

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Ministers: All God's People at FLC
David J. Sperstad, Pastor



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November 2009

October 30, 2009

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

Dear Friends in Christ,

We want to keep you informed of events that have occurred with relation to the Special Congregational meeting held on Sunday, October 11. Voting members present at the meeting were asked to vote on two motions; the motions and results are as follows:

Item One: Whether or not First Lutheran Church should withdraw as a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was defeated by a vote of 160 – 96.

Item Two: Whether or not First Lutheran Church should affiliate with Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) was defeated by a vote of 95 – 73.

Therefore as a result of the vote, First Lutheran Church will remain a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Pastor Nate Bjorge submitted his letter of resignation via email to the church council on Wednesday, October 14. The council accepted Pastor Nate's resignation with regret and his resignation was announced at services on Sunday, October 18. Pastor Nate will conclude his call on October 30, 2009. He will receive his compensation through November 30, 2009.

The church council met to appoint new members to temporarily serve in four vacant positions until the next elections at the congregational annual meeting on January 31, 2010. You will find a current list of council members and officers on page three of this newsletter. Grateful thanks to members who have volunteered to serve, and for all who faithfully continue to serve.

Your leadership team wants to assure you that God's mission and ministry continues uninterrupted here at First Lutheran. Your joyful serving and the sharing of your talents and gifts are treasured as they have always been. We want you to know that you are welcome here! We trust that you will continue to welcome others in Jesus' name just as you have always done.

May God's peace and blessings be yours as we each continue to be Jesus' hands and feet in this part of the kingdom. We move forward as "*First.....Servants of All.*"

Walking the Way together,

First Lutheran Church Leadership Team

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Pastor Dave's Article

⁹ *So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.* ¹⁰ *So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.* Galatians 6:9-10

I am often asked these days: "So how are you doing?" It is almost as if things are so bad that I am expected to walk around like Eeyore, the Winnie the Pooh character with a frown and a dreary outlook on life.

Yes, things don't always go as planned, and sometimes things even go the way we wish they wouldn't. I had hoped to be an associate in ministry with Pastor Nate for a number of years. There are people who get sick and we pray their health be restored – yet sometimes they are not healed and they die. We pray for a particular job or a particular result and it doesn't happen. We want God to do things the way we want them to be done. We want a nice safe outcome, one that we are comfortable with. An outcome that doesn't cause us to be anxious, worried or fearful. Yet is that always possible? Is that always what is best?

Think of the times you have asked God for something and it didn't turn out the way you had hoped. Yet, perhaps things turned out better than you could have anticipated. I believe and have faith that that will happen for the people of God here at First Lutheran. There were people on both sides of the issue voted on, only one side prevailed. Yet, no 'side' won.

It was mentioned at our council meeting following the congregational vote that perhaps the only one who 'won' was the Devil. This statement may be correct. But fortunately, we, members and friends of First Lutheran, have faith and trust in God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has already defeated the Devil. The Devil will not win or get the last word. As Paul mentions in Romans 6: *"For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."*

Yes there are things we would do differently if we could go back in time. We cannot change the past, but we can develop and direct the future. So let us go into the future holding onto the promise that we do not go alone. Jesus has given us his promise. He is with us always. Paul reminds us in Romans 8: *"... nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

So that is how I'm doing. I am resting and trusting in the arms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is leading us into the future just as he led the people of Israel into the promised land—we need not worry about tomorrow. God is the same God He has always been and will continue to be with us.

So I close with a prayer from Paul in Colossians: *"¹¹ May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³ He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."*

Pastor Dave Sperstad





Council Highlights

- New members will be received in worship on Sunday, November 1. The council hosts the new members at a fellowship meal following 10:45 a.m. worship

First Lutheran Church Congregation Council

Michelle Dahlberg 632-9073
 Lola Faufau 632-4662
 Les Hittesdorf 632-2218
 Bill Leisenheimer
 Wayne Liljegren 632-8873
 Paula Monahan, President 632-3011
 Kathy Nelson 584-5582
 Nancy Ratzloff 632-9729
 Chad Shelstad, Past-President 632-1826
 Pastor David Sperstad 632-5930
 Richard Walen, Treasurer 632-3582
 Linda Weiss, Secretary 632-1733

Financial Update

2009 Mission Plan Budget	
January—October 25:	\$ 343,601
Actual received	
January—October 25:	\$ 307,566

Thank you to all who faithfully contribute to our shared ministry at FLC!



“Empowered by God— Responding by Grace” Stewardship Update

“Now as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you — so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking” (2 Corinthians 8:7)

Over the past weeks members and friends of First Lutheran heard fellow members share about stewardship and blessing. All are invited to fill out *Estimate of Giving* cards for their offerings for 2010. As of October 25, 72 households have committed \$109,458 to the 2010 Mission Plan. Of the cards received, 23 plan to **increase** their giving for 2010 and 12 are **new** pledgers! Thanks be to God for your willingness to grow in faith and stewardship, and for your commitment to the mission and ministries of First Lutheran. If you would like to fill out an *Estimate of Giving Card*, please see Susan Gustner in the church office.

Music Ministry Opportunities

“Sing to God a brand new song, praise Him in the company of all who love Him!” *Psalm 149:1*

Everyone is welcome to assist in leading worship through music here at First Lutheran. Opportunities include:

- ♪ Senior Choir – rehearses at 6:45 p.m. on Tuesdays
- ♪ Praise Team – rehearses at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesdays
- ♪ Men’s and Women’s Ensembles
- ♪ Gifts of music, vocal and instrumental
- ♪ Serving as Cantor for worship services
- ♪ Serving as Assisting Minister for worship services

For more information, please contact Becky Nelson at 749-2336 or rpnelson@brainerd.net.

Thanks!

A great big **thank you** to all those who donated items or attended the Lutheran Social Service Rummage Sale held at Bethel Lutheran Church. Sales of \$2,500 plus a \$500 matching grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans will go to the area LSS group homes. Thanks also to those who volunteered their time to help with set up, working the sale days, and take down. Many hands make light work! May God bless you all. Karen Haaland

Thank you to all who helped to make the fall sale at the care center a great success. Whether you donated baked goods, craft items, quilts, silent auction baskets, or came to work or shop at the sale, it is all appreciated. Proceeds support the needs of the residents.

Donna Hegstrom, Jean Petersen, FLC Reps,
Lutheran Care Center Volunteer Board.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

"I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers... and I pray that the sharing of your faith may promote the knowledge of all the good that is ours in Christ." Philemon 4:6

We thank you for the partnership in the Gospel that we have shared through the ministry of First Lutheran Church. We have been blessed to be a part of this congregation. And although parting ways can be heartbreaking, we trust that God's work will continue in our lives to His glory. Your support and encouragement have at times been overwhelming. We have made some deep and lasting friendships that we hope will continue. You are in our prayers as we share in the one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all. *"May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7*

In Christ,
Pastor Nate & Family



Blue Christmas Service Sunday, December 6, 7:00 p.m.

For many people, the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays do not bring the joy that is advertised.

They may be facing a holiday after the death of a loved one or after a divorce. Perhaps they have been unable to have a child, or have suffered through an emotional trauma. Or perhaps they feel pressured and overwhelmed by holiday preparations. This may describe you or someone you know. If so, we have good news.

This year we offer a Blue Christmas Service at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 6. This service offers an opportunity to gather for a quiet time of hope and celebration in the midst of suffering or stress. This service is less about colored lights and more about Jesus as the Light which shines into our darkness. This service is less about sparkling holiday cheer and more about quiet, divine holiday strength. We will not pretend to be jolly or merry if we are not. We will give thanks and rejoice.

We will sing hymns of hope, hear the promise of Scripture, pray and give thanks. This is a come-as-you-are event. You don't have to put on your Sunday clothes or your "I'm fine" smile. Come prepared to remember what you have and what you have lost, to give thanks for friends, family and God's many blessings.

Adult Opportunities

Women's Circles:

"To God's Beloved"
Paul's Letter o the Romans—
Hope: Hope Does Not Disappoint
Romans 6:11

Martha Circle

The Martha Circle meets Monday, November 16 at 1:30 p.m. at the church. Hostess is Deb Colombe. Deb will also give the reading.

Ruth Circle

The Ruth Circle will meet Wednesday, November 18 at 2:00 p.m. at the church.

Mission Circle of Joy

The Joy Circle will meet Tuesday, November 24 at 9:00 a.m. at the church.

Daily Text 2010

Once again this year we offer the opportunity to place a group order for the 2010 Daily Text books. This is a great way to easily "get into" God's Word on a daily basis. There are selected Bible verses and prayers for each day of the year. The paperback version is \$5.00 and the hardback journal version is \$13.00; First Lutheran will contribute \$1.00 to the cost of each book and cover the shipping cost. These books make wonderful gifts. We will place our group order before December 1. Watch the weekly bulletin for ordering or call the church office at 632-6667.

Library Corner

Thank to all who helped us with our FALL CLEANING. Your generous donations will purchase new books to enjoy. We'd love to hear your suggestions for your favorite author or series that would be appropriate for the library.

The Shack has recently been mentioned as a "good read". A donated copy is now available to enjoy! Starting November 18 look for books on display that will enhance your journey through Advent.

Men's Bible Study Breakfasts

All men of the congregation and friends are invited to a Men's Bible Breakfast study. The study meets for breakfast on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 6:15 a.m. at the church. You are welcome to attend any time – come when you are able, leave when you must. For more information, contact Pastor Dave.

Adult Study Discussion Group on the Gospel of Luke Mondays, beginning November 2 7:00-8:00 pm.

The Gospel of Luke – a look at this book written by a Physician for his friend Theophilus (The name Theophilus means 'friend of God.') in order to give an orderly account of the events of Jesus Christ and the prophecy he fulfilled. The Gospel of Luke is part one, if you will, of a two-part book, with the Book of Acts being the sequel. The author demonstrates by gleaning from the history of his day how the good news that began with Jesus both fulfills the promises God made to the people of Israel, and how that same good news has a legitimate place among the Gentiles as well. (The Gentiles—that would be you and I today.)

Pastor Dave leads this study on four Mondays, November 2, 9, 23 and 30. See you there! You may contact Pastor Dave for more information.

Cornerstones (Seniors age 55 and better) Potluck Lunch

Tuesday, November 17, 11:30 a.m.

We gather for potluck lunch on Tuesday, November 17 at 11:30 a.m. at church. Please bring a dish of your choosing to share—there's always plenty to go around! Bring a friend and come for food, and fellowship!

JESUS SAID,
GO AND DO
LIKEWISE LUKE
10:37

Thanksgiving is a time for considering the ways that we can “go and do likewise” by serving those in need both near and far. Each year we meet for worship on Thanksgiving Eve and give God thanks for the many blessings he bestows. Each year the offering we receive at this service is designated for those less fortunate. Your offering during the month to support ELCA World Hunger and local hunger needs is encouraged. Special envelopes are available on the greeters’ table, or you may note “Hunger” on the memo line of your check. Thank you for your generous giving to those in need around the world. Give thanks with a grateful heart!

A few ways you can make a difference:

- + Volunteer or provide donations at the Morrison County Food Shelf
- + Support Kids Against Hunger by making a donation or helping at a food packaging event
- + Serve as a First Lutheran Church liaison to Share A Meal
- + Volunteer to assist with the Community Thanksgiving Meal
- + Provide food, serve, or share supper at Share-A-Meal, Thursday, December 3, at 6:00 p.m. The meal is served at FLC every Thursday. All are welcome to attend for food and fellowship!
- + Advocate for hunger issues around the world by joining the ONE campaign, a non-partisan effort to end global hunger, go to www.one.org for more information.
- + Deliver Meals on Wheels to homebound persons in the community, call the church office to volunteer.
- + Provide financial support to ELCA World Hunger Appeal or Morrison County Food Shelf.

Jesus said, “Go and do likewise!”

Angel Tree Gift Giving

You are invited to share your gifts with families and children in our community who are living at or below the federally recognized poverty level. Watch for the Angel Tree in the Gathering Space after Thanksgiving. Take a tag from the tree, purchase a gift, and return it, unwrapped, to the church. Thank you for your continued participation in the Angel Tree project! Your generosity helps many around us to celebrate this holiday season with thanks and praise. For more information, contact Annalee VanDenheuvel at 320-573-1935.



Keeping Advent

Advent begins on November 29. Our culture will have surrounded us with the sounds and signs of Christmas long before that, but it is important for the Church to observe Advent in its richness.

Advent is a time of waiting, preparing, and hoping. Advent means “coming.” During Advent we wait, we hope, we prepare ourselves in anticipation of the coming Messiah:

- ⌚ We anticipate Jesus’ coming in Bethlehem.
- ⌚ We anticipate Christ’s coming daily into our lives.
- ⌚ We anticipate the coming of Christ at the end of the ages.

Advent, like Lent, provides an opportunity for examining our life of faith. How well do we prepare ourselves and our homes and families for the coming Christ? Advent is a good time to begin a worship practice in the home since the spirit of celebration in the air affects us all – older people, singles, middle-aged couples, busy young families, exuberant teens, and excited young children. And so, we invite you to keep Advent with:

Advent Wednesday Worship December 2, 9 and 16, at 7:00 p.m.

In preparation for the coming of the Christ child we gather to worship each Wednesday during Advent using the service of Holden Evening Prayer. Let the quiet beauty of song prepare your heart for the real meaning of the season. Refreshments will be served following the service.

“Children First” Christian Preschool Christmas Program

Saturday, December 12

On Saturday, December 12 at 3:00 p.m. we present a preschool Christmas Program. Refreshments for all will follow the program. All are welcome!

Visual Arts Team

If you or someone you know enjoys and has a flair for the creative arts consider offering those gifts to assist in adorning the worship space for Advent and Christmas. Please contact the church office. Thank you!



**Advent Craft Sale
Saturday, December 5
9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

In just one short month the Advent Craft Sale and Luncheon will be here. We trust you are making plans to attend!

We are looking for donations of craft and bake sale items. There will be a delicious soup luncheon, musical entertainment and lots of treats and gift items to buy! This year’s sale will benefit youth programming and activities at FLC. *Matching funds are being applied for with Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.*

Your support of this great annual FUNdraiser is appreciated.

"Children First" Christian Preschool Update

Greetings from Children First Christian Preschool!
During October we shared a Fall Harvest Celebration with parents, grandparents and guardians. Children learned their phone numbers and were creative with leaves, scarecrows and pumpkins. In November we will be thankful for all that God provides. Children will learn to recognize and write the letter of the alphabet.

The 2010 Calendar Fundraiser is underway through Sunday, November 8. Orders will arrive before Thanksgiving – they make great gifts!

All are welcome to attend the Preschool Christmas Program on Saturday, December 12 at 3:00 p.m.

We are thrilled to have the largest enrollment number yet—33 children! The preschool has openings in all classes, especially the "Jesus' Gems" afternoon class. Registration is open to children ages 33 months to pre-kindergarten pending class availability. Please contact me for more information.

Thank you to parents and friends who support "Children First" with financial gifts, sharing of time and talents and by keeping the school in your prayers. God's blessings!

Yours in Christ's Service,
Gail Hittesdorf, Director

Confirmation Ministries

Third Grade: Thanks to the Third Grade students and parents for completing their Family Devotions on the Gospel of Mark.

Fourth Grade: Looking ahead – four-week class on Holy Baptism begins Wednesday, January 6, 2010.

Sixth Grade: Class on Human Sexuality for youth and parents begins on Wednesday, November 2. This class is for youth and parents.

Seventh Grade: Mark your calendars for class on the Ten Commandments beginning Wednesday, January 6, 2010.

Eighth Grade: Looking ahead – class on the Old Testament begins Wednesday, January 6, 2010.

Mentor Program: Tenth grade students are in the process of selecting mentors. Mentors are adult members of the congregation who promise to serve as a guide, example, and friend to a confirmand during their last years of high school. If you are interested in serving as a mentor, please contact the church office.

Sunday Morning Education Ministry Each Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

Preschool Sunday School is looking for two helpers each Sunday. If you are ninth grade or older and would like to help with this class please contact Pam Czech, Gail Hittesdorf or Sarah Olson.

Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten classes meet in the Deborah and Moses Rooms in the Ed wing.

TREK (kindergarten thru fifth grade) meets in Stoltz Hall for a 15 minute opening prior to their rotation station. We begin a new 5-week rotation "Isaiah" on Sunday, November 1.

Thank you to the leaders who participated in "The Lord's Prayer" rotation. Upcoming themes are: "Christmas around the World" (The Wise Men), "Calling the Disciples", "Paul", and "Jonah." Consider where you might share your gifts and sign up to help with Art, Cooking, Science/Video, Games or Music, and Storytelling. You can team up with a friend, or lead as a family—there are lots of options.

Youth in 6th-8th grades meet in the Youth Room. Senior High youth in 9th-12th grades meet in the library.

News of the Family

Peyton Andrew Rakow, son of Andrew and BreeAnn Rakow, was baptized on October 11.

New Members Received Sunday, November 1

Barb Arveson and David Riley
Mitch and Brenda Becker,
and Cavin, Cale and Chase Becker
Frank and Lori Kraska
Troy and Gail Olson,
and Haley and Adam Olson
Kathy Pederson
Cyrena Ramos,
and Isaac, Adrian and Elijah Ramos
Kristen Retka and Gene Woodford
Paul and Shawna Sachs,
and Tate and James Finck



Sunshine Chairperson is Mary Larson. Please call 632-8203 if you know of someone who is ill, hospitalized, etc., so that she may send them a card.

Items for the **December NEWSLETTER** are due on **November 20, 2009!**