

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Jake Dyrhaug, Pastor

FIRST

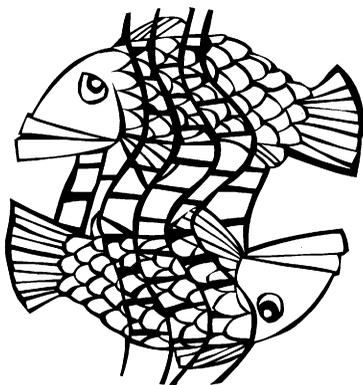
“Servants of All”

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February 2019, Newsletter

January 29, 2019



Epiphany means “manifestation.” In the church year, we celebrate the Epiphany of Our Lord on January 6. On this day we celebrate the revelation of Christ to the Gentiles—that is, to all nations, as the Magi are led to Bethlehem by the light of the star.

In the weeks that follow, this year through the Sundays of January and February, the scripture texts reveal Jesus as the beloved Son of God as he is baptized in the waters of the Jordan. Through this epiphany, Jesus fulfills all righteousness and becomes the servant of God who will be a light to the nations. In the waters of baptism, we are anointed by the Spirit, and are named God’s beloved children.

Jesus then begins his public ministry by calling the fishermen to leave their nets and follow him. In Jesus the kingdom of God has come near. We who have walked in darkness have seen a great light. Light dawns for us as we gather around the word, the font, and the holy table. By this epiphany we are sent to share the good news that others may be caught in the net of God’s grace and mercy.

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There’s something about snow that gives new appearance to the world around us. I like the occasional ads for vacationing on a Caribbean island, I have to admit, as we dream about the warm sun. But then again, if you happen to like snow, it’s great to be in Minnesota where we have that wonderful white stuff. It really is beautiful. And this year, we finally have some! Snow has a way of covering up the dirty, grungy effects of things and blanketing the landscape with a new freshness. Lining my driveway are these brilliant white borders of snow. Weighing down the bows of the spruce trees in a gracious manner, is snow. You can fight it and shovel it and grumble at it sometimes, or you can enjoy it and ski and snowshoe on it and make snow forts and snowpeople out of it.

It’s interesting to think about a writer of psalms in ancient Israel/Palestine reflecting on the qualities of snow. As Psalm 51:7 prays, “...Wash me, Oh Lord, and I shall be whiter than snow.” We might not normally think someone at that location and latitude on the Mediterranean would know about snow. But it does fall there sometimes, especially up on Mt. Hermon where they even ski north of the Sea of Galilea—imagine Jesus and the disciples heading down the slopes—possible, but something you don’t think of every day. That would make a great t-shirt design. For the psalmist, imagine what an event a snowfall was, when he or she didn’t see it fall that often.

What are those things in your life you wish could be covered up, blanketed by God’s forgiveness and given a totally new appearance like new snow? What sins do you feel bad about? What is the dirt of the landscape you’d just as soon see covered in white? That’s what Jesus came to do. When we come to him in sincere repentance, saying we are sorry for our sins, asking for his forgiveness, there is nothing that cannot be covered with the newly fallen snow of God’s grace. Whether you are here

in central Minnesota in the winter or in a warmer climate for a couple months, let the snow of a winter landscape give you a unique perspective and assurance of just how much God can take your sin and give you a totally new self—as fresh, as clean and as white as the newly fallen snow.

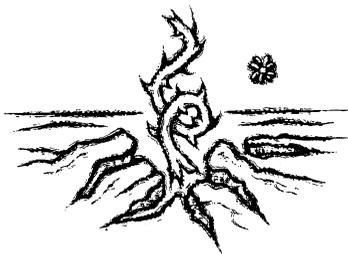
Your Servant in Christ,

Pastor Jake Dyrhaug

First Lutheran Leadership Retreat
Saturday, February 9
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Council members, staff ministry team, all in congregational leadership positions and anyone interested is invited to this day of fellowship and conversation. We will gather here at First Lutheran Church. Pastor Jake will facilitate discussion and review of our goals which were articulated at the 2018 retreat, including progress toward these goals and where God is leading us in relation to these goals. Lunch will be provided. To register, contact the church office by Wednesday, February 6 so that we can provide lunch for all.





Lent 2019

**begins on Ash Wednesday, March 6
at First Lutheran Church**

**Soup Supper served at 5:30 p.m.
7:00 p.m. Worship with Holy Communion
and Imposition of Ashes**

With ash and soot we begin the Lenten season with confession; we begin with Psalm 51. Today this ancient prayer placed on our lips becomes new again: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions."

As we confess our unfaithfulness to God, our lackluster love for our neighbors, our neglect of suffering and injustice in the world, we ask God to wash us, to purge us, to create in us clean

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

*Adapted from Evangelical Lutheran Worship, pg. 87,
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Council Highlights

- ✦ Council, staff, and others interested will participate in a leadership long-range planning retreat on Saturday, February 9 at the church.
- ✦ Council expressed thanks to outgoing members Dave Buker, Katie Riitters, Sue Salvog, and Marlene Williams for their service.
- ✦ Heard that Sunday School is recruiting grade leaders/shepherds for 2nd and 5th grades.

Worship Serving Opportunities Signup for 2019

Each Sunday, many worshipers come to worship at First Lutheran. Your servant hands are an integral part of providing hospitality to all who enter here. Stop at the table in the Gathering Space to offer your gifts in service to Christ's body at First Lutheran. Serving areas are greeters, ushers, scripture readers, communion ministry, child care, coffee hospitality. You can sign up for a time that fits your schedule. Sign up now for February. Training for each serving ministry is available—please ask in the church office!

We will devote space in the newsletter in the coming months with information about the various serving ministries. You may want to try something new!

Signup sheets are posted now. Thanks for being *First...Servants of All.*

Child Care

We are continually grateful for the little ones in our midst! As we are currently without a staff Child Care Attendant, we welcome persons 18 or older to serve as a child care volunteer. This opportunity is primarily during Sunday worship. If this serving interests you, please contact the church office.

Adult Opportunities

Ministry Team Opportunities

The community of faith at First Lutheran has many opportunities for folks in the congregation to be involved. Leadership roles were recently filled by election at the congregational annual meeting (*see the abbreviated annual report on pages 5 and 6*). Adult members are also encouraged to be involved with the seven ministry teams that keep mission and ministry strong and vibrant here. The seven teams areas are: Worship and Music, Education, Youth, Mission, Congregational Life, Facilities and Property, and Health. Consider whether you can share time and talent by serving on one of the teams. Please pray for the teams and the work of ministry and mission that God has called us to do in this place. Contact the church office or Pastor Jake for more information.

Women's Martha Circle

The Martha Circle meets Monday, February 11, at 9:30 a.m. at the church.

Men's Bible Study Breakfast

All men of the congregation and friends are invited to a Men's Bible Breakfast study. The study meets Wednesdays, February 6 and 20—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 Pastor Jake.

Afternoon Adult Bible Study Wednesdays, February 13 and 27 1:00 p.m.

All are welcome to this study led by Pastor Hank French. The study focuses on various topics, currently we are discussing the mysteries of the faith. Come for study and discussion.

Book Club

The February selection is The Great Alone by Kristin Hannah. The group meets Tuesday, February 26 at 7:00 p.m. in the church library. For more information, call Tifanii Dahl, 632-8207.

Men in Mission Retreat Saturday, February 23

8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

First Lutheran Church, Brainerd

Mark your calendars for this men's retreat in Brainerd. Keynote speaker on Saturday is Rev. Dr. Mark Tranvik, Professor of Religion at Augsburg University, Minneapolis. You may remember that Rev. Tranvik led this congregation's vision planning retreat last February at Luther Crest Bible Camp. Breakout sessions will include topics such as, lake stewardship and shoreline care, leadership, coaching and mentoring, and estate planning and legacy giving. Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. Attenders may want to attend a pre-retreat hymnsing and pubfest on Friday, February 22, from 7:00-9:00 p.m. If you would like to attend, please speak to Pastor Jake.

Creation, Church, and You—Earth-keeping Practically Speaking

Saturday, March 30, 9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Brainerd

The NE MN Synod EcoFaith Network leadership team presents this workshop to assist congregations with integrating care of creation throughout all of the congregation's activities. First Lutheran would like to send a team to this event, if you have a passion for creation care and would like to attend please contact the church office. Thank you!

Mini Annual Report First Lutheran Church

The Annual Meeting of First Lutheran Church was held on Sunday, January 27, 2019. Thanks to all who made this meeting a priority! This “mini-report” is provided to help inform you of the important decisions made at this year’s Annual Meeting and to give highlights from the Annual Report. The complete Annual Report is available in the church gathering space.

A few of the many ways that First Lutheran’s commissions and you were servants during the past year:

Serving together in mission:

- ✚ Provided in-kind giving through personal care kits, school backpacks, and Christmas gifts
- ✚ Support of local agencies: Morrison County Food Shelf, Habitat for Humanity, Oasis Central Minnesota
- ✚ Increased financial support to the wider church through the ELCA

Serving together in worship and praise:

- ✚ Vibrant worship using a variety of services and weekly holy communion
- ✚ Midweek worship during Lent and Advent

Serving together in faith formation:

- ✚ Supported “Children First” Christian Preschool in their 18th year of operation
- ✚ Held Vacation Bible School cooperatively with local congregations
- ✚ Supported 9 youth and 2 adults attending the ELCA National Youth Gathering
- ✚ 15 Students affirmed their faith on Reformation Sunday

Serving together thru our building and grounds:

- ✚ Provided meeting space to over 25 non-profit community organizations
- ✚ Maintaining the building and grounds with needed replacements/upgrades

Statistical Reports

Baptized Membership (January 1, 2019)	1,124	Baptisms	20
Confirmed Membership (January 1, 2019)	803	Affirmation of Baptism/Confirmation	15
New Members Received	46	Marriages	4
Transferred Out	5	Funerals	9
Average Worship Attendance	2018 – 198		

Summary Notes from Congregational Annual Meeting

Not Official Minutes

President David Buker, declared a Quorum and called the meeting to order.

Elected to the Church Council were: Carol Anderson, Steve Jones, Carl Rydeen, and Sue Sylvester each to a 3-year term.

Craig Ahlin, Jeff Bigalke, and Ruth Jeremiason-Jensen were elected as the congregational representatives for the Nominating Committee.

The Heartland Conference Gathering is Sunday, February 10 at Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Baxter; the NE MN Synod Assembly is May 3-5, 2019 at Duluth. Voting members are: Ruth Jeremiason-Jensen and the incoming council president if male, alternates are Bob and Linda Mueller.

The Luther Crest Bible Camp annual meeting is October 5, 2019. Voting members are Jeff Bigalke, and Dale Gohl.

Debra Yliniemi-Ahlin was elected as First Lutheran’s representative for the “His Hands and Feet” Stumpf Memorial Scholarship Committee.

The 2019 Mission Plan was approved as presented.

The new Council met briefly, officers were elected, they are: President, Barb Stumpf, Vice-President, Kerry Olson, Secretary, Tifanii Dahl, Treasurer, Jennifer Schott.

Excerpts from the Treasurer's Report

First Lutheran Church was blessed with generous donations in 2018. Thank you for your faithful support both in your commitment of time and financial support.

2018 Mission Plan – actual receipts toward operations were \$366,786. Thank you! Operating expenses were \$389,578, resulting in a deficit of \$22,792 for 2018. These amounts are exclusive of “Children First” Christian Preschool.

This will be our sixth year of our mortgage loan with ELCA Mission Investment Fund (MIF). Our original principal amount was \$569,303 with an interest rate of 3.875% adjusting after 5 years. On April 1, 2018 the rate adjusted to 4.00% and lowered our regular monthly payment to \$2,698.03; however we continued to make the higher payment as previously, resulting in additional principal payments of \$2,410.29. We also received a special offering on Pentecost Sunday and received an additional \$4,682.85 which we applied to the principal of the mortgage! As of December 31, 2018, the mortgage principal balance was \$434,013.

Mission Plan 2019: The Mission Plan proposal for 2019 projects giving of \$409,511. The projected expenses are \$409,689. These amounts are exclusive of preschool.

Thank you for your many additional gifts, both in-kind for various ministries and projects around our church home, and \$1,877 received from special offerings which included \$1,000 for the Oasis Central Minnesota homelessness project.

You provided supplies for 100 personal care kits during Lent. Vacation Bible School children filled over 75 backpacks with school supplies for schools. You gave dollars and in-kind gifts to over 100 area families in need through the Angel Tree. Your continuous giving of time, talents, financial and unseen support for all those in need both in our local community and around the world is amazing.

It has been a great year at First Lutheran and I look forward to another great year in 2019.

God's blessings,

Jennifer Schott, Treasurer

2018 Income and Expense Report and 2019 Proposed Mission Plan

	2018 Mission Plan	2018 Actual	2019 Plan Variance	2019 Mission Plan
Total Giving	402,300	366,786	35,514	409,511
Preschool	25,590	18,676	6,914	17,210
Total Income	427,890	385,462	42,428	426,721
Expenses				
Pastoral Ministry	121,556	120,856	700	125,895
Lay Staff	149,796	148,032	1,764	158,693
Administrative Expense	22,851	20,360	2,491	22,201
Worship and Music	3,850	4,736	(886)	3,850
Congregational Life	4,720	3,739	981	4,470
Facilities and Property	36,485	33,325	3,160	32,150
Debt Service	35,590	35,590	-	35,590
Health	300	286	14	300
Education	3,900	3,102	798	3,700
Youth	5,010	970	4,040	4,010
Mission and Stewardship	18,830	18,482	348	18,830
Total Expense before Preschool	402,888	389,478	13,410	409,689
Preschool	25,590	20,275	5,315	17,210
Total Expense	428,478	409,753	18,725	426,899
Deficit/Surplus	(588)	(24,291)	23,703	(178)

Ice Skating Day
Sunday, February 17
1:00 p.m.

Get your ice skates sharpened and come out to increase your heart rate at the Little Falls Lindbergh Lions west side skating rink. The rink is located on 2nd Avenue SW and 9th Street SW. The warming house opens at 1:00 p.m. All ages are welcome, come and bring a friend and enjoy the ice. It's a Minnesota thing!



Tear Soup for the Grieving
Monday, February 25
5:00-7:00 p.m.

If you or someone you know has experienced the loss of a loved one, you are invited to this gathering time to share a warm bowl of soup, hot bread, and a place to share stories together. There will be a memorial craft for us all to do as well. All are welcome. Bring a friend. Watch for a signup when you are at worship, or contact the church office at 632-6667. Please RSVP by Friday, February 22 so that food and craft supplies are available for all.

Find and Seek:

Do you know where the church AED (Automated External Defibrillator) is located in the church building? How about the kitchen first aid kit? I challenge you to find both of these items. When you do, drop Tracy Moe a note in her church mailbox with your name and you will receive a prize. An AED can save lives!

Concordia Chapel Choir
Thursday, March 21

Exciting news! First Lutheran will host the Concordia College Chapel Choir tour on Thursday, March 21. The choir will provide an evening concert for the community here at First Lutheran. There will be a few familiar faces in the choir! The congregation will provide supper and overnight housing for 79 students in host homes. If you are able to host students in your home, please contact the church office with number of students you can accommodate (2, 3, or 4) and whether or not your home has dogs or cats. Host homes will be asked to provide breakfast to the students and return students to church on Friday morning for departure on the next leg of their tour. We will also be recruiting for assistance in providing and serving the evening meal here at church. Mark your calendar and plan to attend and consider how you can assist with this event. Contact the church office for more information. Thank you!



"Children First" Christian Preschool Update

We are one month into a new year with only four months left of Preschool. Wow, does time fly quickly! January classroom themes included: Snow and Polar Animals, A, B, C's/1,2,3's, Ocean Fun and Dinosaurs. Please check out our artwork hanging in the education wing hallways. February fun is planned with Dental Health, Valentine's/Friends, and "I Love to Read" weeks. We are looking for volunteers to come into the classrooms and read to the preschoolers. Contact teacher Jessica Gustafson, if you are interested in volunteering your time and talents!

Thank you to everyone contributing to the 2018-19 Gifting Campaign. This campaign is our main source of fundraising for "Children First." Contributions support our outreach ministry partnership with Little Falls Health Services/Bridgeway Estates. We use the contributions to pay for bussing along with shared materials and art supplies. The residents look forward each month to our arrival. They enjoy the relationship-building and time they spend with the preschoolers. Thrivent Action Team® opportunities along with a small amount of online homework have also provided "Children First" with funds this past year. If you are a Thrivent member who would like to support "Children First" with an Action Team opportunity, please contact Gail.

"Children First" Christian Preschool continues to collect Coborn's/Cashwise points/dollars. These points are electronically collected if you are a "MORE Rewards" member at Coborn's/Cashwise. Points are gathered when you purchase Food Club brand or other Coborn's branded products and Coborn's then totals these points and distributes cash to support our Preschool. Sign up for "MORE Rewards" at any Coborn's or Cashwise store or <https://www.coborns.com/>. Once you sign up or if you are already a member, login and choose "Manage My Membership." Search "Children

First" Christian Preschool, move the toggle switch to green and select "done."

Planning for the 2019-20 Preschool year is underway. Current preschool families and First Lutheran Church members should watch for registration forms in late February early March with Community Registration to begin the middle of March. Visitors are always welcome. Please contact Gail or the church office if you are interested or would like more information. Registration for the current 2018-19 Preschool year continues as well. Families interested in the "Children First" program may register and begin attending anytime throughout the preschool year as space is available. Registration forms are available on the counter in the First Lutheran Church gathering space or by calling the church office (320) 632-6667.

Each new day brings the gift of life and learning from God who created us. Each new day brings smiles and laughter from the some of the youngest in our midst. Thank you, Preschool families, for sharing your children with us. Our hope is that the gifts we share with them will be a lifetime of learning and God's love. Blessings!

Yours in Christ's Service,

Gail Hittesdorf, Director

"Teach a child how he should live, and he will remember it all his life" Proverbs 22:6



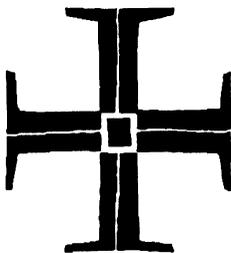
When to Contact the Church Office:

320-632-6667

email: firstserv@fclittlefalls.org

-  When you or a family member is hospitalized or will be hospitalized.
-  When there is a birth or death in the family.
-  When there is a crisis.
-  When you change your address or telephone number.
-  When new neighbors move in near you and they are looking for a church home.
-  When you have good news to share.
-  When you have a suggestion to make or a concern to share, you can contact a council member or a member of the Pastor Parish Relations Team.

Pastor and lay visitors are available to call on you and walk with you in sadness and joy.



Worship Schedule

- 8:30 a.m. Traditional Worship using a variety of liturgical settings.
- 9:35 a.m. Sunday School
- 10:30 a.m. Contemporary Worship led by a Praise Band

Holy Communion at all Sunday services.

Items for the **March NEWSLETTER** are due on **February 20, 2019!**