



*“Servants of All”*

December 2021

November 29, 2021

*Advent and Christmas Worship*



**Advent One:** Sunday, November 28:  
Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.

**Wednesday Advent Worship:**  
Wednesdays, December 1, 8, 15 and 22  
at 7:00 p.m.  
Holden Evening Prayer

**Advent Two:** Sunday, December 5:  
Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.  
*Sunday School at 9:35 a.m.*

**Advent Three:** Sunday, December 12:  
Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.  
*Sunday School at 9:35 a.m.*  
*FLC Soul Squad at 9:35 a.m.*

**Advent Four:** Sunday, December 19:  
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.

*Christmas Eve*

**Friday, 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 26**  
One worship service at 9:30 a.m.

*Come and Worship!*

*Come, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come*

**Pastor Beth's  
Reflections**  
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**Advent**  
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**Adult Opportunities**  
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**“Children First”  
Christian Preschool**  
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Advent is the time of year when it seems everything speeds up but also slows down in life. Advent is a time of both preparing for Christmas—the busy-ness of finding gifts, making plans, holiday parties and family gatherings, travelling or hosting, decorating, and cooking—and Advent is a time of waiting for Christmas—enjoying an evening relaxing with loved ones, holiday parties with time to catch up, playing with the new toys gifted during the holiday season, enjoying well cooked meals, and snacking on treats only found once a year. Advent is a month of getting ready and waiting for Christmas Day to come.

In the time before Jesus was born, God’s people were going through difficult times themselves. God’s people found times of great joy, but also times of grief and mourning for their lives and for the world around them. They were waiting and hoping for a savior to rescue them from oppression, injustice and violence. *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.”* Isaiah 9:2

In the midst of these times of waiting and hoping for a savior, came time for God to come to join us on earth—Emmanuel, God-With-Us. A faithful woman, Mary knew God’s intention and love for the world. She celebrated her pregnancy by singing, *“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, he has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”* Luke 1

When Zachariah met baby Jesus in the temple, he praised God saying, *“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”* Luke 1

Mary and Elizabeth, Anna and Zachariah, and all God’s people were looking and hoping, preparing and waiting for the coming Savior, the Prince of peace and mighty counselor. The busy-ness of preparing for the birth of a baby, the waiting patiently for the labor pains to come and the baby to be ready to be born.

For Advent we have a theme hymn that we will sing each Sunday morning, titled “All The Earth Is Hopeful.” The first verse says, *“All earth is hopeful, the Savior comes at last! Furrows lie open for God's creative task: this, the labor of people who struggle to see how God's truth and justice set ev'rybody free.”*

This Advent and Christmas season, as we wait and prepare for the birth of our Savior again this year, my hope and prayer for you is that you can live into this advent season of waiting and preparing, to then celebrate the birth of Baby Jesus. There is a list that we can make of reasons for despair, suffering, and injustice – both personal and for our world. My prayer is that just like Mary and Zachariah, you can sing praises to God knowing that God-With-Us comes alongside us in suffering and injustice, promising to work so the world will see an end to injustice and live in peace.

**~ Pastor Beth**



**Advent Wednesday Worship  
December 1, 8, 15 and 22 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 Craft Sale  
Saturday, December 4  
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!



**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 Angie in the church office by Monday, December 20.



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

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

**Church Office and Building is closed on  
Monday, December 27 and Friday, December 31.**

## Worship and Music – Advent 2021

*written by Becky Nelson, Director of Music*

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### Be Kind

When I was out and about this week, I drove through a nearby neighborhood. In the front yards of many houses was a small sign. “Be Kind” said each sign. That was it, no pictures, no flowers, even the lettering was pretty plain. But the message was there – “Be Kind”. Do you find it interesting that we need a sign to remind us to be kind? I do.

November 28<sup>th</sup> was the first Sunday of Advent – the Sunday of Hope. The Sundays in Advent have a variety of themes – some traditions call them “Hope”, “Peace”, “Love”, and “Joy”. Some use “Faith” instead of “Hope”. There are many other variations on the Advent theme of “waiting” and what we are “waiting for”.

This year the many themes of Advent are especially poignant. Our world, our neighborhoods and even our families are increasingly polarized. It’s hard not to get caught up in negativity and lose sight of hope, peace, love and especially joy.

Join us for Advent Sunday worship and our midweek Holden Evening Prayer service as we focus on the message that Jesus brings to us, a message of hope, peace, love and joy and yes, to “be kind”.

In worship yesterday we sang “Each Winter as the Year Grows Older”. Verse 3 is especially meaningful.

“Yet I believe beyond believing,  
That life can sprig from death:  
That growth can flower from our grieving;  
That we can catch our breath  
And turn transfixed by faith.”  
Words by William Gay



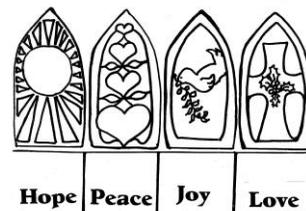
### Winter Youth Retreats at Luther Crest Bible Camp

Come for a great weekend of winter fun with your friends and counselors at Luther Crest. We will lodge in cabins, dive into the Bible by looking deeper into what it means to build up our faith on our firm foundation in Christ, play outside, worship together, drink hot cocoa around a fire, and more! Don’t miss this chance to be back at camp!

**Grades 3-6 weekend** is Friday-Sunday, January 14-16, 2022. Cost is \$150.00 per camper (\$50 non-refundable deposit).

**Grades 6-9 weekend** is Friday-Sunday, January 21-23, 2022. Cost is \$150.00 per camper (\$50 non-refundable deposit).

Parents to register your child or children for this fun event please visit,  
<https://www.luthercrest.org/winter-youth-retreats.html> - for more information or questions, please contact the church office, 632-6667.





## 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 Angie 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 online, 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. Thank you for your support!

### 2021 Giving

The last date for offerings received to be credited for the year 2021 is Friday, December 31, 2021. Thank you for your faithful giving throughout the year.

## 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 every other Wednesday each month (December 1, 15, and 29) 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 the church office.

### Prayer Shawl Group

Do you enjoy knitting or crocheting? Come for fun and fellowship—bring a friend and your helping hands! We are making prayer shawls and baptismal shawls. We meet the second Monday of every month at 1:00 p.m. at the church – our next time is Monday, December 13. If someone you know could use the comforting hug of a prayer shawl, please contact the church office.

### Quilters Group

Meets every Thursday morning at 9:00 a.m. The group welcomes anyone (women or men) who would like to use their hands in service to others. You do not need to be skilled at sewing! We iron, cut, pattern, sew, tie, and fold. Some of the members sew at home. There are a variety of ways to serve. The group meets until 11:30 a.m. We share stories over coffee and treats and have a great time. We accept cotton sheets and cotton material in good condition. Questions? Contact Pat Moller, 320-630-4880.

### Drive-Thru Holy Communion



We will have Holy Communion available via drive thru at the church on:

Sunday, December 5 from 9:45 – 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, December 19 from 9:45 – 10:30 a.m.

If you are unable to be present at one of these times and would like to receive Holy Communion, please contact the church office to make other arrangements, 632-6667.

## 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!

### Thanksgiving Offerings

The church council has designated the offering received on Thanksgiving be given to those in need outside of the congregation. Gifts will be shared with the Morrison County Chaplaincy Program and Oasis Central Minnesota. Your gifts assist us in providing Christian caring in a multitude of ways. Thank you for your generous giving!

### 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.

### Can Care Collection

Keep saving those aluminum cans! Place your cans next to the garage in a securely tied bag.  
Save a can – Save the earth –  
Save our youth budget! Keep those cans coming! Thank you!

### Love Box Project

Love Boxes will be delivered to area residents who are in need of some Christmas cheer!

Members of First Lutheran are invited to supply items for the Love Boxes. Please label items – “Love Box” Here are some suggested items for this year’s Love Boxes:

- Bottled water
- Large print word search books
- Men or women’s socks
- Hard candies or small chocolates

All items should be turned in by Sunday, December 5. Thank you for sharing your love. For more information, please contact Linda Mueller, 320-632-2654.



### 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 donated food items or products to the Morrison County Food Shelf.
- ☞ 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!

## Confirmation Ministries

**Second, Third, and Fourth Grades: Looking-ahead** - Three-week class on Holy Communion for students and their parents/guardians. Class is on Wednesdays, January 5, 12, and 19 at 7:00 p.m. Students who wish to receive communion as a class can plan to do this at Maundy Thursday worship, April 14, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. Letters have been mailed to families, please call the church office if you did not receive a letter or for more information.

**Fourth Grade: Looking ahead** – Four -week class on Holy Baptism begins Wednesday, February 2 and meets each week thru February 23, at 7:00 p.m. Letters have been mailed to students. If your family did not receive a letter or for more information, contact the church office, 632-6667.

**Fifth Grade:** Class on Stewardship ended on Wednesday, November 10. Thank you to Nancy Ratzloff for teaching this class.

**Sixth Grade:** Class on Created in God’s Image concluded on Wednesday, November 17. Thank you to Annalee VanDenheuevel for leading this class.

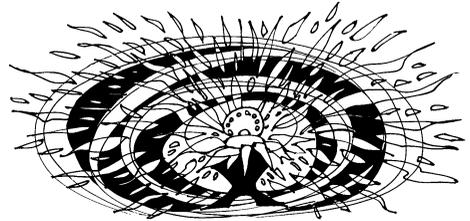
**Seventh and Eighth Grade:** Class will resume on Wednesday, January 5, at 7:00 p.m. **Mentor/Mentee Gatherings** are Wednesdays, January 5, February 2, and April 20.

### FLC Soul Squad

*(for 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Grades)*

Come at 9:35 a.m. on Sunday, December 12! Meet in the Youth Room and we will make ornaments for those who might need more cheer this Christmas, play games, and have fun!

## Sunday School Christmas Program “Living Word” Sunday, December 19, 3:00 p.m.



*Oh, that birth forever blessed*

Sunday School Christmas Program “Living Word” is Sunday, December 19, 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.

## Sunday Morning Education Ministry

Thank you to everyone who participated and taught or lead Sunday School this fall.

We begin rehearsing for the Christmas Program, “Living Word” on Sunday, December 5. 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. Sunday School sessions are available for youth beginning at age 3 through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. All youth meet in a classroom setting. Preschool and Pre-kindergarten meet in the Ruth/Naomi Classroom. Kindergarten and First grade will meet in Sarah Room. Second and Third graders will meet in Saul/Paul Room, and Fourth and Fifth grades will meet in Abraham Room.

## Parish Nurse News

Tracy Moe, RN Parish Nurse

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### How to Rely on your Faith during hard times

We have all done hard things. I have buried a pet, I have biked 100 hilly miles in the rain in a day, I have had knee surgery, I have hiked over 15 miles in the woods, I have worked at a children's shelter amongst many other difficult things I have done in my life. I have not lived a year and half or more under pandemic conditions quite like this before. It's hard. It seems every day I hear of a story of someone ill, someone in the hospital, someone who has passed or someone that is stuck in their house for two weeks due to Covid. It's difficult and it takes a toll on a person in various ways. It is during these times where I especially look to God for help and guidance. We all need to take time to reflect on how our faith guides us during these difficult times.

1. Maintain your faith at all times.
  - Schedule prayer time and worship a part of your day.
  - Find a daily devotion.
  - Download an app that helps you read the Word of God.
  - Watch our recorded service or attend in person.
2. Find practices that bring you peace.
  - Pray daily.
  - Read the Bible.
  - Take a walk.
  - Call a friend.
  - Do a craft.
  - Sip a cup of coffee.
3. Lay your struggles before God.
  - Lay your troubles at the feet of Jesus. Struggling allows us to grow.
  - If you cannot give it to Him, work on that relationship.
  - Have a conversation with God.

4. Rely on your support systems.
  - Find someone that will listen to you.
  - We all need love, support, kindness, hope and confidence.
5. Find the good.
  - Have a heart of gratitude.
  - Start a journal of thankfulness.
  - We need laughter, read a funny book.
  - And just remember, God is bigger than Covid.

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore we will not fear...Psalm 46:1-2*

osfhealthcare.org

### Caregiver Support Group

The caregiver support group will meet Thursday, December 2 at Sprout Market from 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. (noon) for the "Soul Food-Cooking with Caregivers" class. These sessions are sponsored by Horizon Health. The class is offered for anyone for \$5.00 per person and includes all ingredients and containers for a dinner for two. Please contact Tracy Moe at 320-282-5928 if you plan to attend or for more info.



Free blood pressure screenings on Sunday, December 19, 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. in the library at First Lutheran Church. Screenings will be offered for all ages and given by Tracy Moe and Whitney Habas. If you have any questions, please contact Parish Nurse, Tracy Moe at 320-282-5928.

## “Children First” Christian Preschool

Greetings!

“Children First” Christian Preschool has been busy this past November. We learned about our Five Senses, Nutrition and Healthy Bodies/Food and we talked “Turkey”. Please visit our Art Gallery hallways, next to the church kitchen and around the corner from the restrooms to see our preschool art and happenings. We love to share our artistic gifts with all!

All are invited to celebrate with “Children First” preschoolers at the Preschool’s Christmas Program on Tuesday, December 21, 10:30am-11:30am in the First Lutheran Church sanctuary! We will enjoy a light lunch following the program! We are looking forward to sharing Christmas joy with everyone!

Our last day of Preschool for 2021 will be December 21st. We will enjoy a Christmas Break while the staff prepares the classroom for the New Year. Preschool classes resume school January 3, 2022.

“Children First” Gifting Campaign has begun. We have set a fundraising goal of \$3000.00. 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 future field trip bussing. If you would like to participate in our campaign by sending letters, contributing or would like more information, please contact me.

Coborns/Cashwise More Rewards Program points has been an opportunity to secure funding for preschool by many! Please sign up 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 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



Carter Eugene Stoner, son of Keith and Lynn Stoner, was baptized on November 21.

Milo Robert Martinson, son of Adam and Kathryn Martinson, was baptized on November 28.

Welcome to the family of God!



Items for the **January NEWSLETTER** are due on **December 15, 2021!**



**Annual Meeting — Sunday, January 30, 2022**

*Following the 10:30 a.m. service*

# First Lutheran Church

*Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*  
2100 Riverview Drive  
Little Falls, Minnesota 56345-4402

**First...  
Servants of All!**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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