

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Ministers: All God's People at FLC

Hank French, Pastor



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January, 2020 Newsletter

December 27, 2019

First Lutheran Church

Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 26, 2020

Following the 10:30 a.m. Service

Share a fellowship meal – child care will be provided

- Election of Council members, voting members, and other leadership positions
- Adoption of 2020 Mission Plan
- Annual Reports

The following leadership positions will be elected at the annual meeting. If you or someone you know would like to be considered for serving please contact the Nominating Committee or the church office.

Church Council:

Five individuals each to a 3-year term –

Lay voting members to

Heartland Conference Gathering, Sunday, February 9, at First Lutheran Church, Aitkin

NE Minnesota Synod Assembly, Friday-Sunday, May 1-3, 2020
at DECC Center, Duluth

Two voting members, and two alternates to be elected

Lay voting members to

Luther Crest Bible Camp Annual Meeting, Saturday, October 3, 2020:
Two voting members to be elected

2020 Nominating Committee: *three members to be elected*

Stumpf Memorial Scholarship:

One person to coordinate a group of five to select scholarship recipients

Please plan to attend this important meeting. Share in a fellowship lunch following the 10:30 a.m. service. Child care will be provided. Annual Reports will be available at the church for review before the Annual Meeting.

Worship Life

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Pastor Hank's Article

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**Adult
Opportunities**

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Parish Nurse News

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Notes from Pastor Hank:

As I write this, we are only five days away from Christmas Eve. As we journeyed through Advent we were blessed by wonderful Sunday worship thanks to Becky Nelson's thoughtful worship planning, Sue Gustner's careful attention to detail, Barb Stumpf and the Grace Notes Choir's many gifts of music and the commitment of the many women, men and children who volunteer each Sunday to enhance our worship experience. My thanks to you all for all you do so well.

Five years ago, on Christmas Eve, I shared a story with you in my sermon that illustrated why God became one of us in Jesus. Let me share it with you again.

Let me invite you to ponder—and perhaps enter into—the mystery of Christmas by telling a brief story that illumines a question that has been asked for some 2000 years: Why? Why did God become one of us?

Somewhere in rural America, a woman and her daughter prepare to set off for the 11:00 p.m. Christmas Eve candlelight worship at their small country church. She asks her husband to join them, but as usual his answer is “No.”

He just doesn't see the point of it; so he will stay home, sit in his easy chair and read. As he stands in the doorway to watch his wife and daughter walk to the church, which is only a few blocks away, he can see that the wind is rising and it is starting to snow heavily.

While sitting by the fireplace, reading the day's newspaper, the man hears a dull thud against the window. He opens the curtains, and he can see that the snow has intensified, and the wind has picked up. A blizzard is brewing.

As he peers into the snow and wind-swept yard, he can see a whole flock of birds clinging desperately to the branches in the bushes around the edges of the yard. One of them had flown into his window, perhaps seeking shelter from the storm, and now lay dead on the ground, almost buried by the quickly drifting snow.

The birds seem disoriented by the violence of the storm. He can see that they will be in serious trouble if they don't find shelter. The man's heart goes out to them. He knows that in this winter violence they will die if they don't find food and warmth, if they don't find a safe haven.

Then it occurs to him that perhaps he can help. He has a barn that might offer them shelter from the storm. So, he puts on his jacket and boots, goes outside, and fights against the wind and whirling snow to reach the barn. He pulls the barn doors wide open and puts on a light, hoping to attract the birds inside to safety.

But they won't come. They huddle on the branches or fly in highly erratic circles in the strengthening wind.

The man has deep compassion for the endangered birds, and he waves his arms to get their attention and shouts at them to come into safety. But still they will not come. His compassion goes unnoticed. He only succeeds in frightening them. You see, birds don't understand human words, or human behavior, or human motives, or human love.

In despair the man watches the endangered birds being buffeted by the cold wind and whipping snow. “I wish,” he thinks. “I wish that I could become a bird, that I could become one of them, even if only for a short while, so that I could meet them in the storm and lead them into the barn and safety. So I could show them that I am not a threat to them; that I care for them and their wellbeing; that I mean only to offer them life.”

Just then, through the whistling wind, he hears the church bells ringing, announcing the birth of Jesus, the disclosure of God as love and compassion. A smile spreads slowly across his face—he finally gets it; he finally knows why God became one of us; he finally understands that God wanted to speak to us in a language we could understand. A tear runs down his cheek, and he begins walking through the storm toward the church where

welcoming candlelight glows in the darkness of Christmas Eve.

God comes to us as one of us. For love of us, God became human. May you know the depth and richness of that love this Christmas season and throughout the New Year.

Pastor Hank



Council Highlights

- Planning for the congregational Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 26.
- Heard that the window purchased with Pentecost Celebration offering gifts was installed in the Ruth/Naomi Room on December 6.
- Thanksgiving Eve offering of \$560 was gifted to the Oasis Central Minnesota homelessness project and to the Morrison County Food Shelf. Thank you!
- Please keep the council members in your prayers as work continues on the congregation's pastoral vacancy.
- Thank you to Pastor Hank French for walking with the congregation during the transition.



Worship Serving Opportunities Signup for 2020

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 counter 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 January and February. The congregation has a number of active members who are winter 'snowbirds' and away during these months. Perhaps you could serve in a new way that interests you. You will be called as needed. 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*.

Greeters

Where do we begin? Ministry begins at the front door as we enter and exit the house of God. Greeters serve as the first point of contact for first-time worshipers, and for others who may seek us out for ministry. Greeters help us to be a congregation that is a good host.

The goal of our "Ministry of Greeting" is to help God's people experience First Lutheran as a place of welcome and compassion. We want to grow disciples and provide a church home for those in search of one. Through this ministry, first-time worshipers who feel welcomed will often become active participants.

Thank you to all who serve in this important way.



Adult Opportunities

Men's Bible Study Breakfast

All men of the congregation and friends are invited to a Men's Bible Study Breakfast. This study meets for breakfast on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 a.m. at the church. We meet on January 8 and 22. All are welcome – come when you are able, leave when you must.

Book Club

All adult readers are welcome to read with this group. The next selection is The All-Girl Filling Station's Last Reunion by Fannie Flagg. Readers, please secure your own copy of this book. The group will meet in the church library at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 28, to share and discuss the book. The February selection is The Space Between by Dete Meserve. For more info contact Tifanii Dahl, 632-8207.

Women's Martha Circle:

The Martha Circle meets Monday, January 13, at 9:30 a.m. at the church. We share Bible study and delicious treats. All are welcome!



Library Corner

In keeping the church library up-to-date, we have on hand some older or duplicate books. Books will be on display during the month of January and are free for the taking. We hope you will help yourself to a good book and find time to curl up and read this winter! Thank you to those who have made donations to the library and those who work to keep the library organized.



Afternoon Bible Study Wednesdays, January 8 and 22

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.

Grief, Loss and Reconnecting Sunday, January 26, 9:35-10:30 a.m.

Those who have experienced the loss of a loved one are welcome to come for this hour of remembering the loved ones we have lost. We will be led by Michelle Roshia, BCC, home care/hospice chaplain with CHI St. Gabriel's Health and Hospice. There will be a short time of sharing about recent loss and then a ritual of reconnection to provide support for all in attendance. You are invited to bring a scarf, or you will be able to purchase a scarf at the session which will benefit The Turkish Scarf project. For more information, contact Tracy Moe, Parish Nurse

Thrivent Choice®: Thank you to all who have designated their Thrivent Choice dollars to First Lutheran Church and to "Children First" Christian Preschool. This year we have seen an increase in the number of Thrivent members who are eligible to donate these funds. Thank you for putting your Thrivent Choice dollars to work in mission and ministry at First Lutheran!

The Season of Epiphany

The Feast of Epiphany is traditionally celebrated on January 6. This is the Twelfth Day of Christmas and commemorates the visit of the Magi to the Christ Child, having been led by the Star of Bethlehem. The word ‘Epiphany’ means “manifestation.” On this day we celebrate the revelation of Christ and his saving grace to the Gentiles—that is, to all nations. Some Christian traditions celebrate three great epiphanies on this day: the magi’s adoration of the Christ child, Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan River, and his first miracle, in which he changes water into wine. The word and sacraments are for us the great epiphany of God’s grace and mercy. Like the light of the star that guided the magi to Jesus, the light of Christ reveals who we are: children of God who are claimed and washed in the waters of baptism. We are sent out to be beacons of the light of Christ, sharing the good news of God’s love to all people!

This year First Lutheran will celebrate the Feast of Epiphany on Sunday, January 5. We will worship on Sunday morning at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Shine your light!



Grace Notes Choir

All singers high school age and up are welcome to sing with this group. We rehearse on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary and sing two or three times per month at the 8:30 a.m. service. Come and use your voice to praise God! For more info, contact director, Barb Stumpf at 632-8372.



Music Opportunities

If you or someone you know would like to share musical gifts please contact Director of Music, Becky Nelson. Opportunities for worship leadership assistant/cantor, instrumental or vocal gifts of music, participation in praise band, and other opportunities are available. You can reach Becky at the church on Wednesday afternoons or at 749-2336.

Thank you!

Thank you to all who had any part in enriching the season of Advent and Christmas here at First Lutheran, and around the community and globe. Whether you provided gifts of service, music, arts, fellowship, wrote or read an Advent devotion, served behind the scenes, and/or were present in worship—all is appreciated.

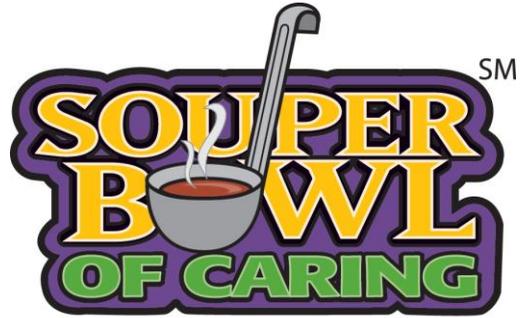
Christmas and New Year’s blessings to All!

✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱ **Mission Life** ✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱✱

Thank you!

- ♥ The Youth Ministry Team thanks everyone who participated in the Advent Craft Sale fundraiser for Youth Ministry. Over \$2,500. was received from sales and donations. Thanks to everyone who donated food, crafts, baked goods and their time in support of this event. Thanks to Thrivent ® for Action Team support. Your generosity is an inspiration!
- ♥ Thank you to all who use their time, talents and treasure to serve one another in ways both small and large. The smallest, quiet act of kindness may make the biggest difference in the life of another. Thank you for all you do daily in the love of our Lord.
- ♥ Thank you for your support of the Angel Tree Project. Because of your caring and commitment, over 100 Morrison County families know the peace of Christ. Thank you for making the difference in the life of a child. Sincerely, Annalee VanDenheuvel
- ♥ Thank you to all who assisted in any way with the weekly Share A Meal that First Lutheran hosted on Thursday, December 19. We served almost 100 folks. It was a great holiday meal!
- ♥ Thank you for your recent donation of \$280 to the Morrison County Food Shelf. Your donation has helped to provide one of the most basic necessities to those in need. These are our friends, neighbors and family. In 2018, we averaged 80 families per week, distributing 7,163 pounds of food per week. Again, thank you, your donation makes a positive difference in the lives of members of our community.
Gina Vetter, MCFS Board President
Marilyn Gulden, MCFS Executive Director

*Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God,
serve one another
with whatever gift each of you has received.
1 Peter 4:10*



tacklehunger.org
Souper Bowl of Caring
Sunday, February 2

Join with others around the nation in a simple act of caring. On Sunday, February 2, youth will hold large soup pots in the Gathering Space and ask worshippers for one-dollar (or greater!) donations to be used for local hunger needs. In 2019, 4,880 groups of young people including those at First Lutheran, received over \$9.7 million in donations which was donated 100% to thousands of local charities! Thanks for your support!

O Eternal God, the beginning and end, you who sustain all things, understand all things, who existed before all things, and who is without end, be with us, remain among us; strengthen our intentions, sanctify our souls and eradicate in us all that is evil. Enable us to make a good sacrifice and pour out your abundant blessings, and so enable us to enter into the holy of holies wherein dwells your presence.

Ethiopian liturgy

Welcome 2020! A new year brings many of us to eat healthier and work out more but what about our spiritual health? Here are some interesting facts about faith and health to ponder:

Researchers Confirm the Healing Power of Faith

A Harvard Study confirms research that has found beneficial health effects from faith.

- ☞ Duke University study found that religiously active people have lower blood pressure.
- ☞ People with religious faith have less mental illness, according to another Duke study.
- ☞ People who attend church once a week or more are less likely to be hospitalized, according to a study published in the Southern Medical Journal.
- ☞ Members of prayer groups have lower heart attack risk, a 2005 study found.

The key to health benefits associated with faith is to make sure you have people near you who care about you.

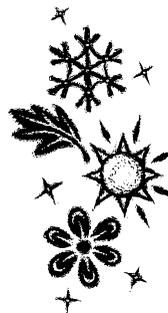
- ☞ Find a loving relationship and stick with it.
- ☞ Support those around you in times of need.
- ☞ Treat your body like a temple. Don't smoke, Drink in moderation if at all. Get plenty of sleep.
- ☞ Regularly give thanks for what you have.

Practicing healthful principles can be done by anyone. Here's to a healthy New Year!



Prayer Chain

For many years First Lutheran prayer chain participants have intentionally prayed for concerns and/or joys of those who request prayer. In the past, prayer concerns were shared via telephone, now most all participants receive requests via email. It is a powerful thing to know that one's requests are being prayed over by others. If you would like to serve and support others through prayer in this way, please contact the church office to be added to this group.



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!

"Children First" Christian Preschool

Greetings,

January is here! December was a month of Christmas preparation and celebration. We enjoyed sharing our Preschool Christmas program with family and friends. We want to say thank you to Miss Jessica and Miss Jodie for leading our program and all their work in preparations.

January will be a busy month! Class will resume on Monday, January 6, 2020. The themes for the month include: Snow and Polar Animals, Dinosaurs, and A,B,C's. Also, please remember our Library Days are on Wednesday and Thursday each week! Our visit to Little Falls Health Services (across from Coborn's) will be on Thursday, January 9 at 10:00 a.m. Please encourage all residents that you know to come to the activities room for singing and socializing!

Parents, grandparents and guardians, please be sure to send those hats, warm coats, boots, snow pants and mittens. The preschoolers go outside on every nice day possible!

"Children First" Christian Preschool accepts registration of Preschoolers throughout the preschool year. A \$50.00 non-refundable registration fee is required along with registration and enrollment paperwork. Class tuition varies based on the number of days per week attending. There is a class that meets each day, Monday – Friday from 8:30-11:30 a.m. You may choose a minimum 2 days up to maximum 5 days per week to attend. Please contact the church office, Jessica Gustafson, Teacher, or Gail Hittesdorf, Director, if you are interested attending or would like more information! All are welcome to experience the fun, the educational activities and the spiritual growth in God's love. Preschoolers currently attending, are welcome to add more days to their preschool week at any time. If your child is 3 and you wish to extend their week, please see Miss Jessica for developmentally ready recommendation.

As always, we thank everyone who has participated in the "Gifting Campaign" thus far. We have a goal of raising \$3,000.00 for our classroom supplies along with support for our outreach ministry to Little Falls Health Services. Thank you to all who have blessed "Children First" Christian Preschool in 2019, with financial giving, giving of time and talents, tuition support and including the school in your prayers. We appreciate you! God's Blessings!

Happy New Year!

Yours in Christ's Service,
Gail Hittesdorf, Director



Confirmation Ministries

Fourth Grade: Four-week class on Holy Baptism meets on Wednesdays, January 8 through January 29, at 7:00 p.m. Families should have received a letter about this class. Students will make a keepsake baptismal banner as a part of this class. A parent, grandparent or guardian is encouraged to help with this project. Thank you to Michelle Dahlberg for teaching this class.

Eighth Grade: class for eighth grade begins on Wednesday, January 8. Letters with the class schedule have been sent to families; if you did not receive a letter or for more information, please contact the church office. Pastor Hank French teaches this class. Bring your Bible, Luther's Small Catechism and your great attitude!

Confirmation Mentor Program:

Students currently in eighth grade will soon be selecting a mentor to share in their life of faith. Adult members are asked to give prayerful consideration to serving as a mentor for a student. Students in eighth grade will be confirmed on Reformation Sunday, October 25, 2020. If you could serve in this important way, please contact the church office.

Can Care Collection

Save a can – Save the earth –
Save our youth budget!

Place your empty aluminum cans in a *securely tied* bag next to the church garage. Thank you!

Save the Earth

Did you know that each American produces 4.6 pounds of waste per day, the most in the industrialized world? That in the U.S. 80 percent of products are used once then thrown away? Thank you for your efforts to reduce, re-use, and recycle around your home, our church building, and in the community. Your help with recycling glass, paper, cardboard, plastic, aluminum or tin cans is very much appreciated. Thank you for your care for creation!

Sunday School News

Welcome back! Sunday School resumes on Sunday, January 5, at 9:35 a.m. in Stoltz hall for opening time.

Preschool/PreKindergarten children meet in their classroom along with teachers and helpers. Please remember to take your child to the restroom before class and sign in to the information book when you bring your child. Thank you!

Kindergarten-Fifth Grade begin a new rotation – “Jesus is Baptized.” The dates for this section are January 5, 12 and 19. If you would like to share as a leader, please contact the church office. Thank you to all who lead rotations!

Thank you to all who assisted with the Christmas program. Whether you led the singing, helped with direction and rehearsal, had a speaking part, sang, arranged costumes, assisted with fellowship, helped in any way, and came to the program, you are all appreciated! Thank you!

Grades 6-8 meet in the Youth Room for lessons and activities.

Winter Youth Retreats at Luther Crest Bible Camp: “Keep It Simple”

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Come for a great weekend of winter fun with your friends and counselors at Luther Crest. There will be snow-shoeing, tubing, lodging in the new winterized cabins, skiing, games, great food, and great worship.

Grades 3-6 weekend is Friday-Sunday, February 8-10. Cost is \$110.00 (4 meals, 2 nights lodging, and program. Sign up by Wednesday, January 30.

Grades 6-9 weekend is Friday-Sunday, February 22-24. Cost is \$110.00 (4 meals, 2 nights lodging, and program. Sign up by Wednesday, February 13.

Your \$50 deposit (non-refundable) holds your spot. For more information, speak to the church office.

News of the Family

Asa Joan Herman, daughter of Travis and Kimberly Herman was baptized on December 3.

Jackson Frederick Kludt, son of Shad and Amber Kludt was baptized on December 22.

Franklin Patrick Martinson, son of Adam and Kate Martinson was baptized on December 22.

Welcome to the kingdom!

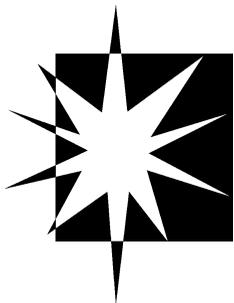
Sunday Worship Schedule



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

Holy Communion is received at all services.

Come and worship!



Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons!

2 Corinthians 5:17 from The Message

Items for the **February NEWSLETTER** are due on **January 20, 2020**