



*“Servants of All”*

December 2019

November 22, 2019

## *Advent and Christmas Worship*



**Advent One:** Sunday, December 1:  
Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.

### **Wednesday Advent Worship:**

Wednesdays, December 4, 11 and 18  
at 7:00 p.m.

Holden Evening Prayer

**Advent Two:** Sunday, December 8:  
Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.  
*Sunday School at 9:35 a.m.*

**Advent Three:** Sunday, December 15:  
Service of Lessons and Carols  
Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.  
*Sunday School at 9:35 a.m.*  
Children's Christmas Program at 3:00 p.m.

**Advent Four:** Sunday, December 22  
Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.

## *Christmas Eve*

**Tuesday, December 24:**  
**Festival Worship at 3:00, 5:00  
and 10:00 p.m.**

Holy Communion at all three services

**First Sunday of Christmas:**  
**Sunday, December 29**  
Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.

*Come and Worship!*

*Come, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come*

**Pastor Hank's Article**  
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**Church Life Updates**  
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Christian Preschool**  
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Well, it seems like once again I am honored to serve First Lutheran Church. This time, however, I am not serving as a full-time interim pastor as I did for the 22 months before Pastor Jake came. This time around I am what the Synod calls a “bridge pastor.” A bridge pastor is someone who fills in after a pastor leaves a congregation and before a full-time interim pastor, a term-contract pastor, or a regularly called pastor is assigned to the church.

I think we all know what a full-time interim pastor is—that’s what I was from the summer of 2014 through the summer of 2016. A full-time interim does everything a pastor does while the church goes through the process of calling a new pastor.

A term-contract pastor is one who is hired by a congregation for a specified period of time—for example, a term of one, two or three years. If things go well, when the term is up, the congregation can offer the pastor a permanent call which he or she is free to accept or not.

The benefits of having a term-contract pastor are (1) there is plenty of time for the congregation and pastor to get to know each other and discover if it is a fit for both the church and the pastor and (2) you avoid the long, time and energy consuming call process.

At this time, we don’t know how long it will take the Synod to find us either a full-time interim or a term-contract pastor, or if we will need to begin another call process like the one that led to Pastor Jake being called to FLC. There is a shortage of available pastors in the Synod and we will just have to be patient as the Synod staff works to meet our need.

As a bridge pastor, I am not full-time. I have agreed with the church council to put in 25-30 hours a week in order to cover all essential pastoral needs. I will (1) preach and preside at Sunday worship; (2) preach and preside at

Thanksgiving worship and Advent worship; (3) preach and preside at Christmas worship; (4) preach and preside at Lenten and Holy Week worship if an interim or term-contract pastor has not been found by then; (5) teach seventh grade confirmation; (6) teach eighth grade confirmation in January and February, if needed; (7) continue to teach a twice monthly adult study group; (8) provide emergency pastoral care; (9) officiate at funerals and weddings as necessary; (10) be a resource for the Church Council.

I will not be keeping regular office hours but will be working out of my home office. I also will not be doing routine administrative work or routine pastoral visits, and I won’t be meeting with the various ministry teams.

The office staff, Sue Gustner, Gail Hittesdorf and Nan Brossoit, our parish nurse Tracy Moe, and our ministry teams are top notch, committed folks and, with what they do so well and with what I will be doing, you can expect “full service ministry” as we move through this time of transition into the future God is preparing for us.

FLC is a great church full of good committed folks doing a lot of good things for both the church and the community. I am honored to serve you once again. If you have any questions at all, talk to me, Barb Stumpf, president of the church council or any council member

We will soon enter Advent and move toward Christmas. It is a season grounded in hope. Let us move forward hopefully in the confidence that God is and always will be with us.

Peace and every blessing to you all,

*Pastor Hank*



**Advent Wednesday Worship  
December 4, 11 and 18 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. Invite a friend to come with you and let the quiet beauty of song prepare your heart for Christ's birth.

**Advent Devotions  
Made New 20/20**

Again this year members and friends of First Lutheran have written short devotions for the season of Advent with the theme "Made New 20/20." Beginning December 1, the devotions will be posted on the church webpage at [www.flclittlefalls.org](http://www.flclittlefalls.org). If you would prefer a printed copy of the devotions, please contact the church office.



**Christmas Poinsettias**

Your donations towards poinsettias to decorate our sanctuary for Christmas are welcome. You may donate in honor/memory of a loved one. The church office will order poinsettias for delivery for Christmas. This year we will order several large plants instead of the individual plants. Your donation of \$10.00 will defray this expense, additional funds received will support a mission project. Submit your request to Susan in the church office by Sunday, December 15.



**Council Highlights**

- Approved a Bridge Pastor contract for Pastor Hank French until an interim pastor is available.
- Heard that 19 youth and 3 adults attended the NE MN Synod Middle School Youth Gathering at Cragun's Resort on November 22-23.
- Designated the offering received on Thanksgiving Eve to be shared with Morrison County Food Shelf and Oasis Central Minnesota Homelessness Project.
- The office staff will be updating the membership roster. Please notify the church office when/if your contact information changes.
- Thank you to all who continue to support ministry at First Lutheran and beyond with their time, talent, and financial gifts. God's work. Our hands.



**Wishing you and yours  
a Blessed Christmas Season!**

From all of us on the First Lutheran  
Church Staff Ministry Team

## Family Contact Information Update

We wish to stay up-to-date with contact information for First Lutheran congregation members and friends. We are aware that phone numbers, email addresses and mailing addresses change fairly often. Should your contact information for your family change, please notify the church office.

If your family includes adult children living out of the home, updated information and status for them would also be greatly appreciated. For more information, contact Sue Gustner in the church office. *Thank you!*

## Youth Mission Trips – Summer 2020



We have reserved mission trip sites for next summer for both middle school (to Lake Traverse, South Dakota, June 21-26) and high school (to Denver, Colorado, July 5-10) youth. We will partner with Youthworks to experience hands-on Christ-centered ministry with people in different life situations than youth might be familiar with. We will challenge ourselves to be the hands and feet of Christ as we seek to serve in mission in an active way. Space will be somewhat limited for these trips so you are encouraged to reserve your spot now; we will raise funds to help with the trip cost.

Your deposit of \$90.00 per person is required to reserve your place on either trip. Total trip cost is not fully determined but we hope to keep the cost to less than \$500.00 per person. Please make deposit payment. Watch your mail for more information about these trips. If you have questions, please contact Susan Gustner in the church office, 320-632-6667, or via email at [sgustner@flclittlefalls.org](mailto:sgustner@flclittlefalls.org).



## The Gift of Generosity

Thank you to everyone who has supported First Lutheran Church this past year with their time, talent and financial contributions. We are thankful for your continued faithful and generous support.

Numerous members appreciate the convenience of automated giving through Simply Giving®. If you would like a convenient way to make regular offerings or if you plan to make an additional gift before the end of the year, we encourage you to look into our electronic giving options. As the pace of life speeds up, especially around the holidays, you may find electronic giving a most welcome way to make contributions. Contact Susan Gustner in the church office for more information. Thank you!

## Thrivent Choice ©

Many First Lutheran members are also members of Thrivent Financial and are eligible to designate Thrivent Choice dollars (contributed by Thrivent) to the non-profit organization of their choosing. Funds can be designated on-line or you can receive a form for designation and assistance in the church office.

If you are unsure whether you are eligible to direct Choice dollars, please contact your Thrivent representative. First Lutheran Church and “Children First” Christian Preschool are able to receive designated Choice © dollars. In 2018, these dollars amounted to over \$2,000 in additional funds for ministry here. Thank you for your support!

### 2019 Giving

The last date for offerings received to be credited for the year 2019 is Tuesday, December 31, 2019. Thank you for your faithful giving throughout the year.



**Annual Lutefisk Dinner  
Bethel Lutheran Church  
Tuesday, December 3  
4:30-8:00 p.m.**

Sister congregation Bethel Lutheran has served this annual holiday meal for many years. First Lutheran is offering helping hands for the meal again this year. We will provide support as they host the dinner. Consider how you may assist with this event, here are some possibilities:

- ☞ Setup in early afternoon, or take down following the meal, both on December 3
- ☞ Assist in the kitchen on December 3
- ☞ Serve tables in two shifts, 4:30-6:00 p.m. or 6:00-8:00 p.m.
- ☞ Bake pies – apple or pumpkin
- ☞ Bake holiday cookies
- ☞ Tickets \$17.00 advance, \$18.00 at the door

Of course, you can also attend the dinner and enjoy this annual holiday event and fellowship.



## Adult Opportunities

### Men's Bible Study Breakfast

All men of the congregation and friends are invited to a Men's Bible study. The weekday study meets on the first and third Wednesday of each month (December 11) at 7:00 a.m. at the church for breakfast. You are welcome to attend – come when you are able, leave when you must. For more information, contact Doug Luepke.

### Afternoon Bible Study Wednesdays, December 4 and 18 1:00 p.m.

All are welcome to attend this study led by Pastor Hank French. The group continues study by comparing the beliefs of the major world religions with Christian beliefs. Come for study, discussion, and prayer—all are welcome.

### Book Club

The Book Club will not meet in December. Watch for the newly selected books and keep reading! For more info, contact Tifanii Dahl at 632-8207.

### Martha Circle

The Martha Circle meets Monday, December 9 at 11:30 a.m. at the Royal Café for lunch.

### Music Opportunities

**“Grace Notes” Adult Choir:** If you love to sing and are high school age and up you are welcome to sing with this group. Singers who would like a short-term opportunity are welcome to sing in December as we prepare for an Advent Service of Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 15 at both services. December rehearsals are Wednesday evenings following Advent worship at about 7:30 p.m.

**Gifts of Music:** If you or someone you know would like to provide a gift of music, vocal or instrumental, at worship in December, please contact Director of Music, Becky Nelson, 320-749-2336.

## Ways that First Folks are “First...Servants of All”



### God’s Global Barnyard Project

God’s Global Barnyard is a project of ELCA World Hunger. For families around the world, an animal can make a world of difference. You can participate in this project to provide funds for the purchase of an animal or other global need such as Bibles, food supply, bees and more. Check the gathering space bulletin board for the ornament display and ways to support this global mission project. Thank you!

### Morrison County Chaplaincy Pizza Party Fundraiser Sunday, December 1 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Little Falls VFW

Bring a friend and the family and come out to support Chaplain Gregg Valentine who provides spiritual support to local law enforcement personnel and local persons in emergency need. All the pizza and pop you care to eat for any size donation. Bring a new or gently used coat for donation or non-perishable food item. Thank you for your support of this local ministry.

### Thank you!

Thank you for the many ways you serve in mission and ministry every day as members and friends of First Lutheran. We are church together as First...Servants of all! God’s Work. Our Hands.

### Who is my Neighbor? Opportunity Angel Tree Gift Giving

You are invited to share your gifts with families and children in our community and county who are living at or below the federally recognized poverty level. Take a tag from the Angel Tree located in the Gathering Space. Return your *unwrapped* gifts with their tag to the church by Sunday, December 15. 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 320-232-9366.



### God’s Work – Our Hands Thank you!

- ☞ Thank you to all who ordered a fresh balsam wreath! Your purchase supports youth ministry at First Lutheran.
- ☞ Thank you to all who volunteered to assist with the Lutefisk and Meatball Supper on December 3.
- ☞ Thank you to all who volunteer to prepare the worship space for Advent and Christmas worship.
- ☞ Thank you to all who use their Thrivent Action Team Grant to do ministry!



**Advent Craft Sale**  
**Saturday, December 7**  
**9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

Come and enjoy the start of the Advent season at the annual Advent Craft Sale and Luncheon.

Handcrafts and bake sale items will be available to purchase. There will be a delicious soup luncheon, and lots of treats and gift items! Proceeds from this year's sale will support youth ministry programming at First Lutheran. Thank you for your ongoing generous support!

**Confirmation Ministries**

**Fourth Grade:** Four-week class on Holy Baptism begins Wednesday, January 8 and meets each week thru January 29, at 7:00 p.m. Check your mailbox for a letter about the class!

**Eighth Grade:** Class begins on Wednesday, January 8, at 7:00 p.m. Watch your mail for information about the class.

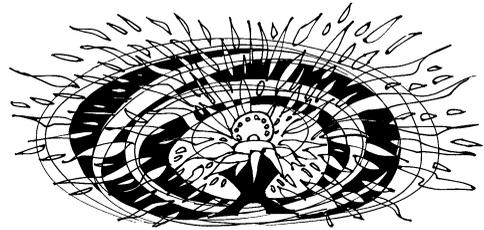
**Mentor Program:** Eighth Grade confirmands will be selecting a mentor to walk with them on their faith journey. First Lutheran members are encouraged to prayerfully consider how they can participate in the mentor program and if asked by a student to please say "Yes!"

**Can Care Collection**

Keep saving those aluminum cans!  
 Save a can – Save the earth –  
 Save our youth budget!

Place your cans in a securely tied bag by the garage door. Keep those cans coming!  
 We thank those who helped to take cans to be recycled recently. It was great to accomplish this ahead of the winter weather. Thank you!

**Sunday School Christmas Program**  
**"Let's Get Ready"**  
**Sunday, December 15, 3:00 p.m.**



*Oh, that birth forever blessed*

Sunday School Christmas Program "Let's Get Ready" is Sunday, December 15, beginning at 3:00 p.m. Families, guests and friends of all ages are invited to attend. A time of refreshments and fellowship will follow the program.

Sunday School children and leaders will rehearse the songs during the Sunday School hour. Volunteers are welcome to organize costumes and props and to help with direction. If you can assist with this wonderful annual event or for more info, contact the church office, 632-6667 or Becky Nelson, 749-2336.

**Sunday Morning Education Ministry**

Thank you to everyone who participated and led stations for the last rotation, "Zaccheus." It was exciting to see the activities, food and art projects.

We begin rehearsing for the Christmas Program, "Let's Get Ready" on Sunday, November 24. During the next weeks we will learn more about the Christmas Story as we wait and prepare to celebrate the birth of the promised Savior, Jesus.

Come for Sunday School at 9:35 a.m. All ages gather in Stoltz Hall for opening time. Preschool and Pre-kindergarten meet in the Ruth/Naomi Classroom in the education wing. TREK Rotation (K-5) meets in Stoltz Hall. Grades 6-8 meet in the Youth Room.

## Parish Nurse News

Tracy Moe, RN Parish Nurse

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### Tips for Avoiding the Holiday Blues

As we approach Christmas, we can celebrate and embrace the greatest gift that God has given us. In addition to remembering those gifts that God gives us, reflect on the gifts that you can give to your own body and to others during the season.

- \* Stick to your normal routine as much as possible.
- \* Get enough sleep.
- \* Take time for yourself, but don't isolate yourself. Spend time with supportive, caring people.
- \* Eat and drink in moderation. Avoid alcohol if you are feeling down.
- \* Get exercise, even if it is only a short walk.
- \* Make a to-do list, keep things simple.
- \* Set reasonable expectations and goals for holiday activities such as shopping, cooking, entertaining, attending parties or sending holiday cards.
- \* Set a budget for holiday activities; don't overextend yourself financially in buying gifts.
- \* Listen to music or find other ways to relax.

Lord, thank you for the gift of health that you have given us. Help us as we celebrate you in this season to celebrate the gifts that you give us each day. In your holy Name, Amen.

**Reminder:** The cold and flu season is a good time to do what we can to stay healthy and not spread illness to others. Worshippers share the peace of Christ with one another as a sign of the Christian community fellowship we share. For those who are experiencing respiratory or cold symptoms, please remember to sneeze into the crook of your elbow, wash your hands, and/or kindly consider refraining from handshaking. You are always welcome to use the hand sanitizer that you will find in locations around the church or consider carrying your own small bottle. Your prayers for others who are ill are appreciated. Thank you!



### What are the risks of vitamin D deficiency?

Vitamin D deficiency – when the level of vitamin D in your body is too low – can cause your bones to become thin, brittle or misshapen.

Vitamin D also appears to play a role in insulin production and immune function, and how this relates to chronic disease prevention and cancer, but this is still being investigated.

Although the amount of vitamin D adults get from their diets is often less than what's recommended, exposure to sunlight can make up for the difference. For most adults, vitamin D deficiency is not a concern. However, some groups, particularly people who are obese, who have dark skin and who are older than age 65, may have lower levels of vitamin D due to their diets, little sun exposure or other factors.

The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for adults is 600 international units (IU) of vitamin D a day. That goes up to 800 IU a day for those older than age 70. To meet this level, choose foods that are rich in vitamin D. For example, choose fatty fish, such as salmon, trout, tuna and halibut, or fortified foods, such as milk and yogurt.

Don't overdo it, though. Very high levels of vitamin D have not been shown to provide greater benefits. In fact, too much vitamin D has been linked to other health problems.

If you are concerned about whether you're getting enough vitamin D, talk to your doctor about your diet and whether a vitamin supplement might benefit you.

Adapted from Mayo Clinic, Katherine Zeratsky, R.D., L.D.

## “Children First” Christian Preschool

Greetings!

“Children First” Christian Preschool had a busy November. We learned about our Five Senses, Nutrition and Healthy Bodies/Food. Our field trip to Little Falls Health Care Services was a fun experience as we sang songs and danced with the residents. We also took a tour to see the house fronts, the cat in the window, the birds, the river and waterfalls! Thank you to Andy’s Charter for transportation services! Please visit our Art Gallery Hallways, next to the church kitchen and in the education wing. We love to share our artistic gifts with all!

All are invited to celebrate with “Children First” at the Preschool Christmas Program, “Say Cheese for Christmas” on Thursday, December 19, 10:45 a.m.-11:30 a.m. in the First Lutheran Church sanctuary. We will enjoy “cheese” and other pizza following the program. We are looking forward to sharing Christmas joy with everyone!

Our last day of Preschool for 2019 will be Thursday, December 19. We will enjoy a Christmas Break while the staff prepares the classroom for the New Year. Preschool classes resume on Monday, January 6, 2020.

“Children First” Gifting Campaign has begun. We have set a fundraising goal of \$5,000. Families are participating by sending out letters to those who may be interested in financially supporting our Preschool ministry. The funds raised through this campaign support our current Preschool year and assist with large classroom furniture, educational items and field trip bussing. If you would like to participate in our campaign by sending letters, making a contribution, or would like more information, please contact Gail.

We continue to participate in the Coborn’s/Cashwise More Rewards Program points. Please signup to be a More Rewards

Member online and choose “Children First” Christian Preschool. “Children First” receives cash from the points collected as you shop!

Thank you to Thrivent Financial and Thrivent Members for your Action Team ® assistance. We appreciate the sharing/caring/serving ministry opportunities you provide our Preschoolers.

A reminder that all preschoolers age 33 months - Pre-Kindergarten are welcome to experience the fun, the academic learning, and the spiritual growth in God’s love. “Children First” registers Preschoolers all year long. If you know of interested families, please encourage them to check us out!

“Children First” Christian Preschool Advisory Team and Staff would like to thank everyone for their contributions of time, talents and monetary giving this past year. Especially thank YOU for keeping the children and families of “Children First” in your prayers.

God’s Blessing to all for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Yours in Christ’s Service,

Gail Hittesdorf, Director



## News of the Family



Klayton Jeffrey Kieffer, son of Navasha Klapotz and Joe Kieffer, was baptized on November 10. Welcome to the family of God!



Items for the **January NEWSLETTER** are due on **December 20, 2019!**



**Church Office and building is closed on  
Wednesday, Christmas Day, December 25.**

**Annual Meeting—Sunday, January 26, 2020**  
*Following the 10:30 a.m. service*