



Our Church—This Week  
for January 22, 2024

## FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

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FIRST LUTHERAN MONN MOUTH  
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### Our Staff

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Custodian  
Chris Algren

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### Congregation Council

President: Pam Van Kirk  
Vice President: Ray Golden  
Secretary: Diane Carlson

Pam Best  
Adam Sanberg  
Mark Shrader  
Chip Algren  
Brian Elliott

\*\* one seat remains vacant in honor of Evelyn Volz, until our next election meeting in May, 2024

Dear Friends and Family,

The sunshine is a bright ray of hope that this cold blast won't last long. It is good to see the sun, even as it glistens on another fresh coating of snow. At least this time it was light powdery snow.

Looking forward to the new week, we are hoping the weather will stop impacting our ministry plans. We have already announced our Annual meeting changed, we canceled one worship service, and now our brand new Sunday Bible study will not begin until Sunday, February 11th. Though, part of that delay is I will be traveling to an ELCA World Hunger conference from Tuesday, Jan 30 to Monday, Feb 5. This event will have a variety of speakers, workshops, and hands-on experiences, all of which I am looking forward to bringing home and sharing both here at the congregation and throughout our synod as I serve on the synod world hunger committee.

### Annual Meeting

The Annual meeting has been postponed until Sunday, January 28th. As of the writing of this newsletter, we still planned on having worship on Sunday, January 21st, but we are aware of many folks who are traveling this weekend, as well as extreme cold temperatures that were anticipated. So moving the annual meeting to a (slightly) warmer weekend made sense. See you all on Sunday, January 28th for our annual meeting.

### Annual Report and Membership Directory

The annual report is ready and available for pick-up. The report includes a membership directory. There are also additional copies of the directory available for pick-up as well. If you would like either of these documents e-mailed or sent by post office to you, let the church office know and that will be taken care of as soon as possible.

Also, as always, please review your family information in the directory. If you have adult children listed in your family who have moved away, please update their information with the office. If your address, email address, or phone numbers listed have changed – especially with the switch from land-lines to cell-phones, all of those changes would be appreciated as well. Email the office at office@flcmonmouth.org for the easiest way to let us know all of these updates.

## The Chosen TV Show watch party

We will resume watching the TV series “The Chosen” on Wednesday, January 17th at 10 AM in Pastor’s study.

The TV series is a beautiful telling of the life of Jesus and the disciples.

After each episode we talk about how the stories in the Gospel are found in that episode and we discuss how the narrative, story telling nature of the series writers is based on what we know or what we conjecture. It is a good time. And even if you haven’t seen the earlier episodes, you can still catch up by watching the series on a streaming service at home.

## So That’s My Bible – Bible Study

The new Bible Study, which you are all greatly anticipating, will now start on Sunday, February 11th. The weather of January really did a number on our Sunday plans. Hopefully February will be gentler on our Sunday schedule.

The Bible Study will introduce us to our Bible and using a series of videos from the YouTube Channel “The Bible Project” we will become more familiar with what is in the Bible and how it came to us.

Our first study will feature a story from the Bible about a young man named Eutychus. Eutychus was attending a worship service being led by Paul. Paul was preaching long into the night, and Eutychus was sitting on the window sill, fell asleep and fell out of the window, dying when he hit the ground—three floors below. Paul dismissed his death quickly, and the young man got up, but Paul seemed to ignore him and resumed preaching as the young man was taken home to continue recovering.

What a strange story. Why is it in our Bible? Why does Paul dismiss the miracle of the young man’s return to life? Why does the rest of worship just go on as if nothing happened? What could this possibly tell us about being the people of God?

Join us on Sunday to read the complete story (Acts 20:7-12) and learn more about it.

## Boy Scout Pancake Supper

The Boy Scout Troop 705 will host a Mardi Gras Pancake Supper on Tuesday, February 13th. We will serve from 5 PM to 7 PM in the fellowship room here at First Lutheran.

More details about the dinner will come out in the upcoming weeks. This is a fundraising event to help raise scholarship funds for the troop to help offset the annual cost for participation in scouting.

Scouting is a youth organization for both boys and girls. Scouting teaches leadership, citizenship, and outdoor skills. Scouting values inclusivity and is open to all youth.

The troop meets regularly on Sunday evenings at 6 PM and has monthly outdoor activities (weather permitting).

For more information about our scouting program, talk with Pastor Jamie, who serves as the scoutmaster of the troop.



## ELCA World Hunger Leadership Gathering

Pastor Jamie is attending a conference held in Houston, Texas, for the ELCA World Hunger ministry. While attending this event, the church will be celebrating 50 years of ELCA World Hunger ministry. That means the root ministries that today are ELCA World Hunger (the ELCA was only formed in 1988) are the same age as your pastor, who also celebrates 50 years this year. Okay, so that is a very random connection.

The ELCA World Hunger ministry provides: Education resources to help congregations learn about why hunger is a global issue, and how hunger impacts communities near and far as well as teaching how financial donations make a difference; funding resources that support ministries here in the US and all across the globe, meeting current needs as well as assisting individuals and families become more self-reliant; and, advocacy which takes place in our state and national capitals helping inform legislators on the benefits of policies that address world hunger.

To learn more about ELCA World Hunger, visit the website: [www.ELCA.org/hunger](http://www.ELCA.org/hunger)

# Worship

## Season of Epiphany Sunday, January 7 through Sunday February 11

Many of the stories we will hear throughout Epiphany tell us about the earliest disciples. They were called to follow Jesus, to learn from Jesus, and to begin a movement we now call “the Church.”

That sounds like a tall order. And many of us hear that Jesus calls his disciples still to follow him, and we are worried that we can't live up to what the first disciples were like. That's partly because we have lifted them up as saints, heroes of faith who must have been perfect. But we forget these men and women who Jesus first called had no idea what they were getting into. They had not “accepted Christ” as their Lord and Savior, they followed him to be their rabbi. They had not lived perfectly holy lives, they were flawed and ran away from Jesus when following got very tough, like when Jesus was arrested and sent to the cross. These heroes of faith aren't to be celebrated because they were perfect. They are to be celebrated because they were just like us, unsure of how to follow Jesus, but called just the same.

## Worship Guild Members

### Jan 28 — Epiphany 4

Usher: Adam Sanberg  
Reader: Judy Sanberg  
Com Asst: Diane Carlson  
Narthex Host: Linda McGuire  
Musician: Janice Algren

### Feb 4 — Epiphany 5

Usher: Pam Best  
Reader: Trace Gallagher  
Com Asst: N/A  
Narthex Host: Linda McGuire  
Musician: Janice Algren

### Feb 11 — Transfiguration of the Lord

Usher: Kurt Volz  
Reader: Maddie Blaesing  
Com Asst: Julie Blaesing  
Narthex Host: Linda McGuire  
Musician: Janice Algren

### WEDNESDAY Feb 14 — Ash Wednesday

Usher: Ray Golden  
Reader: Pam Best  
Com Asst: Chip Algren  
Narthex Host: Linda McGuire  
Musician: Janice Algren



## What is the ELCA

In Short, this abbreviation stands for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This is our national denomination. Established in 1988 as a merger of three previous Lutheran church bodies, the ELCA today stretches across the US and is divided into 65 synods, of which we are a part of the Northern Illinois Synod.

The ELCA as a denomination provides resources to help congregations know what it means to be a Christian who happens to follow the teaching of Martin Luther. The ELCA also combines resources from all the congregations and synods to strengthen ministries, for example ELCA World Hunger, campus ministries, outdoor ministries, and more. To learn more about our denomination, go to [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)

## Mark your Calendars: Lent is Coming

Here are some important worship days and times to be aware of as we head into Lent.

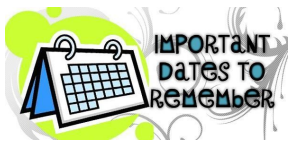
Wednesday, February 14 is Ash Wednesday. We will have worship at 6 PM.

There will be no midweek Lent worship services. Join us Sundays for the “So That’s My Bible” Bible study.

Palm Sunday is March 24th.

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday worship will be 6 PM on both March 28th and March 29th.

Easter Sunday is March 31st.



**Every Sunday**  
**9:30 AM Fellowship Gathering**  
**10:00 AM Worship**



*For corrections and updates, please call the Church office.*

Sunday, January 21st Season after Epiphany  
 Wed, Jan 24 10 AM The Chosen Watch Party  
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Sunday, January 28th Season after Epiphany  
 Sun, Jan 28 11:15 AM RESCHEDULED  
 Annual Meeting

Tues, Jan 29 to Monday, February 5  
 Pastor Jamie attends ELCA World Hunger Event in Houston, TX  
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Sunday, February 4th Season after Epiphany  
 Mon, Feb 5 9:30 AM Sarah Circle  
 7 PM Building/Grounds meeting  
 Wed, Feb 7 10 AM The Chosen Watch Party  
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Sunday, February 11th Transfiguration Sunday  
 Sun, Feb 11 11:15 AM Bible Study  
 Tue, Feb 13 5 PM to 7 PM Pancake Supper  
 Wed, Feb 14 10 AM The Chosen Watch Party  
 6 PM Ash Wednesday worship  
 Thur, Feb 15 6 PM Council meeting

*Notice something missing from the calendar? Please contact the church office, and we will add it to next week's newsletter.*

*Pastor Jamie's typical day off is Friday, though with covering occasional office duties, this time off may vary throughout the week. You are always welcome to call Pastor Jamie on his cell phone.*



- Jan 14 Kathi Cruce
- Jan 30 Kay Lovdahl
- Jan 30 Melba Matson
- Feb 11 Becky Terpening
- Feb 15 Ross Beedle
- Feb 17 Keirstyn Johnson
- Feb 17 Gary Martin
- Feb 18 Mary Jane Olson
- Feb 19 Janet Lowe
- Feb 26 Teresa Miller
- Feb 27 Heidi Niemann
- Feb 28 Connie Larimer
- Mar 2 Dana Jensen
- Mar 7 Dawn Johnson
- Mar 7 Pam Van Kirk
- Mar 9 Helen Babcock
- Mar 13 Joey Slater
- Mar 20 Dee Dee Yez
- Mar 25 Heather Ide
- Mar 27 Phil Bergren



- Feb 22 Kenny & Nancy Reynolds
- Mar 1 Phil & Trudy Bergren
- Mar 11 Cecil & Kay Lovdahl
- Mar 14 Tammy & Jim Slater
- Apr 2 Don & Kathy Fillman
- Apr 25 Todd & Kris Champion
- Apr 28 Ron & Deb Manuel
- May 5 Brenda & Craig Jones
- May 6 Connie & Chuck Larimer
- May 21 Ted & Sue Hanson
- May 22 Butch & Kaye Johnson
- June 1 Rodger & Linda Ellison
- June 4 Gary & Judy Sanberg
- June 8 Ben & Jenny Sanberg
- June 11 DeeDee & David Yez
- June 12 Neal & Jackie Heerwagen
- Jun 13 Michael & Barb Pearson
- Jun 14 Doug & Kathi Cruce
- Jun 15 Rob & Tammy Ravel
- Jun 19 Stan & Diane Carlson
- Jun 23 Mike and Susie Jurgens

*Our celebrations list reflect current membership. To request someone not on our current membership list be added to our celebration lists, please contact the church office.*

## Prayer Requests

Linda Ellison, Ila Roseberry, Kathi Cruce, Dean Sandstrom, Emily Agema, Chris Buban, Gary Eyler, Cecil Lovdahl, Janet Lowe, Brian Elliott, Reva Stachinew, John Van Kirk, Hannah Taylor

*Please let the church office know any updates that are needed to our prayer list.*

## Vision and Purpose Giving

# Our Vision & Purpose



### Endowment Matching Funds for Vision and Purpose

The Endowment Fund Committee is promoting our Vision and Purpose monthly giving by giving automatically each month \$100. Then—based on the giving of congregation members, the committee will also match an additional \$150 of giving. This means, if the congregation gives \$150 a month to vision and purpose, the total amount given to the fund will be \$400.

So—how will you support the Vision and Purpose giving this month?

We will start our year once again supporting the Western Illinois Animal Rescue. This shelter located here in Monmouth houses cats and dogs until they are able to be adopted into forever homes. Volunteers help the center by daily playing with the cats and dogs and helping with feeding and other necessary tasks. The shelter provides for veterinary care through a local vet's office.

Our donations will help WIAR with those vet costs, providing appropriate food and other supplies needed for the pets.

Have you ever adopted a pet from WIAR? Pastor Jamie's family dog, Niko, came from the shelter. Who could resist such a cutie as this?

Thank you for supporting WIAR this month with our vision and purpose giving.



### Weekly Devotional



[Jonah] prayed to the LORD, and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing." —Jonah 4:2

"Jonah was a prophet ... But he never really got it ..." These words are from a song from the VeggieTales animated movie "Jonah" possibly the best adaptation of this short book from the Old Testament that I have ever seen. Jonah as a story is a drama-comedy. Jonah is asked to go and preach to Nineveh that God will destroy the city for all of its evils. Jonah doesn't want to go to Nineveh, he doesn't really believe God will destroy the city, he is afraid they will hear him, repent, and God will change his mind. On his way to the opposite end of the world, Jonah is swallowed by a big fish where for 3 days he is able to contemplate life, rethink his ability to listen to God, and prepare to go to Nineveh. Once out of the fish Jonah indeed goes and walks one day's journey into the city, stands on a street corner, proclaims God's message in one sentence, and walks away. This half-hearted preaching attempt actually yields results, though, and the whole city enters a period of mourning and repentance as they await God's punishment. But of course, God sees the change in Nineveh and changes his mind, so now the city will not be destroyed. And Jonah is left angry, angry that this evil city was not destroyed as God promised, angry that God's nature of mercy indeed won out over God's vengeance, angry that he was chosen to be the one who proclaimed God's word, only to see God's nature win out over God's word. And the story ends with Jonah being angry that a plant he was sitting under was eaten by a worm, and God asking him why Jonah cared more for the plant than he did for all the people of Nineveh.

Jonah is not a historical book, these events did not actually take place. No prophet was ever swallowed by a fish and spit out again three days later. Yet this story speaks a tremendous truth about God, God's nature, and human nature. We have been given a message about God being gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. Yet it seems many Christians today relish in seeing people get what punishment they deserve. It also seems many Christians today would rather withhold grace from those who are not on an approved list. Just watch the Roman Catholic Church reaction after Pope Francis allowed for blessings of LGBTQIA+ individuals and couple in certain circumstances. See how many are up in arms and angry at Pope Francis for daring to suggest God could bless these people, who they don't even consider capable of being God's children. Jonah is an opportunity for self-reflection; what do we care about more than the children of God who need to hear the message that Nineveh needed to hear? Who are we angry about that God's mercy extends to, even when we don't want it to? The book does not give us an answer from Jonah to God — it is intentionally open ended so we can answer that question ourselves.

Peace, Pastor Jamie