

The Friendly Visitor

First Lutheran Church
Louisville, KY

September 2023



417 East Broadway
Louisville, KY 40202
(502) 584-4926

Email: fstluth@bellsouth.net
Thewelcomeplace.com

From the Pastor

It's an honor to be your pastor. To be a part of the rich history of First Lutheran Church is a blessing. It's also a blessing to be part of your lives, to journey with you in faith. And "blessing" is what I hope defines my tenure with you.

I was introduced to the work of John O'Donohue a couple of years ago when a worship director started incorporating O'Donohue's blessings into worship. These blessings provided a structure for celebrating accomplishments and acknowledging new beginnings, transitions and endings. I've come to deeply appreciate the importance of blessings.

In March of this year, my wife Alison and I made the decision to move to Louisville. I realized I needed to prepare myself for all the transitions ahead of us. Our youngest was transitioning out of the house after graduating high school, our oldest had just gotten married, our middle child was moving away for graduate school, Alison was starting a new job, we were selling our house, and I would inevitably be starting a new job. When you look at a life change index scale (or stress test), we checked off most of the boxes at the top!

I purchased O'Donohue's book *To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings*. I knew that I would need some way of navigating these transitions. Blessing the endings, new beginnings and transitions I was walking through proved to be a useful way to keep moving forward. There is a richness in blessings regardless of whether one is the recipient or giver. To be blessed by another or to bless one's circumstance allows room for the holy to enter into spaces of chaos, confusion and uncertainty.

Having a new pastor is a time of new beginnings. I hope that it is also a time of blessing for you and for me. It's what I'm praying for. And if you, too, are experiencing a new beginning, I hope you find these words from John O'Donohue useful as I do.

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,
Where your thoughts never think to wander,
This beginning has been quietly forming,
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.

For a long time it has watched your desire,
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,
Noticing how you willed yourself on,

Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.
Your eyes young again with energy and dream,
A path of plenitude opening before you.

Though your destination is not yet clear
You can trust the promise of this opening;
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning
That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
Soon you will home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

My soul *does* indeed sense the world that awaits me. I hope yours does too!

Blessings!

John



Message from the President

Dear Friends at First,

The beautiful weather of autumn in Kentucky will be with us soon and I for one am looking forward to it. There have been such devastating floods, fires and tornadoes all around us, and around the world, and I feel guilty. But we don't control the weather, so let us enjoy it when it is pleasant and prepare ourselves and our homes for when it is not. Melody Stirling recently organized the craft group ladies to create kits for people displaced by weather or warfare. Each kit had a towel and basic toiletries. As we assembled them, I thought about how grateful I

would be to receive this if I had nothing else, but also about how much I didn't want to ever be in the situation where I would need to receive one.

There is a modern parable (a quick Google search did not reveal the origin) called "The man who could sleep through a storm". A farmer is desperate for a new farmhand, and he hires a man whose letter of recommendation merely says, "He can sleep through a storm." Not a great talent, the farmer thinks, but he hires the man anyway. Several months pass and the man turns out to be hardworking. The farmer has no complaints. Then one night, a terrible storm whips up and the farmer leaps out of bed to make sure the animals and buildings are safe.

He runs to the barns, but the animals are safely in, with plenty of food and water. He checks on the sheds and garages, but everything is just right. After seeing that everything is secure, he finally looks in on his hired hand, who is sleeping peacefully during the storm. Then he understands: if you prepare for storms, you don't have to worry about them.

This has been on my mind these last few months. No one in Maui could have prepared completely for those wildfires, and certainly the average Ukrainian could not prepare for the length of this war. But in general, we can do the things we know we need to in order to be prepared for disasters.

At the church, we have been looking to the building and to the finances over the past two years. We have made many repairs and updates, trying to prepare for storms, in the literal and metaphorical sense. In the meantime, we continue to help our neighbors who do not have easy access to grocery stores.

Melody's project of creating the refugee kits was one way to help our world prepare for storms. We can also help our church weather storms by creating caring bonds between individuals and families, participating in worship and activities, praying and learning.

With best wishes for a beautiful autumn,
Sharon Lillie

Sharon and First in the News

Sharon Lillie was interviewed by LPM news about a way we're helping with climate change. Thanks to Nancy Brian for finding the story! <https://www.lpm.org/news/2023-09-12/louisvilles-plan-to-combat-urban-heat-could-take-a-century-at-its-current-pace>

Talking with the New Pastor

I had the pleasure of interviewing the new pastor of First Lutheran, John Bell. He has been in the ministry since 1994 and served at four congregations in the Chicago area. He has a background in urban churches, which is one of the things that makes him a great fit for First.

His wife Alison moved to Louisville before he did. She came in March as the Deputy Director of the International Rescue Committee. Pr. John looked for an opportunity at a church here and found it with First Lutheran. He's actually Methodist, and talked with amusement about how he's still getting used to the "High Church" atmosphere.

I asked him what he would like to see happen at First. He answered that the three R's for a successful church are "Relationships, relationships, relationships!" He really wants to see the church thoroughly involved in the surrounding community, pointing out that we've made successful inroads with the food pantry. He's been busy meeting with nearby organizations and looks forward to meeting the councilman, Jekory Arthur.

He emphasizes the importance of organic community building in the church rather than "success formulas." "I think the mass distribution and big-box thinking are weighing on people. I like to see genuine involvement from those in the church rather than a Sunday morning appearance."

We discussed how the twenty-first-century church can address current social problems and divisions among Christians. The church needs to find what gives it sustainability, he says. "Historically, it hasn't necessarily honored people's struggles." He's happy that First is a Reconciling in Christ Church. Where does love, our only commandment, lead us? We need to be flexible in our understanding and make room for new ideas as well as looking to our traditions.

We had a really wonderful talk. I think there will be a lot of great things ahead for the church, and I wish Pr. John and his family a long and happy time in Louisville!

Rebecca White



THE FRIENDLY PUZZLER

Find the underlined words amongst the letter grid at the bottom.

The remaining letters will reveal a hidden message.

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him, and, as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

D E R E D R O C O M P A R E D T E P
D E L T T E S N D L D E R U T R O T
I R S T H A N G E R P E T E R S O U
S M E R C Y S A P O O A A N S D T A
T L V H E G D N R R T L T E T B E D
R S E E T E N T W I I A S I N K S H
E A N V D O E I B W I S O U E I T E
S C H I L D R E N T I W O O L N H A
S U N G D R E B D O T C H N A G C V
E V E R Y T H I N G K O K U T D S E
D T A O R H T S A N D C Y E E O A N
R S W F E L L O W K N E E S D M A L
R E F U S E D E S A E L E R G E S Y

September 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 10:30am Worship Service	28 Food Pantry closed 5:30pm NA - Why Are We Here 7:30pm LYG	29 10:00am Food Pantry	30 10:00am Food Pantry 6:00pm NA - Escape from Denial	31 4:00pm Food Pantry	1 Food Pantry closed 6:00pm LYG	2 12:30pm NA - Lose the Desire
3 10:30am Worship Service 11:30am Social Ministry meeting	4 Food Pantry closed 5:30pm NA - Why Are We Here 7:30pm LYG	5 10:00am Food Pantry 7:30pm NA	6 10:00am Food Pantry 4:30pm LYG Staff Meeting 6:00pm NA - Escape from Denial	7 4:00pm Food Pantry	8 Food Pantry closed 6:00pm LYG	9 9:45am NAMI meeting 12:30pm NA - Lose the Desire
10 9:30am Breakfast 10:30am Worship Service	11 Food Pantry closed 5:30pm NA - Why Are We Here 7:30pm LYG	12 Food Pantry closed	13 10:00am Food Pantry 6:00pm NA - Escape from Denial 6:30pm LYG	14 4:00pm Food Pantry 7:30pm Worship and Music Committee Meeting	15 Food Pantry closed 6:00pm LYG	16 10:30am Finance Committee meeting (in person) 12:30pm NA - Lose the Desire
17 10:30am Worship Service 1:00pm Council Meeting 2:00pm PFLAG Meeting	18 Food Pantry closed 5:30pm NA - Why Are We Here 7:30pm LYG	19 10:00am Food Pantry	20 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 10:00am Food Pantry 12:30pm Craft Day 4:30pm LYG 6:00pm NA - Escape from Denial 7:00pm Chancel Choir rehearsal	21 4:00pm Food Pantry	22 Food Pantry closed 6:00pm LYG	23 12:30pm NA - Lose the Desire
24 10:30am Worship Service	25 Food Pantry closed 5:30pm NA - Why Are We Here 7:30pm LYG	26 10:00am Food Pantry	27 10:00am Food Pantry 6:00pm NA - Escape from Denial 6:30pm LYG 7:00pm Chancel Choir rehearsal	28 4:00pm Food Pantry	29 Food Pantry closed 6:00pm LYG	30 12:30pm NA - Lose the Desire