

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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September, 2009, Newsletter

September 2, 2009

**Sunday Morning Education Ministry
Begins Sunday, September 20**



Youth and Education ministry is valued highly at First Lutheran Church. We seek to provide Sunday Morning Education Ministry opportunities for Christian learning for young people of all ages. Children in kindergarten through fifth grade will begin the second year using the 'rotational' style of learning. We will also have opportunities for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, middle school youth, and high school youth. This is ministry with and for youth. We hope that the language used will be reflective of the ministries that are planned for all ages – infants through high school. When you see the term 'Sunday Morning Children's/Youth Education Ministry' know that we plan to continue to assist you in teaching your child the Christian faith as Lutherans all through their youth.

T.R.E.K. (Teaching, Reaching, Educating, Kids) is the name of the Sunday morning rotational-style ministry for children in Kindergarten through Fifth Grade. Guided by a shepherd, children learn the Bible by experiencing five different stations – one station each Sunday. The stations include Storytelling, Arts and Crafts, Science/Video, Food/Cooking, and Music and Games. We'll experience seven biblical units or themes during the months of September through May.

Volunteer sign-up is underway for T.R.E.K. and for all ages. Information on the stations and the dates for each unit is available at the church. You may volunteer as an individual or team up with a friend, the commitment of your time can be as you want it to be. What a great way to share your Christian faith journey and get to know terrific kids at the same time!

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Pastor Dave's Article

MINNEAPOLIS (ELCA) The 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) voted today to open the ministry of the church to gay and lesbian pastors and other professional workers living in committed relationships.

The action came by a vote of 559-451 at the highest legislative body of the 4.6 million member denomination. Earlier the assembly also approved a resolution committing the church to find ways for congregations that choose to do so to "recognize, support and hold publicly accountable life-long, monogamous, same gender relationships,"

By ELCANEWS@LISTSERV

Most of us are trying to figure out what this all means. I will be praying for you. I ask for your prayers as well!

It is my understanding is that no changes from Church Wide will be implemented until November at the earliest. I believe that because of the hierarchy in the church it will take time to put together all the policies and work through all the layers of the church body. The resolution itself has language that includes a variety of people and groups in the process. And I think many attorneys will also be involved. How this decision will look as it unfolds will become clearer in the days and weeks to come. We will work through what this means in the life of this congregation. The church council has convened a group of individuals to explore options for the congregation. Options are many and diverse. Watch for a report from this group.

I have received many questions before and after this vote. I will try to help you understand this decision. One thing I do know and pray is that individual congregations will continue to hold the final decision of who they call to serve as pastor in their own local faith community.

In the meantime, if you want to do something, use your energy around this issue and dig deeper into following Jesus, read scripture, and listen to His

Word speaking to you. It is not our denomination, the ELCA, or a particular pastor that is the God we follow, it is Jesus Christ Himself. Church bodies as a whole are as sinful and broken as any one of us individually.

I urge you and encourage you to grow as Christ followers through your own Bible reading, contemplation, and daily prayer. I invite you to continue in fellowship, worship, and the continued generous giving of your time and talents, and most of all, continue to encourage one another. I invite you to follow the one who is Lord of the church, Jesus, the one God sent to save us. At the same time, love all your neighbors, even the ones who disagree with you. There is nothing like caring for others to remove the temptation to turn in on ourselves in fear, grief and frustration. Our denomination, is not our God but we can trust that God can and will use us, even through our own sinfulness just as God uses the simple elements of bread, wine, and water to be His means of grace for a world that needs the Good News that we know in and through Jesus.

Dear God, continue to work in our midst so that our conversation might be faithful, and a positive witness to your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Please hold our tongue, guide our mind and our heart as we listen to our sisters and brothers from across this congregation and church body.

Dear God, we need your guidance, presence and power each and every day. Disturb us when we need to be challenged. Comfort us when we are crushed. Bring Your Peace to us all. Bring healing to the wounds that we carry as individuals and as a community. Push us deeper into being the church you want and need for us to be. Work on us and push us deeper into trusting only in you.

Dear God, do your work among and in us today and in the days to come. We ask all this in the name of Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Dave Sperstad

“Empowered by God – Responding by Grace”

Stewardship 2009

“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*

We are entering into our annual stewardship emphasis entitled, “Empowered by God — Responding by Grace.” During this time, we will consider how God has empowered us and how our response, by grace through faith, can be used by God, especially in the ministry here at First Lutheran Church.

Just what does it mean to be empowered by God? The Lord Jesus said that His disciples would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them (*Acts 1:8*). That not only happened as He said it would, but we, too, receive God’s power by His grace through our faith in Christ as the Holy Spirit takes up residence in us. The words of a contemporary anthem by David Clydesdale and Claire Cloninger express this truth clearly: “Empower me! Like a rushing river flowing to the sea, Lord, send Your Holy Spirit flowing now thru me. ‘Til I’m living as Your child, victorious and free. Send the power of Your love; empower me!” (Copyright © 1984 John T. Benson Publishing Co./ASCAP. All rights reserved.)

As we experience God’s power through faith in Christ, our hearts respond. Our response begins with the realization that God owns everything. As Edwin Frizen stated, “. . . Scripture is full of evidence that all that we have comes from God.” God is our Source. God is the Creator and Sustainer of life. God is the Provider of all that we have, whether it be life itself, the air we breathe,

water which sustains us, or financial resources through which we obtain the necessities of life. On a daily basis, God demonstrates again and again His abundant power as He “richly provides us with everything.” (*1 Timothy 6:17*)

And what should be our response to God’s provision for us? According to *2 Corinthians 8:7*, we respond by “faith,” implicitly trusting God to provide all that we need. We respond by “speech,” sharing the good news of the Gospel with others. We respond by “knowledge” through the study of God’s Word. We respond in “complete earnestness,” that is, through a demonstration of the sincerity of our love for the Lord. And we respond by excelling in the “grace of giving.”

As an example of what it means to give by grace, the Apostle Paul points to the Christians at Macedonia. These were poor people — dirt poor, poor as the proverbial church mice — who were commended by Paul for giving beyond their ability to give. How could they do that? The answer is found in *2 Corinthians 8:5* — “. . . they gave themselves first to the Lord.” Giving does not begin with the movement of the hand to the wallet, purse or pocketbook. Giving begins in the heart.

In fact, this principle goes back to God’s instruction to Moses in *Exodus 25:2*, “. . . from all whose hearts prompt them to give you shall receive the offering for me.” This principle is still in operation today. As we give our time, talents and treasure to the Lord, we do so by God’s grace because we have already given our hearts to Him.



Memorial Gift Received

First Lutheran has received a generous memorial gift from the estate of life-long member Lillie Olson. Lillie was born March 24, 1911, to Gilbert and Ellen Olson, in Buh Township, near Little Falls. She became a member of FLC at her baptism on July 23, 1911 and remained a member until her death at age 96, on March 17, 2008.

Lillie taught elementary school for 45 years before retiring in 1976. Lillie knew the importance of education and valued the gift of children. The majority of this gift will be used to provide youth ministry scholarships to young people here at First Lutheran. Youth attending the ELCA National Youth Gathering and the Youthworks Mission Trip received gifts from this memorial fund this summer.

Thanks be to God for the quiet witness of faithful saints such as Lillie Olson. With the Spirit's guidance, may the seeds of life-long faith continue to be planted in children through the generosity of this gift.

Library Corner

Come in and browse around! The church library is a good resource for adult, youth and children's fiction, biographies, inspirational, devotional, Bible studies, a wide range of family and social issues, and other media in VHS and DVD. You'll find a printed list of all materials by the book return box.

The Library gals have been busy cleaning out older and duplicated materials from the church library. Watch for our used book sale at church on Sundays, October 4 and 11.

Council Highlights

- ✦ Approved "Children First" Christian Preschool proposed budget for 2009-10.
- ✦ The council thanks all whose efforts made this year's Vacation Bible School a great success.

Financial Update

2009 Mission Plan Budget	
January—August 23:	\$ 271,123
Actual received	
January—August 23:	\$ 239,413

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



New Member Group

FLC's fall New Member Group begins in October. The group will meet on Sunday evenings; October 11 and 18, at 7:00 p.m. New members will be received in worship on Sunday, November 1. FLC council and commission members will host a new member meal following worship on Sunday, November 1.

This group is meant to help joining members to find their place in the mission of the congregation, get to know other members, and discuss the foundations of the faith we share. Current members are encouraged to attend and get to know joining members.

For more information, or to sign up for the class, please call the church office at 632-6667.



Reminder: Fall Worship Schedule begins Sunday September 13 at 8:00, 9:30 and 10:45 a.m.

Adult Opportunities

Women's Circles:

"To God's Beloved:
Paul's Letter to the Romans"
Lesson One: Be Mutually Encouraged

Martha Circle

Martha Circle meets Monday, September 21, at 1:30 p.m. at the home of Marlene Williams.

Ruth Circle

Ruth Circle meets Wednesday, September 16, at 2:00 p.m. at the church.

Mission Circle of Joy Tuesday, September 23

All women are welcome to come to a monthly morning circle group, "Mission Circle of Joy." We meet on the fourth Tuesday of each month, at 9:00 a.m. at church. The next meeting is Tuesday, September 22. Questions? Call Naomi Engel at 632-3167.

Women's Bible Study Daniel:

Lives of Integrity, Words of Prophecy

"Daniel: Lives of Integrity, Words of Prophecy." Through this Beth Moore video study we will learn how to shine for Christ in our modern culture. The study meets for twelve weeks. Sessions meet at 6:45 and 9:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Workbooks are helpful, cost is \$15.00 each. Sign up now! Facilitator: Naomi Engel, 632-3167.

Quilters and Fix-Up Crew

The Thursday morning Quilters Group resumes meeting on Thursday, September 10 at 9:00 a.m. You do not need to be skilled at sewing to help out! There are a variety of ways to serve. And hey, there's always food! For more information, call Marlene Williams, 632-4290 or Marlys Plante, 632-8055.

Men's Morning Bible Study Wednesday, September 2 6:15 a.m.

All men of the congregation and friends are invited to Men's Bible Study. We meet on the first and third week of each month on Wednesday morning at the church.

The 6:15 a.m. study includes breakfast. The study will be completed by 7:40 a.m. to allow time to get to work. Come when you are able, leave when you must. For more information, call the church office at 632-6667.

Adult Bible Study Ephesians

Monday, September 7, 7:00 p.m.

Pastor Dave will lead a new conversation and study on the book of Ephesians. Ephesians is a baptismal treatise written to establish Paul's authority, and to introduce his letters. It has been seen as the mature fruit of Paul's thought and faithful understanding. We meet at church for six sessions. The first session is Monday, September 7 (yes, Labor Day!) See you there!

Sunday Morning Adult Education Begins Sunday, September 20, 9:30 a.m.

All adults are welcome to meet each Sunday at 9:30 a.m. in the Library with one of the pastors for a variety of educational opportunities. Watch for more information on the weekly sessions. Bring your coffee and come for learning and conversation.

Women's Fall Retreat

Fall Colors Creative Retreat, Friday-Sunday, October 2-4 at Luther Crest Bible Camp. Come and stay in the Adult Retreat Center and have time for scrap-booking, stamping, worship, learning, food and fun. Just \$120.00 for double occupancy! For more information, contact the church office.



**Cornerstones
(Seniors age 55 and better ☺)**

Are you interested in participating in senior fellowship? Bring a friend and a food item to share and come for potluck lunch. We gather on the third Tuesday of each month, September through May. Mark your calendar for Tuesday, September 15, at 11:30 a.m. We'll meet in Stoltz Hall to share food, conversation and laughter!

Koinonia Groups – Dinner for Eight

New groups are forming now. This is a wonderful fellowship activity for all adults and is a good way to meet new people, have fun, and share good food. The groups will gather for four months (March-June) for a meal. Group members will share hosting the group (although hosting is not required). Each month the host provides the main dish and beverages. The other participants provide the side dishes. Questions? ask Pastor Dave.

Can Care Collection

Keep saving those aluminum cans!

- ☺ Save a can
- ☺ Save the earth
- ☺ Save our youth budget!

Keep those cans coming!
Thank you!

Military Care Packages

Many members of FLC have friends or family members who are or have been deployed to active duty to serve in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some have participated in an effort to send 'care packages' to these deployed military personnel. We would like to organize an effort once again to send a care package of love and support for these troops who are enduring separation from their loved ones and homes.

Many of you will remember interim pastor Amy Schiffrin who served FLC in 2004-05. Pastor Amy's oldest son, Army Lt. Hans Tolpingrud, was recently deployed to Afghanistan. His battalion has already experienced the devastating deaths of several soldiers. He has requested assistance with packages to share with the soldiers, some of whom may not receive this encouragement from home. We would like to include the soldiers in Hans' platoon in this effort.

Your donations of items to fill the boxes is welcome. We would also welcome your contributions towards the cost of mailing the packages.

Items requested include: Gatorade Propel drink mix (available in box of 10 individual packets), beef jerky, high protein bars (such as Cliff Bars), hard candy (anything that won't melt), foot powder, wet wipes, socks (especially thick boot socks), dried fruit, nuts, trail mix, any toiletries that won't leak, chapstick, current sports or hobby magazines, and your handwritten cards or letters of support.

You may bring items to church. Look for a collection box in the Gathering Space or bring to the church office. A packing date will be scheduled near the end of September.

Thank you for your continued support of the military personnel. Please continue to uphold all involved in these conflicts in your prayers. For more information, contact Susan Gustner in the church office.

Thank you!

Thank you to all who came with brush in hand and served as members of First Lutheran's annual Paint-A-Thon team on Saturday, August 1. Seven homes were painted in the community on Saturday morning. Thanks to Jerome and Karen Haaland for coordinating this year's team.

Thank You!

Thank you all members of First Lutheran Church for your continued prayers, support and volunteerism for Habitat for Humanity of Morrison County! Your financial support directly impacts the lives of our homeowner families. It's through your support that we are able to support more families. You are a faith community that puts their faith into action. If you have question regarding Habitat for Humanity in Morrison County, please call me at 616-2084.

Sincerely, Kathy Kahlhamer

Thank You!

Dear First Lutheran Church Family,

Thank you so much for your generous help for the Morrison County Chaplaincy. This has been a very slow year for donations so it means more than you will ever know. I am too blessed to be depressed. God has given me supporters like you.

Your Pastoral Staff and Administrative Staff have been so kind to me. The blankets that go to emergencies have been terrific. I know that generosity is its own reward. Scripture says by the measure you have used it will be given.

My appreciation goes deeper than just financial, I know that you pray for me and that alone is a pillar of strength in dark and difficult times.

May God richly bless you the way you have blessed me.

In God's Love,
Chaplain Gregg Valentine

Sunday Morning Education Ministry Begins September 20, 2009

This fall we are excited to offer Sunday morning discipleship learning to people of all ages—infant, youth and adult! Plan to participate and grow into the disciple Jesus intends for you to be.

- + Infant/Parent Class (birth to age one): Begins Sunday, October 4, meet the first Sunday of each month from 10:40-11:00 a.m.
- + Toddler/Parent Class (two year olds): Begins Sunday, October 11, meet the second Sunday of each month from 10:40-11:00 a.m.
- + Preschool/Pre-Kindergarten Class (three and four year olds): Begins Sunday, September 20, at 9:30 a.m. Look for your child's name outside the Education Wing classrooms.
- + Kindergarten through Fifth Grade – T.R.E.K. (Teaching, Reaching, Educating, Kids) Children will meet by grade level in Stoltz Hall. 'Shepherds' will guide them to rotating stations learning the Bible stories. You are encouraged to participate by leading or helping with a station.
- + Wild and Crazy Saints (Grades 6-8): This group will meet together beginning Sunday, September 20 at 9:30 a.m. exploring God's Word through learning and stewardship opportunities.
- + Senior League (Grades 9-12): This group will meet together beginning Sunday, September 20 at 9:30 a.m. They will experience God's Word and its application to their daily lives through a variety of medium.
- + Adult Education: Adults will gather with one of the pastors each Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

Youth and Education registration forms were sent by mail, additional forms are available at the church. Please complete these forms and return to the church office as soon as possible.

For more information, Gail Hittesdorf, 632-6667.

"Children First" Christian Preschool Update

Greetings from "Children First" Christian Preschool!

Parent orientation is Thursday, September 10, at 7:00 p.m. The first days of class are Monday and Tuesday, September 14 and 15. These sessions will meet for one and one-half hours. The morning sessions will meet from 9:00-10:30 a.m. and the afternoon session will meet from 12:30-2:00 p.m. Students and parents will experience the classroom together for 1/2 hour, and then the parents will attend a special session while the children have fun. Wednesday and Thursday, September 16 and 17 will be regular classroom days.

Openings remain for all classes:

- ☺ *Noah's Animals* is a two-day class for children 33 months to three years old, meeting Tuesday and Thursday from 9:00-11:30 a.m.
- ☺ *Jesus' Gems* is a two-day class for children four and five years old, meeting in two sessions, Monday and Wednesday from 9:00-11:30 a.m., and 12:30-3:00 p.m.

The preschool hosts a booth at the Little Falls Arts and Crafts Fair on Saturday-Sunday, September 12-13. We're on the corner of Broadway and Second Street (courthouse corner) serving chips

and cheese and beverages. If you can help with the booth, please contact Gail.

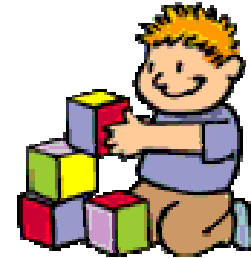
'Give Us a Hand!' Come to Morrison County Kids' Day on Saturday, September 26 at the Morrison County Fairgrounds. We will make a quilt for Habitat for Humanity. Last year, children of the community placed their hand prints on our quilt top. The quilters of First Lutheran Church made it come to life and it was then presented to a Habitat for Humanity homeowner. Come and place your hand print on our quilt top!

There is power in prayer and we have been wonderfully blessed by your prayers for the mission to bring God into children's lives. Thank you for your support!

Please keep preschool students, families and staff in your prayers as we begin our new school year.

In Christ's Service,

Gail Hittesdorf
Director



Confirmation Ministries

Parents: Please register your children for confirmation and youth ministry activities now. Forms are available in the church office. Eleventh and Twelfth grade students please register in order to participate in youth activities.

Third Grade: Youth entering third grade have received their Bibles. Parents and youth will share Family Devotions in September. Each youth will receive a home visit in October.

Fifth Grade: class on Stewardship meets Wednesdays, September 16 and 23, at 7:00 p.m. Pastor Dave teaches this class.

Ninth Grade: New Testament class begins on Wednesday, September 9, at 7:00 p.m. Pastor Nate will teach this class.

Tenth Grade: Lutheran Identity class for youth begins on Wednesday, October 7. Pastor Dave will teach this class.

Eleventh Grade: Confirmation Reception on Sunday, October 4, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. for students, parents, and mentors. Students will share mentor activities. Confirmation Sunday is October 25 at 10:45 a.m. worship.

☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺ **Youth News** ☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺

**Gospel Gang
(Grades 3-5)**

**Family Picnic Kickoff
Sunday, September 20**

Bring the whole family for this first event of the season. Watch for more details!

**Kids' Day at Morrison County Fairgrounds
Saturday, September 26**

Kids! Plan to bring Mom and Dad to Kids' Day on Saturday morning, September 26. There will be booths with lots of fun activities for the kids (including "Children First" Christian Preschool!) and it's free!

**Wild and Crazy Saints
(Grades 6-8)**

Friday Fun Night

Friday, September 11, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Bring a friend and come to the Youth Room for fun, food, faith, pop, friends, pizza, games and fellowship. Your cost is only \$3.00. Sign up in the Gathering Space. For more info, contact Pastor Dave. See you there!

New this fall!

F.O.C.U.S.

**+ Fixed On Christ Until Sunday +
Youth Group**

Beginning Monday, September 14, at 6:50 a.m., we'll meet at Burger King with breakfast and a FOCUS (Fixed On Christ Until Sunday) devotional – Walk With Jesus Daily. We will have an Every Day God Experience and we want you to have it as well. A life-changing experience awaits us as we pursue God every day. Come, and draw closer to him! Youth in 6th-12th grade are welcome. Questions? Need a ride? Call Pastor Dave at church, 632-6667, or at home, 632-5930, or via email at dsperstad@flittlefalls.org.

**Wild and Crazy Saints
(Grades 6-8)**

**Middle School Youth Gathering
"Pray. Always"**

**Friday-Saturday, November 20-21
Cragun's Resort**

You don't want to miss this event! We travel to Cragun's Resort for the annual gathering with kids from all over our NE MN Synod. This year's focus is the Lord's Prayer. Middle school youth will gain a deeper understanding of prayer and how prayer is central to our daily life. Guest speaker is Tiger McLuen, and the band is The OWLS, synod youth worship band. Early registration is \$60.00 per youth; your deposit of \$30.00 will hold your spot, FLC will cover the other \$30.00—what a deal! Bring your deposit to the church office.

Senior League (Grades 9-12)

Tent City

Friday, October 9

Brainerd Armory

Each night in Minnesota thousands of people are experiencing homelessness in Minnesota. Many of them are children. Can you spend one night in a tent to raise awareness for those right here in central Minnesota who are homeless? There will be games, drawings, live entertainment by SilverLine and much more. For more information, contact Pastor Dave.

**See You at the Pole
"Engage"**

Wednesday, September 23

"Go and pray to God for me and for the people..."

2 Kings 22:13a

SYATP connects believers together at the beginning of the school year, so you can stand strong together throughout the year. Check out www.syatp.com and then bring your friends before school on Wednesday, September 23. We'll gather at the Middle School flagpole at 7:00 a.m. and start the day with youth-led prayer.

News of the Family

Lily Ann Jensen, daughter of Katy Jensen, was baptized on August 16.

+

Susan Anderson and Lee Liebel were united in marriage on July 31.

+

Olga Johnson died on July 31. Her funeral service was held on August 5.

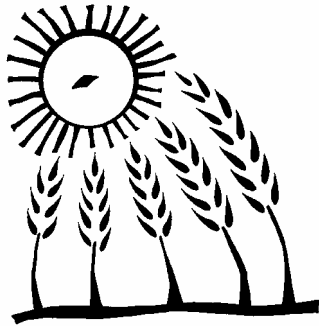
Reuben Hokanson died on July 12. His funeral service was held on August 18.

May God grant comfort and peace to the families and friends of these faithful saints.

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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 **October NEWSLETTER** are due on **September 20, 2009!**



Reminder: Fall Worship schedule begins Sunday, September 13. Worship at 8:00, 9:30 and 10:45 a.m.