

*First Evangelical Lutheran Church
Missouri Synod*



FIRST FRUITS
December Newsletter





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

Pastors Corner

On the church Calendar, Sunday, November 29, is the first Sunday in Advent marking the beginning of a new “church year”. Advent means the coming or introduction of something important. ... For us, as Christians, Advent means “coming”, the coming of God’s Promise made flesh in a lowly manger in Bethlehem.

Blue, the first color of the liturgical colors, is used in our observance of a new church year. Advent, a preparatory time of waiting and watching, communicates the message of hope. BLUE-the color of the sky-helps convey that powerful message. Our Christian faith rests Christ, who came in assuming our flesh and will also return on the last day of time from that same blue sky to which He ascended into long ago.

The Advent wreath, or Advent crown, is a Christian tradition that symbolizes the passage of the four weeks of Advent in the liturgical calendar. The concept of the Advent wreath originated among German Lutherans in the 16th century. However, it was not until three centuries later that the modern Advent wreath took shape.

The Advent Wreath is an evergreen wreath with four candles, sometimes with a fifth, white candle in the center. Beginning with the First Sunday of Advent, the lighting of a candle can be accompanied by a scripture reading. An additional candle is lit on each subsequent Sunday until, by the last Sunday of Advent, all four candles are lit. Some Advent wreaths include a fifth, Christ candle which is lit at Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. The custom originated in family settings but has also become widespread in public worship.

In the mid 1800’s a Protestant pastor in Germany and a pioneer in urban mission work among the poor, became the inventor of the modern Advent wreath in the 19th century. During Advent, children at the mission school in Germany, would ask him daily if Christmas had arrived. In 1839, the pastor built a large wooden ring (made out of an old cartwheel) with 20 small red and 4 large white candles. A small candle was lit successively every weekday and Saturday during Advent. On Sundays, a large white candle was lit. The

custom gained ground among Protestant churches in Germany and evolved into the smaller wreath with four or five candles known today.

What will your Advent be like? Over the years it has been a time for many people of planning for the Christmas (or some call the “Holiday”) celebration(s). Advent can be a time of meal planning and purchasing the “right gift” for the “right person”. In the midst of all of this planning is the real “reason for the season” lost? Many people greet others with the words, “Happy Holidays” which totally takes Christ out of the picture, since a “Holiday” could be referring to the 4th of July and not December 25.

This Advent Season is different with the effects of Covid-19, but as Christians let’s also make it different by spreading the “Reason for the Season” in greeting people with the words “Merry Christmas” or “Have a Blessed Christmas”. Avoid using the unchristian message “Happy Holidays” in your personal greetings as well as the Christmas Greeting Cards that you may use.

I wish you the many Blessings of this Advent Season and a very Blessed Christmas!

Pastor Steve Breitbarth



LIBRARY CORNER FOR DECEMBER 2020.

Early Christmas greetings our gentle First readers! Many thanks go out again to our Library AngelZ who recently gifted us with 21 new books and 4 movie DVDs. There will be more reviews/blurbs of the new books coming in future newsletters, but I’ll mention a few here: Books 1-3 of Deborah Raney’s Chandler Sisters Novel series; Books 1-3 of Tracie Peterson’s Willamette Brides series; and Books 1-3 of Robin Lee Hatcher’s A

Kings Meadow Romance series as well as a stand-alone book by Robin. Three of the movies are Hallmark Christmas stories. So come visit your library and choose books to curl up with in your comfy chair and escape into someone else’s life! – **Janie Carlson, Darlene Baltus and Shela Cline**

MISSING ISAAC by Valerie Fraser Luesse, 813.6 Lue. “When Pete McLean loses his father in the summer of 1962, his friend Isaac is one of the very few people he can lean on. Though their worlds are as different as black and white, friendship knows no color. So when Isaac suddenly goes missing, Pete is determined to find out what happened – no matter what it costs him. His quest will lead him into parts of town that he knows only through rumors and introduce him to a girl who will change his life. What they discover together will

change the small Southern town of Glory, Alabama – forever.” “**MISSING ISAAC** will break – and then heal – your heart.”

ALMOST HOME by Valerie Fraser Luesse, 813.6. “A story of kindness, friendship, and healing. At an Alabama boardinghouse in the 1940s, characters going through troubled times find hope and help through each other.”

BLUE RIDGE SUNRISE by Denise Hunter, 813.6 Hun. “Former free spirit Zoe Collins swore she’d never again set foot in Copper Creek or speak to the man who broke her heart. But return she must when her beloved Granny dies, leaving the family legacy to Zoe – a peach orchard nestled at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains.”

WHERE SHE BELONGS by Johnnie Alexander, 813.6 Ale, book 1. Can love redeem a broken past? “Shelby Kincaid is ready to move forward after the death of her husband left her devastated. With high hopes for the future, she longs to purchase her family’s homestead, Misty Willow, so she can raise her young daughters in the only place she ever truly belonged. She plans to transform the abandoned house into the perfect home for her memories. But she has her work cut out for her.”

STRANDS OF TRUTH by Colleen Coble, 813.54. “Harper Taylor is used to being alone – after all, she grew up in one foster home after another. Oliver Jackson finally took her under his wing when she was a runaway teenager, and now Harper pours her marine biology knowledge into Oliver’s pen shell research. But she’s never stopped

wishing for a family of her own...So when a DNA test reveals a half-sister living just two hours away, Harper is both hopeful and nervous. Over warm cinnamon rolls, Harper and Annabelle find striking similarities in their stories. Is it just a coincidence that both their mothers died tragically, without revealing Harper and Annabelle’s father’s name? Oliver’s son, Ridge, still sees Harper as a troubled teen even all these years later. But when Oliver is attacked, Ridge and Harper find themselves working together to uncover dangerous secrets that threaten to destroy them all. They must unravel her past before they can have any hope for the future.”

CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE GRANDPARENT’S SOUL by Jack Canfield, 808.8 Can. “Stories to open the hearts and rekindle the spirits of grandparents.”

KINDNESS IS COURAGEOUS by Nicole J. Phillips, 808.8 Phi. “100 stories to remind you people are brave and kind.” Excellent and uplifting – Janie.

THE HEALER’S TOUCH by Lori Copeland, 813.54. “It’s 1887, and Lyric Bolton doesn’t ask for much – just friendship and acceptance from her rural Missouri community. But her family is regarded with suspicion and fear because of her mother’s sickness – a sickness that of the mind that grows worse by the day. Lyric is resigned to a life of isolation and doesn’t see a way out...but that’s before Ian Cowley bolts into her life on a runaway stallion...A tender story of God’s love and

faithfulness...even when all hope seems lost.”

DEADLY DECEIT by Natalie Walters, 813.6 Wal Bk 2 of Harbored Secrets series. We already have Books 1 and 3. “Welcome back to Walton, Georgia, where everyone knows your name – but no one knows your secret...” “A delicious hero, heart-pounding suspense, and an intricate weaving of a heroine’s journey make **DEADLY DECEIT** one of my top-of-the-top favorites of the year! Natalie Walters brings it all together with an ending that

will stick with you long after you close the book.” – Jaimejo Wright, author.

“A library is a good place to go when you feel unhappy, for there, in a book, you may find encouragement and comfort. A library is a good place to go when you feel bewildered or undecided, for there, in a book, you may have your question answered. Books are good company, in sad times and happy times.” - E.B. White

CHRISTMAS BAKE SALE – SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13th:



The women of the congregation are having a Christmas bake sale the morning of December 13th. Cookies, breads, pies, jams, jellies, candy, etc. will be available for purchase. The bake sale is a free-will donation. This is one of our fund raisers to help support mission grants. Quilts will also be sold for missions. Please mark your calendar for this event!

BAKERS: Please package your items and bring them to the church on Saturday, December 12th from 2 pm to 3 pm or Sunday morning, December 13th. Thank you for supporting LWML mission grants.

Submitted by Carla Taylor

RED STOCKINGS: Sunday, December 6, we will be handing out our small red stockings for you to put an offering in for LWML Missions. Past recipients have been the food pantries at our seminaries, Grace house, and Elder Circle to name a few. Please return your stocking with your offering by December 25. Many thanks for your generosity.



Submitted by Shela Cline

Teaching the Children of Ukraine

God be praised! The teaching of English through the LCMS mission to Ukraine has exploded! We have been blessed with 15 adults and children in our community beginner class. Kipps's private lessons have gained students. I have started teaching in a local school for four hours a day, teaching the elementary students English. We both have English classes for the clergy and staff of the cathedral. We are team teaching a beginner's level English class on Zoom for the children in Kherson, Ukraine. On November 15, 2020 we will be starting a conversation and group discussion class for the children of Odessa, Ukraine.

This new group will be made up of children from 12-18 years of age, who need to practice their discussion and conversation skills in English. This teen group will meet after church for

fellowship and conversations. Kipp and I will team teach this class after Sunday school English lessons.

We were invited into a local school to see what school is like in Odessa, Ukraine. This is a small private school that keeps their class sizes small and children are given personal attention to their educational needs. The school asked Kipp and I to come in and do a presentation for each grade level. After our presentations we were offered a position to teach four days a week. I took this on since I have such fun with teaching elementary students. It was challenging at first, but now is something both the students and I look forward to each day.

The community classes have spread by word of mouth and signs out in front of the cathedral. Even during this challenging time of Covid-19, the class is packed. I will be splitting the class into two groups as restrictions grow tighter. The students range from 10 years old to 83 years old. The intergenerational part is fantastic! The students help each other out and are not afraid to contribute. This was a huge hurdle to overcome. The school system has exceptional literacy rates and knowledge retention but, from the student's perspective is a harsh learning environment. My students were not willing to make mistakes. I rewarded and praised those who would contribute and take risks. We played many games and combined lessons with food. Between this, God's help, and my teaching style, the students are eager to help each other, and freely respond to class.

The Sunday school class has just gotten off of the ground. After two lessons the children, their teacher, and I are getting to know each other. They have a wide range of skills and are at that age where they don't like to contribute to class. With time, patience, and God's direction we will progress nicely! I keep inventing games and other ways to draw them out.

Kipp is now leading morning prayer for Bishop and his staff every Friday in English. They use the blue hymnals and follow the prayer liturgy. We are very fortunate to have the ability to attend morning and noon prayer services every

day. There is a Saturday service for confession and a Sunday service with communion. Pastor Cortright, out of Riga, Latvia, holds a service in English for Eurasia missionary members every week. This provides us with fellowship, a chance to hear English, and bond with the other missionaries in our area. Pastor Cortright and his wife Connie have also been providing pastoral care for Kipp and I. I do not know how we would have made it without them and another missionary, Ben Helge. They are there to pick us up, urge us forward and quiet the noise with God's Word. We want to thank them for their care for us as well as Bishop Maschewski and his wonderful staff here. When you are far from home it's the thoughtfulness, and care that help you get through difficulties.



THANK YOU ! May God Bless and Care for you all!

This letter was sent to my email from Tamara Beaudoin. They are the Missionaries from the Ukraine that we support. Thought I would share her letter. Shirley



LWML First Lutheran News

Our executive board met on Monday, November 2. Treasurer's report highlights: Cookies for coins free will donations-\$461.00, Mite box offerings submitted \$306.44 as of October 31.

FYI- Mite Box Sunday is the first Sunday of each month. There is a large mite box we put out for offerings that Sunday. Your mite offerings may also be placed in the wooden box by mailboxes. The offerings collected are used for missions at LWML Minnesota North District and the National level. There are small mite boxes available for you to take home and collect your coins in. Every penny makes a difference. The 2019-2021 mission grants goal is \$2,100,000. (National LWML). The 2020-2022 mission grants goal is \$140,500 LWML Minnesota North District (which First Lutheran is member). Our mites help us share the Love of Jesus in our communities, nation and the world.

Every year we subscribe to Lutheran Woman's Quarterly for the women of our congregation. It is published 4 times a year. There are interesting articles about what is going on in LWML and bible studies that can be used for a group or individual study. The current edition includes information about national LWML convention June 2021. These are **free** for anyone who is wants one. Please feel free to take one. They can be found by guest book registration area or on the counter outside Shirley's office.

Portals of prayer which are a daily devotional are also available **free** to any interested person.

God bless

Serve the Lord with gladness *(submitted by Teresa Howrey)*

Youth News

Merry Christmas!

The story of Jesus' birth is a story we are all so familiar with. We have grown up listening to this story over and over and it is ingrained in our minds. The reason why we celebrate Christmas. What if you have never heard the story of Jesus' birth? What if you have never heard of who Jesus is? How would your life be different if you did not have Jesus in it?

There are many people out there that have never heard of the story of Jesus' birth. Can you believe it? So many children, so many adults have never heard of this story. Imagine how they are living their life. What are they doing, or who are they turning to when they do something wrong, or need something? Do they ask for forgiveness? If they do not know how, who are we to judge them for their actions? We should not be judging anyone. As a Christian it is our job to spread the love of Jesus. It is our job to tell our friends and family about Jesus. **'Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' John 14:6**

This year among every other year we have the opportunity to share the story of Jesus' birth. Christmas is a special time of year for everyone, believers, and nonbelievers. Since we have put in the new audio video system, we have an opportunity to spread this story to everyone through social media and video. We are asking families or anyone who would like to be a part of this opportunity to come forward. We are going to set aside a few days for families to come into the church one family at a time to record their part. Parts will be handed out ahead of time and practiced at home. Everything will be wiped down between each family.

We have the opportunity to reach a lot of friends and family with the video of Jesus' birth, I pray that you will take part in it. Please let us know ASAP if you have not already done so. We will showcase the story on December 16th at 6:30 in the sanctuary. We have plenty of room to properly physical distance including the fellowship hall and narthex. We also understand that not everyone feels comfortable coming into the church, which is why after we showcase it on December 16th it will be available on YouTube and on our website to watch.

Have a Merry Christmas! Never stop spreading the love of Jesus.

Jessica Pellinen

Family Ministry Program Director



UPCOMING EVENTS:

BELL CHOIR: December 6th and December 13th Jennifer Flem will direct the bell choir for the youth. We may need adults to play too. If you are interested sign up in the three-ring binder.

Looking forward in December the **CHRISTMAS PROGRAM** will be on December 16th. The children will practice in November and December during Sunday School.



To All Of Our Youth Born In
December



FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN WORSHIP SERVICES FOR DECEMBER

December 6

Mite Sunday

8:00a.m. Traditional Service

9:00a.m. Sunday School and Adult Bible Study

10:30a.m. Non-Traditional Service

December 13 Communion

Dimes For Missions

8:00a.m. Traditional Worship

9:00a.m. Sunday School and Adult Bible Study

10:30a.m. Non-Traditional Service

December 20

Youth Sunday

8:00a.m. Traditional Worship

9:00 Sunday School and Adult Bible Study

10:30a.m. Non-Traditional Worship

December 27 Communion

Food Shelf Sunday

8:00a.m. Traditional

9:00 Sunday School and Adult Bible Study

10:30 a.m. Non-Traditional Worship



SPECIAL ADVENT & CHRISTMAS SERVICES

December 2
Advent One
6:30p.m.

December 9
Advent Two
6:30p.m.

December 16
Children's Christmas Program
6:30p.m.



December 24


Christmas Eve
Worship
5:00p.m.

Pastor Breitbarth Hours

December Office Hours:

Tuesdays

Dec 1 9:00-2:30

Dec 8 9:00-2:30

Dec 15 9:00-2:30

Dec 22 9:00-2:30

Dec 29 9:00-2:30

Wednesdays

Dec 2 10:00-5:00

Dec 9 10:00-5:00

Dec 16 10:00-5:00

Dec 23 10:00-5:30

Dec 30 10:00-5:30



The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

LCMS Stewardship Ministry

Newsletter article – December 2020

Christmas is coming. It is a joyous time of feasting. The Church feasts upon the Word of God in sermon, song, and sacrament.

We hear the proclamation of the message of the angels: “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). We mingle our voices with theirs as we sing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased” (Luke 2:14)! We receive the proclaimed Savior, Christ the Lord, not wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in manger but wrapped in bread and wine placed into our mouths for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. We feast in great joy indeed because of this great blessing from our Lord and God.

God’s people in ancient Israel also feasted with great joy. The Lord showered His abundant blessing on His people. And He commanded them to feast upon it (Deuteronomy 16). The people were to go to the place appointed, where the Lord would make His name dwell, and give offerings, each man as he was able, according to the blessing of the Lord that He had given them (Deut. 16:10, 15, 17).

And there the Lord would bless them with joy as they feasted upon what the Lord had provided. They ate of the choice parts of their offerings. They enjoyed the company of all the people of God as they together heard His promises of blessing, sang of His bountiful goodness, and partook of what He gave.

We feast on the Word who became flesh to dwell among us, not just during Christmas but throughout all the year. We feast not just on the salvation He has wrought for us in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, but we feast also on all the temporal blessings that God gives out of His fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us. We enjoy the rich bounty that God provides, not only in Word and Sacrament, but also in house and home, property and income, family and friends.

Let us then, as did our brothers in the faith from ancient Israel, give as we are able, according to the blessing of the Lord our God that He has given us. Let us, like them, give generously of the first fruits of our income, which He gives, so that all may know and enjoy the salvation He gives and the joy we have in the Savior born in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord. **The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**

COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS PLAN

You may be wondering what we are doing at church to keep everything sanitized and clean. We do have a COVID-19 preparedness plan. If you would like to read through it all, just ask, we would be happy to send you a copy. The most important thing is wearing a mask while inside the church. The pews are cleaned and wiped down with a disinfectant after the first service and before the second service, plus Monday mornings. The mics are wiped down after being used, the handrails, doors, light switches are wiped down every Monday or as needed if there is more traffic in the church. Each classroom is cleaned with a disinfectant after every use. We ask members and guests to sit on the ends of the pew if they are not from the same household or one household per pew. Every other pew is roped off to maintain physical distancing. As you can see, we have practices in place to maintain a clean environment.

VIRTUAL WORSHIP

The 8:00 service will continue to be livestreamed and found on the website at www.flcgr.org or on our Facebook page “First Evangelical Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. Grand Rapids Mn”. We can also be found on YouTube at “First Lutheran Church-LCMS”. Subscribe to our channel and you will be notified when we go live if your notifications are turned on. For any new livestream, please be sure to watch Facebook or go to the website for updates.

WINTER WEATHER CANCELLATIONS

In the event of a winter storm and worship services get cancelled, please see the policy and procedure so you can find out how to be notified.

1. Call the church office to listen to the recorded message at 218-326-5453.
2. Visit the website at www.flcgr.org the announcement will be on the homepage.
3. Check the Facebook page at “First Evangelical Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. Grand Rapids Mn”
4. Watch KBJR 6 TV- Duluth/Superior for an announcement
5. An email will be sent out, if you are currently not receiving emails from the church, please contact Shirley to be added.
6. A text message will be sent out if you join the “**Remind**” class code. “**Remind**” is an app found in the Apple Store or the Play Store. Once you have it downloaded you can join a class by entering in the code **@ha94hf**. If you wish not to have the app on your mobile device, you can still sign up to receive text messages by going to <https://www.remind.com/join/h7ab86>

Submitted by Jessica Pellinen

“Sharing the Love of Jesus”
CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES - UNAPPROVED

November 10, 2020

Present: Mary Buech, Jessica Pellinen, Greg Taylor, Debbie Robertson, Molly Goplin, Doug Carlson, Steve Goplin, Tom Lattimore, Dwight Kessler, Linda Urevig

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

Opening devotion and prayer: Mary B. led devotion and prayer from Ephesians 4 – Life Lessons

Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Agenda

2. Approval of Minutes

***Motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the Consent Agenda. (Security Camera System was added to New Business later in the meeting.)

Oral Reports of Boards and Committees

1. Boards of Christian Education & Youth: Report in Packet/Jessica P.

5. A stewardship message is included in the monthly First Fruits.

2. Board of Elders: Report in Packet/Steve G.

6. Board of Trustees: Report in packet/Greg T.

3. Boards of Human Care & Missions: Report in Packet/Molly G.

7. Revolving Trust Fund Committee: No Meeting/Greg T.

4. Board of Stewardship: No Meeting/Doug C. stated again that there is a need for counters.

8. Wiebe Grant Committee: No Requests/Greg T.

9. Direction and Planning Committee: No Meeting/Greg T.

Family Ministry Program Director's Report: Report in Packet/Jessica P. stated that starting Monday, November 23rd the school district will implement distance learning for a two-week period. The goal is to return to the hybrid model on December 7th. This will depend on the number of staff and students who are in quarantine or infected. Extending the reset may have to be considered at that time.

Pastor's Report: No Report

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

YTD income 2020: \$228,673.35 YTD income 2019: \$247,973.45

Treasurer's Report: Preliminary Report in Packet

As of: October 31, 2020

General Fund Chkg: \$43,553.92

Mortgage loan balance: \$71,334.35

Building Fund Chkg: \$2,399.40

Revolving trust fund Chkg: \$81,147.16

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

Correspondence – Letter was received from Anderson, Ophoven & Stauffer Law Office regarding the Evelyn Salmela Trust. The church is beneficiary in the amount of \$1,446.45.

Unfinished Business

1. Call Committee Update – Matt P. has just received nine new names. He will get the information out to the Call Committee and the process will continue.
2. AV Committee Update – No Meeting
3. AV Upgrade Update – Tom L. stated that the upgrades will be done next week.
4. Weather Cancellation of Church Services Update – Tom L.
***Motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the written Policy and Procedure for Cancellation of Services with radio stations deleted and updates to be made to Text/Remind App.
5. Archival Fire Proof Cabinets Update – Greg T. stated that moving the cabinets has been completed.

New Business

1. Strategic Planning Time Frame – Greg T. stated planning will be done after the first of the year through the DPC.
2. 2021 Missions Declaration – MN North District wants to know the dollar amount we will be providing in 2021.

***Motion was made, seconded and approved to continue with the commitment in our budget to provide \$15,000.00 to Mission Work.

3. Security Camera System

***Motion was made, seconded and approved to purchase a new Lorax Security Camera System that is compatible with our current wiring in an amount up to \$600.00.

There was a discussion regarding the Scout Troop meeting here Monday nights, questioning if we would be making any changes. Because we have protocol in place that is appropriate at this time, no changes need to be made.

Caring and Sharing

The meeting was adjourned at 6:23PM

The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Urevig, Recording Secretary

COMING EVENTS

December 1st – Board Meetings 6:30PM or as decided by each Board

December 8th – Council Meeting 5:30PM



Newsletter

Please Have January 2021 Newsletter

Articles to Shirley

By December 15th.

Newsletter will be published and

Sent out on December 23.

