, we can really start to look at the possibilities that lie around us. We can open our eyes to what God wants us to do. He has given us an opportunity like no other. An opportunity to give to children that may not otherwise ever experience an overnight camp, fishing, canoeing, friendship all by being directly in His creation.

We have a unique opportunity that no other church in town can offer.

We can offer an overnight VBS for free to the children in our community! Why should it be free? Well first off, we got a great discount at Camp Bluewater because we are a youth organization, second, we have a gracious giving congregation where we can have a budget just on VBS, and most importantly people are praying.

We have been planning for this without even knowing it for the past few years by going to Lutheran Island Camp with the kids and then holding our own family camp out at Camp Bluewater. I feel confident that working together we can execute this and have an amazing time all while being surrounded in God's word.

Let's start looking at the greater good of our community not just inside the church walls. When God is giving us an opportunity, we need to put our trust in Him that He will work out all the details. He will provide the children that need this experience. Yes, we are going to have challenges, but God will provide a solution. I am putting my trust in God; will you do the same?

There will be many different opportunities for you to give your time. We want you to walk away from VBS refreshed and energized not tired and exhausted. Please only give the time you can give. We will make sure that there will be rides to Camp Bluewater and back to the Church throughout the day. I would also like to invite you to

our planning sessions. Our next one will be on March 3rd at 4:00.

Together we can plant seeds and make memories that will last a lifetime. We have a chance to change a child's life this Summer, will you be a part of it?

In Christ,
Jessica Pellinen
Family Ministry Program Director



Greetings to all families;

As we are in the Lenten season, may we all truly reflect on the importance of this time to think why God saw the need, because of His great love for us, to send His one and only Son, to die in our place. Because of this gift, we have the assurance that we have all our sins forgiven, and have the promise of eternal life with Him. This is the promise our Sunday school children hear each and every Sunday morning, as they attend Sunday school. That is why it is so important for them to attend on a regular basis.

The children will share their faith again, with all of you on Palm Sunday.

We also pray that we continue to provide the prayer and financial support so all people, of all nations, have God's word in their own native language. Our Sunday

school is donating all our offering to support Lutheran Heritage Foundation so they can continue to provide every family with a copy of The Children's Garden of Bible Stories in their homes.

Please continue to keep our children, their families, and our staff in your thoughts and prayers.

*In Christ, Mary Buech
Sunday School Superintendent*



THE LWML MN NORTH DISTRICT CONVENTION IS BEING HELD IN GRAND RAPIDS JUNE 22, 23, AND 24, 2020 and is hosted by Our Redeemer, Cohasset and First Lutheran, Grand Rapids. The convention will be held at the Timberlake. Registration will begin in April and more details about that later.

TO THE WOMEN OF FIRST LUTHERAN: The MN North LWML District Board has an open position for the Arrowhead I Regional Vice President for 2020 – 2024. Sue Zeige currently fills this position and her term is up in June 2020. Please prayerfully consider serving as our LWML Regional Vice President. Always remember, "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." Philippians 4:13. God bless you for prayerfully considering this opportunity to serve our Lord through the LWML. Please contact Carla Taylor with any questions. Copies of the Regional Vice President job description can be found on the counter outside Shirley's office.



LIBRARY CORNER FOR MARCH 2020

Greetings First Readers!

The following books have been on the NEW Books shelf since last fall and haven't been checked out. They've been placed in their place on the shelves now, so I'd like to generate some interest by taking information from their back covers:

Prayer – the Ultimate Conversation at 243.32 Sta. “No matter what confounding questions, perplexing circumstances, or seemingly insurmountable dilemmas you are facing today, the solution to them is absolutely obvious to God – and He longs to share His answers with you. Draw closer to the Father. Get to know God by engaging with Him in *Prayer, The Ultimate Conversation.*”

Rich in Love – When God rescues messy people at 248.84 Gar. “Over the past forty-five years the Garcias have birthed, fostered, or adopted thirty-two children. Their story holds difficult endings as well as promising new beginnings. Above all, it reminds us what can happen when ordinary people submit to God's call. This is a book about a family cemented in hope.

About a need to love the orphan. And about a God who never, ever gives up.”

An Eclipse of the Soul – a Christian Resource on Dealing with Suicide at

248.8 Hos. This book “is a compassionate resource on the motives, myths, and effects of suicide. Having recovered from an unsuccessful suicide attempt herself, Helen Kooiman Hosier writes like few can, providing not only sound biblical counsel and resources for suicide prevention but also understanding, empathy, and hope.”

Outreach Promises – God's Encouragement for Sharing Your Faith

at 269.2 Bic. “Outreach promises are Bible verses in which God assures you His mission is possible, and you can make a difference. Outreach promises help you to take action, trusting in God's ability to use you to reach people for Christ.”

What They Need to Hear – Sharing Christ with Family and Friends at 269.2

Pre. “Maybe above all else, we want our family members and friends to rejoice with us in God as our Savior. Yet, those closest to us often present us with the greatest challenges for our witness.”

Thanks for the following review from one of our frequent First readers: **The Winner's Game** at 813.6 Mil. This book is not about sports, but about a dysfunctional family. The hostile parents are near divorce and the three children ages 17, 13, and 8 are becoming increasingly hateful toward each other. They had heard of The Winner's Game that saved their great-grandparents marriage. When tragedy strikes the family, all involved learn that sometimes a loser is really the winner. "This is an excellent book."

Reviewed by Alice Hill

Many thanks also go out to our Library Angelz for their donation of new books and three DVDs for grownups! Look for them above the card catalogue.

Authors include Lisa Wingate, Irene Hannon, Terri Blackstock, Andrea Boeshaar, Chris Fabry (**Overcomer**), Amy Sorrells, Robin Pearson, Beth Vogt, and Judith Miller.

Enjoy this winter by staying warm and curling up with a good book. We're so fortunate to have a large variety of books to choose from. Let us know if there is a title you'd like to see on our shelves.

Darlene Baltus, Shela Cline, and Janie Carlson – your gentle First librarians...

"So please, oh please, we beg, we pray. Go throw your TV set away, and in its place, you can install a lovely bookshelf on the wall. Then fill the shelves with lots of books" – Roald Dahl, **Charlie and the Chocolate Factory**.

Mission Quilters Thank You!

We want to thank everyone for support of our mission, for donating fabric and sheets, for buying quilts so we have funds for supplies and shipping, for sewing tops at home. I especially want to thank the faithful quilters who come in on Tuesdays to work and the fellow quilter who delivers quilts to St. Paul for us.

Last year we finished 40 quilts with 5 workers working. These were sent to missions, taken to local Grace House homeless shelter and to Elder Circle to be distributed as needed.

If you want to help, we use cotton and cotton blend fabric that we can cut 6" squares from and sheets to be used for quilt backs. Please consider joining us on Tuesday from 9:00 to 11:00 whenever you can spare time, or you can sew quilt tops at home. We have several jobs to do so special talent isn't required.

Blessings and thanks to all of you. For more information ask one of us. Verna Jean Craig for Mission Quilters

ATTENTION PUZZLE PLAYERS: We are setting up a puzzle exchange table for the months of February and March. Please leave one of your jigsaw puzzles and take a different one to help pass these next two snowy months until Spring! Check out the table by the fireplace. Thank You, Janie and Darlene.



The board of youth have several events planned for the next couple of months. For more information on these events and what we have been up to please watch the bulletin, Facebook page, Facebook group “First Lutheran Youth Group”, website flcgr.org, Instagram “firstevlutheranyouth”, and the bulletin board outside the youth office. We also send out an email, to join the email newsletter, email your address to firstevyouth@gmail.com

Release Time Prayer Partner

Meeting: March 25th at 12:30. Meet with your Prayer Partner one last time before the year is over. Snacks Provided.

Family Easter Egg Hunt and Game Day: March 29th after second service. Join us for a Potbless meal, Easter egg hunt then join in on your favorite board games. Everyone is welcome!

Family May Baskets: on May 3rd after second service we will make May baskets for the shut-ins and deliver them. It was such a success with the cookies and caroling the children want to do it again. Lunch will be provided.

Youth Sundays will be on March 15th and April 5th (Sunday School singing only), April 19th, and May 17th.

Confirmation Sunday will be held along with youth Sunday on Palm Sunday April 5th.

May you see God’s blessings in all that you do this month.

Jessica Pellinen

“Sharing the Love of Jesus”
CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES -
UNAPPROVED
FEBRUARY 11, 2020

Present: **Les Flem, Jennifer Flem, Dwight Kessler, Greg Taylor, Greg Robertson, Debbie Robertson, Janie**

Carlson, Tom Lattimore, Mary Buech, Gary Rosin, Pastor Zeige, 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 Psalm 103:1-5. We should be mindful of these words from the depths of our soul. God always is with us. With our whole being, we should thank and praise God. He redeems our life from the pit.**

Consent Agenda

1. **Approval of Agenda**

2. **Approval of Minutes**

***Motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the Agenda and Minutes.

Oral Reports of Boards and Committees

1. **Boards of Christian Education & Youth: Report in Packet. Greg R.**
2. **Board of Elders: Report in Packet. Les F.**
3. **Boards of Human Care & Missions: Report in Packet. Mary B.**
4. **Board of Stewardship: Report in Packet. Janie C. stated that Mike Meyer is interested in looking into auto payments for offerings.**

5. **Board of Trustees: Report in Packet. Gary R. Jennifer F. offered her thanks to David Storrs for the work he did to clean out the choir room.**
6. **Revolving Trust Fund Committee: No Meeting. Greg T.**
7. **Wiebe Grant Committee: No Requests. Greg T.**
8. **Direction and Planning Committee: Greg. T. stated that the next meeting will be set soon.**

Family Ministry Program Director's Report: **Report in Packet.**

Pastor's Report: **Report in Packet. Pastor Zeige**

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

YTD income 2020: \$23,452.21

YTD income 2019: \$22,824.80

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

As of: January 31, 2020

General Fund Chkg: \$35,953.65

Building Fund Chkg: \$50,647.81

Mortgage loan balance: \$85,722.15

Revolving trust fund Chkg:

\$126,413.80

***Motion was made, seconded and passed with one correction to be made on the Treasurer's Report.

Correspondence – **None**

Unfinished Business

1. Call Committee Update – The update was the same as the Annual Voters' Meeting update. The Call Committee had narrowed the candidates to six. Two were not interested in the call and one had dropped out. Of the three remaining candidates, one may decline depending on the outcome of a vote at his church. With only possibly two candidates remaining, the committee will have to decide whether to go forward with interviewing the two candidates or request new names from the district.
2. Youth Tithe Account Update – No Report
3. AV Committee Update – Tom L. Training will be set up soon.
4. Red Cross Blood Drive Update – Mary B. Blood Drive is scheduled for May 28th.

New Business

1. Weather Cancellation of Church Services – Tom L. We will be looking at our capabilities for sending out a message, possibly setting up a text system.
2. **Church Technology Workshop – Jessica left printed information about the Technology Tools Workshop on Saturday, April 25th. If anyone is interested, please contact her.**

3. Debbie R. expressed her concern about greeting one other with a hand shake during the cold and flu season.

Caring and Sharing

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 6:36PM.

The Meeting was closed with prayer
Respectfully submitted, Linda Urevig,
Recording Secretary

Chili Feed Fundraiser for Eagle Scout Project

- Sunday, March 15th
- 12:00 to 3:00 pm
- First Lutheran Fellowship Hall
- Supported by Men's Club and Thrivent Financial
- **Free Will Donation**
- Eagle Scout Candidate: Nic Morse

Parenting Point by Heather Melcher, DCE

Confirmation is Not a Declaration of Independence

Each year, at the beginning of July, people in the United States and Canada think a lot about independence and celebrate their freedom of self-government.

While adults focus on independence once a year, teens are aware of independence, or their lack of it, all year round and look forward to the independence of adulthood.

Some kinds of independence are a good thing. But, God does not want any of us to be spiritually or socially independent.

Sadly, a lot of people mistakenly believe that confirmation is a time when children declare their spiritual independence from their parents and graduate from Christian education.

But, confirmation is not a declaration of independence.

In reality, the rite of confirmation is a time when young Christians declare their dependence on God for salvation and commit to a life-long journey of faith development and involvement with other Christians in a congregation.

Dependence on God:

Every Christian depends on God for the free gift of forgiveness He offers everyone who believes in Jesus.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:23-24)

Interdependence with Other Christians

Throughout the Bible, God tells us to work together to serve and encourage each other. When teens stop being involved in a community of faith after they are confirmed, they abandon part of what it means to be a Christian. They miss out on being cared for and they neglect to care for others.

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24-25)

As fellow believers in Jesus, it will always be our responsibility to encourage our children in their faith, to remind them to be involved in a church regularly, and to continue to explain how important Jesus' free gift of forgiveness and salvation is.

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American Red Cross

Date : 5/28/2020

Start Time 08:00 AM

End Time 02:00 PM

Where : First Evangelical Lutheran Church

Address : 735 NE 1st Ave, , Grand Rapids, MN 55744



Contact Shirley at 999-4101 or stop by the office, to schedule a time to donate Blood.

COMING EVENTS

- February 16th – Youth Sunday
- February 29th – Family sleigh Rides & Snow Tubing
- March 3rd – Board Meetings 6:30 PM or as decided by each Board
- March 10th – Council Meeting 5:30PM
- March 15th – Chili Feed Fundraiser for Eagle Scout Project



NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

APRIL
"FIRST FRUITS"
ARTICLES

December "First Fruits" items are Due by March 15th.

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