



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

“THE ETERNAL DIFFERENCE”

Many years ago, I had a conversation with a man who seemed rather serious about holding what I thought (and still think) was a ridiculous notion. He proudly state he had a “childlike faith.” So far, so good. He went on to say that he did not want to mess it up with studying the Bible. It is my most ardent hope that not even one person who will ever read this agrees with that man.

Why? Because faith needs to grow and stretch and be challenged. When it stands still it will stagnate at best, and, at worst, shrink.

We will never reach a level of spiritual maturity, or for that matter, of spiritual simplicity, where we can rightly say, “I have arrived, there is no more that I need to learn.” Life is a learning process and we had better keep learning the unfolding of God’s truth so we do not fall prey to the cares and concerns of natural, worldly thinking. The difference between God’s Word and the world’s value system is “the eternal difference.”

If it were possible to gather up the accumulated wisdom of this world and add it to the sum total of human experience, it could not even begin to save one human being from perishing in everlasting condemnation. There! Did I say that strongly enough? Apart from faith in Jesus Christ, all will perish. On the other hand, “whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).” Yes, that is a familiar passage, but do not let the frequency of hearing it dull the razor-sharp intention of its words of truth.

If, then, clinging to God’s truth is the passageway to eternal life and following the ways of this world leads to eternal separation from God, shouldn’t it be the goal of every one of us, first of all, to believe this? Shouldn’t we, then, go on to hold the position that spending our lives learning more and more and more about God’s Word would be the best thing we could do?

September
2019



In Jesus' ministry, He encountered people who were more than willing to follow Him on their own terms. They listened selectively for what they wanted to hear. They like the part about being forgiven, but balked at being forgiving. They loved the part about going to the Father's mansions, but they rejected the part about taking up their cross to follow. They delighted to hear Him "beat up" on the Pharisees, but they choked on His words about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. They drew a line of their choosing and said, "We will follow You no further" They departed and left Him. Jesus asked His disciples, "Will you also leave?" Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life (John 6)."

Can you see that it is a false security we reach for when we want to create a less demanding category of being a Christian than being a disciple? Jesus did not set up different camps based on their levels of willingness to participate. He simply called disciples. He called out people who would commit to studying His Word and keeping His Word and putting it into practice. His promise for disciples clinging to His Word was truth – the kind of truth that sets us free from sin, from Satan's deceptions, from self-absorption, from self-righteousness, and, ultimately, from eternal death.

How are you doing with Jesus' personal call on your life? How are you doing with being a disciple of Jesus Christ? There can be an eternal difference.

By the way, several Bible study classes are offered at various times throughout the week. There are plenty of chairs available to accommodate more disciples. Please consider attending any of them.

THANK YOU: This past month has been very eventful. I celebrated another birthday and Sue and I observed our 50th wedding anniversary. Thanks to so many who sent cards or expressed well wishes for these events. Let me especially express my gratitude for all the prayers so many have offered for my health issues. After 12 days we finally heard the news that I have non-malignant cysts on my pancreas – not cancerous tumors. We are relieved, thankful for God's hand on me, and grateful to you for all the support and concern. We are still waiting to hear if any follow-up surgery is needed to remove the cysts. We will kept you

informed. Keep us in your prayers, please.



AUDIO-VISUAL: It would be my fondest hope that by the time you read this we will be not only up and running with the AV improvements, but also knowing how to use them. We thank everyone for your patience during installation and during the learning curve for those willing to be the technicians.

our **ELDERS**

THANKFUL FOR OUR ELDERS: We have been pleased to be able to use our Elders to help with something new for them. It is extremely difficult to acquire the services of retired pastors to fill in when I have occasional Sundays away. Our Elders have stepped up with a great willingness to lead worship services in my absence. This has allowed me to be present for a granddaughter's graduation, another's confirmation, a family gathering to celebrate our 50 years of marriage, and even some vacation time. Thank you, Elders! Your help is greatly appreciated.





ALASKA MISSION 2020!!! Planning for the 2020 Alaska mission trips has begun! The first planning meeting is scheduled for Thursday Sept 5th at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church at 7:00PM. This will be an informational session to answer questions and get a feel for how many people want to go. The trip will be for at least a week this coming June. No special skills are required. If you are interested in being a part of the 2020 team please plan on

attending. If you cannot attend but are still interested in going, contact Neil Grunke directly at 218 244 8426 or grunke4@paulbunyan.net. **Thank You!!!**

ON BEHALF OF THE 2019 ALASKA MISSIONS TEAM, I want to thank everyone for helping to make this year's trip a success. Approx. 60 children in two villages attended VBS during our two week visit and numerous outreach opportunities in the villages occurred. Both villages expressed extreme gratitude for our visit and expressed a desire for us to return next year. The Alaska Mission Team includes all of you and many more, not just the five individual who were blessed with going to Alaska this year. **Neil Grunke**

Within a year we had no one in the high school or middle

Family Ministry



It all started in 2013 when I was asked to join the Youth board. My children were 6, 5 and 3 at the time. Why would I put my time and energy into something that my children are not even involved in? Well God called me to it so I said yes. We had a good group going through at the time and did some activities, I remember attending my first lock-in with the bunch.

school age coming through or the group just disbanded. As a board we made the decision to start having family events. Inviting the younger children and their parents in on the fun. Now several years later we are seeing this influx in children. We have been averaging 8-15 middle school/high school students that attend the events regularly. We have up to 30 that are of age to join the youth group.

As you can see, we have been working for several years to build up the youth. This didn't happen overnight or just in the last year when I was hired. This has been a slow and steady process working with families and providing opportunities for them to grow in their faith. Creating relationships with one another has been a key ingredient in all of this. Since I have started working for First Lutheran, I have been pushing relationships. I do this

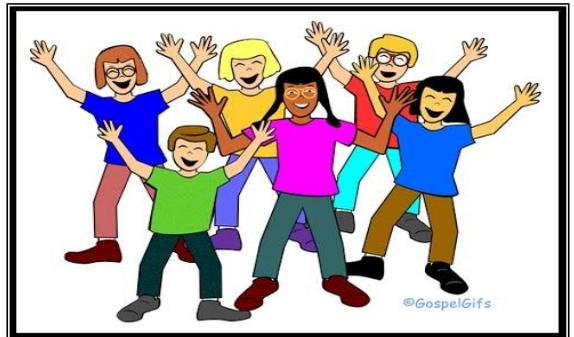
because I see the value in it. There is study after study done on the effects of adult/youth relationships. One example that just happened recently is an adult from First Lutheran was a mentor 20 years ago to a 9-year-old. That 9-year-old is now 29 and reached out to his mentor after 20 years to get together. What an impact the adult had on that child 20 years ago to have him reach out. Think back to when you were in elementary or middle school, was there one adult that just stood out? That made an impact on the path of your life. I am sure you can think of at least one person that had an impact on your life. Now how can we give that same impact to the youth at First Lutheran? I am starting to see a trend that I am not too excited about. I am praying that we are just in a lull and this won't continue. Either way I want to bring awareness to the congregation. The trend that I am seeing is the youth are starting to come through and help volunteer at events and the adults are stepping away thinking they are not needed. For instance, let's look at VBS, last year we had about eight youth helping and this year we had 13 youth. We needed the 13 youth this year or we would not have been able to put on VBS due to not enough adults volunteering. I am curious to see what next year brings if this is the trend we are on. We are down to three Sunday School teachers for two classes. Family camp we didn't see the helpers that we saw last year providing meals. Soon the youth are going to see this and wonder why they are having to do things when the adults are not doing them. We are setting the example and the

tone of the church. The youth watch us very closely and learn from us. What are we wanting to teach them?

How can we stop this trend? I would love for your feedback and ideas on how we can get more adults engaged with the youth or church overall. This is not intended to be more work for you, but an opportunity for the adults to bring their knowledge and skills to the youth. Set a good example and be leaders of the church. I can only say it so many times relationships, relationships, relationships. Share the Love of Jesus with one another. I pray that the adults of our congregation will be a role model to their peers and the youth of the church. If you are already doing this, THANK YOU! You have no idea how you are positively impacting the faith of the children.

Psalm 78: 4 we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. Jessica Pellinen

Family Ministry Program Director





CHURCH LIBRARY
News
LIBRARY CORNER FOR
SEPTEMBER 2019

THE HOMEPLACE, by Gilbert Morris at 813.54 Mor is the first book of the Singing River Series. During the time of the Great Depression, Lanie Freeman of Arkansas finds faith in God and love in a tightly knit family that overcomes the odds of tragedy and creates a future that promises the fulfillment of love. This story is an inspiring saga of a courageous young woman who holds her family together in hard times.

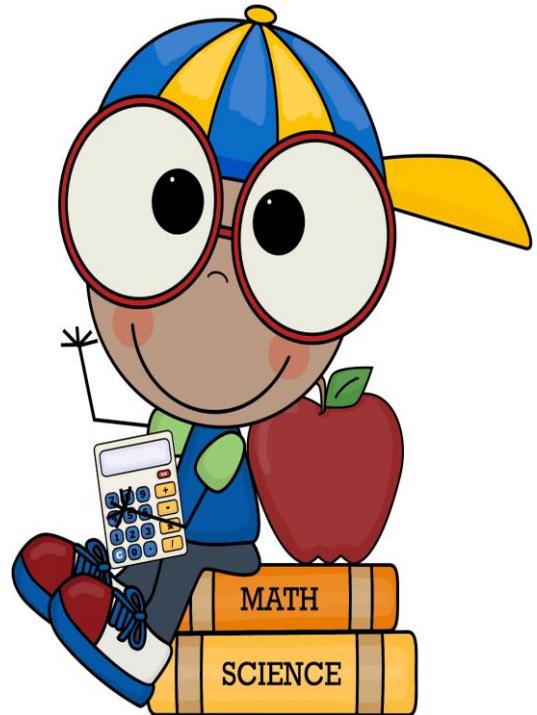
THE DREAM, by Gilbert Morris found at 813.54 Mor is a continuation of the first book above. Lanie seeks solace in her writing. She pours her heart out to God, trusting His promises. 17-year-old Lanie continues to struggle to hold her family together.

THE MIRACLE by Gilbert Morris found at 813.54 Mor. The Miracle continues the story of a young woman's valiant struggle to uphold her faith, her family, and her dreams during the height of the Great Depression.

Please let the volunteer librarians – Janie Carlson, Darlene Baltus, and Shela Cline – know if you have enjoyed these books by Gilbert Morris. There is another one

called **THE COURTSHIP** that continues the story!!! All of these are part of the Singing River Series by Gilbert Morris. As you have been reading the bulletin, you will notice that there are quite a few new books and 3 new DVDs that have recently been added to our library. Lynn Austin and Karen Kingsbury are just a couple of authors of those new books. Check them out!

Back To School
September 3rd.



Rally Day is September 8th



SEPTEMBER IS HERE ALREADY!

Summer again has flown by! What a blessing to enjoy all God has provided for us. September means the beginning of our Sunday School, Release Time and Confirmation Classes. What opportunities we must share the wonderful message of Jesus with all our children. Many of our Sunday School and Release Time teachers are returning. Thank you and we praise God for you. We are however in need of a Nursery-PreK teacher for our Sunday

School. It is truly a joyous and rewarding opportunity to share the love of Jesus with our little ones. You will really receive more than you give. Please pray that God would lead you to be a part of His ministry. Please call if you would like more information-Mary 999-7408. Rally day is September 8th, which will be the first day of Sunday School. Christian education opportunities are for all of us, no matter how young or old. Bible classes on Wednesday and Sunday School are wonderful ways for us to grow in our relationship With our Lord and Savior. Release time classes will begin in October. We will again need Prayer Partners for the students. The prayer journals are a wonderful way to connect with our students in a more personal way. A signup sheet will be in the notebook by the church office. Please keep our children, families and staff in your prayers. Remember we all have a part in our ministry to all.
In Christ- Mary Buech, Sunday School Superintendent.

A REDEEMER'S SONG MINISTRIES FILM

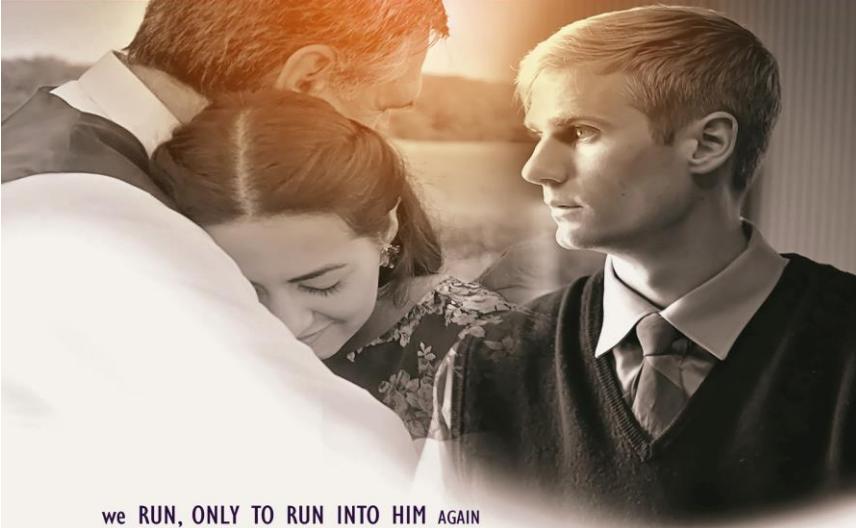
NICK
MUNDIS

DANAE
JOHNSON

JOSEPH
LARSON

KIP
SUNDEE

JOE
JOHNSON



we RUN, ONLY TO RUN INTO HIM AGAIN

HE LEADETH ME

REDEEMER'S SONG MINISTRIES PRESENTS

NICK MUNDIS DANAE JOHNSON JOSEPH LARSON KIP SUNDEE JOE JOHNSON
WITH DIANE EHLERS PETER WOIT SETH JOHNSTON ALIXANDRA JOHNSON AND LEAH DREXLER
WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY SARAH R. LARSON PRODUCED BY ALIXANDRA JOHNSON
MUSIC BY SOMMER N. DERICKSON EDITED BY SARAH R. LARSON

Thursday, September. 19

**Pot Bless Dinner at 5pm • Movie at 6pm • Freewill donation
at First Ev. Lutheran Church • 735 NE 1st Ave, Grand Rapids**

Please come to the premiere of "He Leadeth Me" an original Christian film made by a Minnesota director Sarah Larson! It is the retelling of the prodigal son set in the 1930 and filmed in the Midwest. Sarah Larson will be present. Please come to a pot bless at 5 with the film to show after at 6.

Where: First Lutheran Church

When: September 19

Hope to see many people there!

Stephanie Schroeder

**CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES - UNAPPROVED
AUGUST 13, 2019**

Present: Tom Lattimore, Les Flem, Gary Rosin, Dwight Kessler, Doug Carlson, Mary Buech, Ann Hauser, Pastor Zeige, Linda Urevig

Call to order: Tom Lattimore called the meeting to order at 5:35PM.

Opening devotion and prayer: Pastor Zeige led us in devotions and prayer from Proverbs 15:22. “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.” We are encouraged to come together with our ideas seeking the counsel of others. Never think that my way is the only way.

Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Approval of Minutes

*****Motion was made**, seconded, and passed to accept the Agenda with additions to New Business (5. AV Additions; 6. Treasurer’s Duties; 7. Custodian Disability/Employee Short Term Disability; 8. Pastor’s Retirement) and accept the minutes as written.

Oral Reports of Boards and Committees

1. Boards of Christian Education & Youth: Report in Packet. Ann H. added that Pam Clairmont did attend the meeting.

2. Board of Elders: Report in Packet. Les F. noted that the elders discussed Pastor Zeige’s retirement plans.
3. Boards of Human Care & Missions: No Meeting. Mary B. noted that \$645 was collected at a Door Offering for Neil Grunke’s Mission Trip. The Harvest Table has been set up.
4. Board of Stewardship: In Packet. Doug C. noted that the committee will be getting together with Pastor regarding October Stewardship Month.
5. Board of Trustees: In Packet. Gary R. noted that Kathy and Jim Hohenstein have been acting as substitute janitors since Brad has been on medical leave.
6. Revolving Trust Fund Committee: No Meeting
7. Wiebe Grant Committee: No Meeting
8. Direction and Planning Committee: No Meeting

Family Ministry Program Director’s

Report: July was a very busy month.

Report to be added to packet.

Pastor’s Report: Report in Packet.

Financial Secretary’s Report: Report in Packet.

YTD income 2019: \$174,469.85

YTD income 2018: \$171,177.10

Treasurer's Report: Report in Packet.

As of: July 31, 2019

General Fund Chkg: \$30,930.45

Building Fund Chkg: \$49,816.57

Mortgage loan balance: \$115,623.10

Revolving trust fund Chkg: \$280,398.12

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

Correspondence – Thank You card from kids at camp for the food the council provided.

Thank You card from Jessica for the meal provided by the council.

Unfinished Business

1. New Media update – Installation is ongoing and moving forward. AVE stated that our project has been a challenge for them. Training will begin when system is in place.
2. Capital Projects Update – Garage workers had been taken off that project to do the AV project in the balcony. With that project completed, the workers will be back working on the garage. Gary Rosin stated that the entrance doors are in the cities and he will be picking them up. Summer of 2019 completion date.
3. Constitution Update – Update has been done and Synod has approved.

4. Outside Building Cameras Update – The cameras are here and will be tested and installed.
5. Update on Church Website – The website renewal was changed to a one-year renewal. In order to get the five-year renewal, the website would have had to be taken down and completely rebuilt.
6. Church Vehicle – At this time there doesn't seem to be sufficient need for a church vehicle. This can be reviewed in six months to a year.

New Business

1. Purchase of new Bibles for Classrooms – The Bibles would cost \$716 and two \$100.00 gifts have been received toward the Bible purchase.
*****Motion was made**, seconded and passed to purchase new Bibles for classrooms with Thrivent Funds in an amount up to \$550.00
2. Consideration of a Daycare/Preschool – Research & Feasibility Committee – Jessica had been approached about starting a Daycare/ Preschool in our facility.
*****Motion was made**, seconded and passed to look at the feasibility, licensing requirements, town's need, operating costs, staffing, etc. of a Daycare/Preschool through the DPC Committee.
3. 2020 Budget – Jennifer F. would like to have budget drafts from each Board by September in order to make possible

adjustments before approval at the October Council Meeting.

4. October Congregational Meeting – Date for the Congregational Meeting will be set in September.

5. AV Additions – Additions to the AV system include:

- Outlet for possible screen in the lower narthex by the clock (wires have already been run)
- Audio Assist System/ Close Caption Options
- Outlet behind the cross for backlighting
- Lighting under the balcony overhang

*****Motion was made**, seconded and passed to un-table the backlighting behind the cross.

*****Motion was made**, seconded and passed to add an Audio Assist System that includes four units in an amount up to \$2000.00 from Media Ministry in the Revolving Trust Fund.

*****Motion was made**, seconded and passed with one abstaining vote to add an outlet in the lower narthex by the clock for future screen; add an outlet behind the cross for behind the cross lighting and possible Christmas decorating; LED lights for behind the cross lighting and LED lights in the back of the church under the balcony overhang in an amount up to \$3,500.00 from the AV Funds in budget.

6. Treasurer’s Duties – Jennifer F. discussed options with John Roessler,

CPA regarding the costs of payroll taxes and preparation of W-2’s. At this time John has agreed to maintain payroll records, calculate payroll, do monthly submission of Federal & State Withholding, Social Security Taxes, etc. at zero cost. John indicated that he was willing to do this with no fee, but will evaluate after several months and at that time determine the possible fee amount. He will then talk with the church treasurer and agree on a fee.

*****Motion was made**, seconded and passed to have John Roessler, CPA do the payroll and quarterly Federal and State Reports with fee to be evaluated after several months.

7. Custodian Disability/Employee Short Term Disability

*****Motion was made**, seconded and passed to restrict any employee from any work while on disability until a written doctor’s release is received.

*****Motion was made**, seconded and passed to add a tracking form for employee’s absences, vacations and sick days.

*****Motion was made**, seconded and passed that the substitute custodian (Kathy and Jim Hohenstein have been doing Brad’s duties since he has been on medical leave) will receive \$16.00 an hour for up to 28 hours a week to be approved by the Board of Trustees.

*****Motion was made**, seconded and passed to approve pay for Kathy and/or Jim Hohenstein retroactive back to when

they started subbing for the custodian up to 28 hours a week.

8. Pastor's Retirement – Pastor Zeige shared with the Elders his wishes on retirement and his concerns at this time. Tom L. will work on updating our call documents and will work with District President Rev. Dr. Donald J. Fondow on the call procedure.

Caring and Sharing
Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 8:03PM

The meeting was closed with prayer by Pastor Zeige and the Lord's Prayer.
**Respectfully submitted, Linda Urevig,
Recording Secretary**

COMING EVENTS

- September 8th - Rally Day
- September 3rd – Board Meetings 6:30PM
or as decided by each Board
- September 10th – Council Meeting
5:30PM

