



Vacation Bible School
TREASURED
“Discovering You’re Priceless to God”
August 2-6, 2021
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 (Noon)

Let’s have a treasure hunting, jungle-vine-swinging, gem of an Adventure!
Vacation Bible School is coming!!

Youth and adults will explore the Bible and learn that God knows you, God hears you, God comforts you, God forgives you, and God chooses you...*You are treasured!* We will start the day at *Sing and Play Rock*, then kids will have fun with *Jungle Gym Games*, enjoy a movie at *KidVid Cinema*, have a *Bible Adventure*, make a project at the *Imagination Station*, and have a snack at *Vine Dining*. Everyone is welcome to come and wrap up the day at the *Closing Quest!*

This year’s VBS is a joint effort of First Lutheran, Bethel Lutheran and First United Churches. To register, your child must be 3 years old (by September 1, 2020) through 5th grade (completed spring 2021). Registration is free and is underway now. You are encouraged to register your child even if they may not attend every day. Your advance registration helps us have adequate supplies for each child. You may register online at firstserv@flittlefalls.org - If you are unable to register online, you can pick up a registration form at each church. Early registration makes planning easier. Please share this information with others interested!

If you are interested in helping with VBS, there are many fun ways for you to get involved. You can participate for the full week or for part of the week. Check out the “volunteer signup” board in the gathering space for the volunteer opportunities available. Thanks to all who have volunteered to date. Also, discover the ‘supply board’ in the gathering space to assist with providing supplies for the week, there are many ways to be involved and all are important—thank you!

God knows you. **You are treasured!**

For more information about Vacation Bible School, call the church office, 632-6667, or contact Darla Plevell 507-382-2549, or Gail Hittesdorf 291-4698.

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Reflections
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This pandemic year has been....
...it has been all that it has been.

This pandemic year has been another year of life, and has been an extraordinary year that most of us hope to never live through again.

As the pandemic dies down and all signs point towards being able to safely re-enter in public life and community gathered in person, we seem to be picking up where we left off, continuing some of the things that worked well in the pandemic, and playing catch-up to things missed during the height of the pandemic.

This summer is turning in to a CELEBRATION of LIFE. We are CELEBRATING, REJOICING, and FULLY ENJOYING a summer filled with community, activity, and people. Summer vacations. Family gatherings. Grandkid hugs. Block parties. Golf leagues. Summer sports. Overnight camps. We are enjoying our favorite summertime things, and we catching-up summertime things missed last summer.

We are living an ABUNDANT LIFE. Jesus said "I came so that you might have life and have life abundant." (John 10:10) A life of grace, life, and joy – gifts from God found through friends, family, and community.

This summer is turning in to a CELEBRATION OF LIFE. We are celebrating life lost, loved ones gone, and catching up on funerals postponed due to the pandemic. A celebration of life yet a time of GRIEF and LOSS.

Coming out of a pandemic and finding a place where we are able to take a deep breath. We also have a lot to grieve. We have our loved ones, neighbors, and others who died during the pandemic and our grieving was put on hold until a funeral gathering could happen again.

And we have the loss of ALL THINGS MISSED in the past year to grieve: the missed sports games and seasons, the milestone events, big weddings,

baby showers and newborn snuggles, the graduations, proms, school dances, Christmas Programs, birthday parties. The in person time in worship and fellowship, Bible studies, and hugs at church.

Although some of these things were replicated virtually, as people of faith with sacraments that take on the physical forms of water, bread, and wine/juice, and with God who became EMBODIED for our sake, some things cannot be quite the same virtually as they are in person. And although we can say we made the safe and right decisions to be virtual, we can still grieve the loss of what could have been or should have been if there hadn't been this pandemic.

This summer is truly a CELEBRATION OF LIFE. Of life lost. Of life found again. A celebration of the whole cycle of life catching us in our raw and painful moments, and in our joy-filled and grace-filled moments too. Just as Psalm 23 tells us about how God shows up in our lives, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me, your rod and your staff—they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows."

As our summer of CELEBRATION OF LIFE leads us grief and sadness, the guidance of God with us guides us. As our summer of CELEBRATION OF LIFE leads us to joyful reunions and rejoicing in favorite summertime things, God has already prepared this table, with an overflowing cup of goodness and mercy, and ABUNDANT LIFE.

~ Pastor Beth Pottratz

Greetings from your First Lutheran Church Council

I have been your Council President now for about 6 months and I get the opportunity to spend some time in the church office interacting with our staff. I have heard it said that church is not a building but a community of believers which is true. What I have also come to recognize, is that our staff is an integral part of this community. We at First Lutheran are blessed to have an extraordinary staff. They are often the “face” of our church and play an important role in our ministry. I am not going to single out any one staff member but across the board, I am very pleased. The day-to-day quality work they do often times gets taken for granted. Please thank a staff member the next time you see them for the work they do on our behalf.

Also, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge Sue Gustner for her outstanding years of work in ministry while she was on staff. Although she recently retired, she continues to help where needed. Again, thank you Sue. You set a very high bar of staff work which we are all grateful. We all wish you good health and happiness in your retirement!

Council Highlights:

- ✦ We are starting the process to fill the youth and family minister position. This is a vital position for First Lutheran and the council strongly believes this position needs to be filled. If you know of someone who would be a good candidate, please contact the church office or myself.
- ✦ The church council and pastor parish committee continue to support Pastor Beth and her family during her husband’s deployment by facilitating a meal a week for her and her family. If you are interested in providing a meal, please contact Lola Faufau to sign up for a meal. Pastor Beth commented to the council recently that she was very grateful for the congregations support during this time. Please keep Pastor Beth’s husband Jeremie in your prayers.

- ✦ We are looking into an online process to sign up for ministry opportunities. This would not replace the current way we sign up but is intended to enhance the ability to sign up.
- ✦ Starting in August the council will return to a Ministry Team Meeting preceding our council meeting format. What this means is each Ministry Team will meet at church on the council meeting night at 6:15 p.m. immediately followed by the regular council meeting at 7:00 p.m. The Ministry teams are Congregational Life, Education, Facilities and Property, Health, Mission, and Worship and Music. If you are interested in serving on one of the ministry teams or have questions, please contact the church office, or myself.
- ✦ Just as a reminder the council meets the second Tuesday of each month at church, and anyone can attend these meetings. If you are interested in a council meeting, please attend.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your council president.

Sincerely,
Carl

Mask and Coffee Hour Update

Wearing of masks at First Lutheran Church will be optional in the building and during worship services starting on Thursday, July 1. We will resume indoor coffee hour with treats, while following current CDC guidelines. If you have any questions, please contact the church office.

Welcome New Members

New Members were received during worship on Sunday, June 27. Check out the bulletin board for photos and brief bios of the new members and give them a warm welcome.

They are Orrin and Rose Alsleben, Dan and Lynnae Gilder, Brad and Emily Lukasavitz, Willa, and Emery, Kevin and Cindy Molitor, Rev. Beth Pottratz and Jeremie Vanek, Madison, and Mya, Jeremy and Angie Sanoski, and Hunter, Greg and Vicki Spofford. Welcome to all!

Special Celebration Offering

The church council approved a special offering on Pentecost Sunday! This year the offering is designated for the purpose of replacing several windows in the church building. As an important part of faithful stewardship of our congregational home, we want to maintain the property to the best of our ability. Windows will be replaced in order of priority as we have funds available. To date we have received \$2,370 for this project. Your gifts are still welcome! Please write “Celebration Offering” in the memo line of your check. *Please note:* In past years we have celebrated Pentecost Sunday by receiving a special offering dedicated to mortgage principal reduction. As of May 31, the mortgage principal amount owed is \$386,755. **Thank you** for your faithful stewardship!

When to contact the church office:

Pastor Beth and the staff ministry team are available to assist you and walk alongside you and your family in all circumstances. You may call (632-6667), email (firstserv@flittlefalls.org), stop in, or send a note as needed, or for any reason, and especially for any of the following reasons:

- ☎ When you or a loved one 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 phone number, or discontinue your land line
- ☎ When a neighbor or friend is looking for a church home
- ☎ When you have good news to share
- ☎ When you have a suggestion, comment or idea to share
- ☎ If you are a member at another congregation or do not wish to receive our newsletter
- ☎ If you are a snowbird and have an alternate address to share
- ☎ When your post-high school age children have a different address or wish to transfer their membership



Welcoming others...

The first time you walked in the door at First Lutheran Church, did someone welcome you?

Did you receive a handshake and a “Good morning”? Did you enjoy a cup of coffee or a treat? Did someone give you information about worship, or help you find a seat? Did your children find a safe and welcoming place to play? Did you hear God’s Good News spoken in a living way? Did you receive the Lord’s Supper along with the rest of the community?

If the answer to any of these questions is “Yes,” you are encouraged to pass that welcome on – by welcoming others to worship. And if the answer to any of these questions is “No,” then it is *even more important* that you help to welcome others in Jesus’ name.

What can you do? Through the signup system, *every worshiper at First* has the chance to greet, usher, read Scripture, provide coffee/refreshments, set up or serve Communion. By serving in an area where you are gifted, you can help every worshiper to feel welcome. And scheduling is easy – because you sign up for one (or more!) Sunday at a time, you can be sure that you are available for the specific dates you will serve.

Signup sheets for the coming month are always posted on a table in the Gathering Space, and you are encouraged to sign up at any time. If you’re not able to come to church to sign up, you may call the church office (632-6667) to volunteer. If you need more information or training, please mention it when you sign up and you will be contacted.

Thank you for the welcome you provide to others in the name of Christ.

**Is your passion or your hobby crafting, quilting, or golf?
Here are some ways to enjoy your pastime and benefit others at the same time:**



**Camp Knutson
Virtual Quilt Auction
Saturday, August 14**

Quilt lovers — Unique quilts from throughout Minnesota including two quilts from the First Lutheran quilters will be auctioned to benefit Camp Knutson as they welcome campers back this summer with a variety of in-person and virtual camp experiences. Silent auction bidding opens Wednesday, August 11, at Noon and closes Saturday, August 14, at 11:30 a.m. Live auction bidding opens Wednesday, August 11, at Noon and will continue with the Livestream on August 14 at Noon. Covid safe and friendly previews to view quilts on the grounds of Camp Knutson will be available August 11, 12, and 13, Noon to 6:00 p.m., Appointments are not needed. For more info visit, www.lssmn.org/campknutson/get-involved/events/quilt-auction



**Advent Craft Sale and Luncheon
Saturday, December 4**

We know it's barely summer, but the time will fly so now's the time to work on items for the Craft Sale – so be creative! Be sure you have this date on your calendar. If you or someone you know is interested in assisting with this annual event, please contact the church office.

**Luther Crest Second Annual Online
Auction begins
Wednesday, August 18th at 10:00 a.m.**

God is actively at work at Luther Crest. The Annual Fund and the support from generous churches and donors provide approximately 45% of the cost for most campers! Two beautiful quilts from the First Lutheran quilters will be auctioned off to benefit Luther Crest. Bidding opens Wednesday, August 18 at 10:00 a.m. and closes Friday, August 20 at 5:00 p.m. Winning bidders can pick up their items on Saturday, August 21, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., or contact camp for alternative pickup options. For more info visit, www.luthercrest.org/2021-online-auction.html or questions, contact Jody Johnson at 320-846-2431, or e-mail jodyj@luthercrest.org

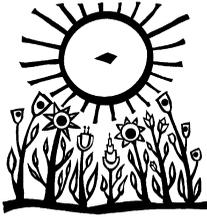


**The Twentieth Annual Golf Scramble
To benefit the ministry at
Luther Crest Bible Camp
Monday, August 9**

Why not get a foursome together and spend a fun day playing this “Best Ball” tournament on the course at Lake Milona Golf Course, Alexandria. Registration begins at 11:30 a.m.; “shotgun start” tee time is at 1:00 p.m. The fee of \$100.00 per person covers green fees, cart rental, balls, driving range, and meals. You are encouraged to give a gift in support of Luther Crest at this event.

Past tournaments have made a significant impact on the camp's ministry. To register, call the church office, 632-6667, or register online at www.luthercrest.org

Mission News



Morrison County Food Shelf

Your contributions and food donations to the Morrison County Food Shelf are encouraged and needed year-round. You can bring your non-perishable food items to church or to the Food Shelf, please do not contribute items that are past the 'use by' date. If you can bring donated items to the Food Shelf, please contact the church office.

Don't forget the Food Shelf when you have excess produce from your garden. Please make arrangements directly with the Food Shelf for these items. The Food Shelf is located near Bethel Lutheran Church at 912 First Avenue SW, Little Falls. Food Shelf hours are Tuesday and Wednesday, 10:00 a.m. to Noon, Thursday 6:00-8:00 p.m. For more information call 632-8304.

Lutheran Social Services Senior Nutrition Program Meals on Wheels

Volunteers are requested to deliver meals to homebound people in the community. Lutheran Social Services Senior Nutrition Program delivers about 35 meals per day from the Little Falls Senior Center. Consider how you might assist with this important service to brothers and sisters in the community. To volunteer, call Ciara, 320-630-8103 or e-mail ciara.ehrmantrout@lssmn.org

Thank you!

- ✠ Thank you to those who volunteered to assist with Roadside Cleanup of our section of Hwy 238. God's work. Our hands.
- ✠ Thank you to all who faithfully tend to the week-in, week-out needs of ministry in this place. You are appreciated!

Vacation Bible School Mission Project

Each year as a part of VBS week, the youth, adults and congregations are invited to participate in an outreach mission project. This year we will once again collect items for 'Operation Backpack.' Donations of backpacks (new or gently used), school supplies, or money for supplies are welcome and encouraged. In prior years we have given 100+ filled backpacks to nine area schools for distribution to children in need. The summer months are a good time to purchase school supplies at reasonable prices. Your contributions to this project are appreciated. You can bring donations to the church office at any time. Thank you!

Share A Meal Is Resuming With To-Go Meals!

Oasis Central Minnesota provides nutritious meals at no cost and First Lutheran serves as the host site for these meals. Everyone is welcome and each meal is provided and served by a different community group. Meals will be distributed to vehicles, every other week at 5:30 p.m., starting on Thursday, July 15. Other dates scheduled are, July 29, August 12, and August 26. For more information, call Oasis Central Minnesota at 632-9140.



Fare For All Monday, July 12 3:30-5:30 p.m. Bethel Lutheran Church

Fare For All is a monthly food distribution program that is open to everyone at sites across Minnesota. It is a great way to save money on quality, nutritious food. You can receive fresh fruits, vegetables, and frozen meat at up to 40% off store prices. Fare For All accepts cash, credit, debit and EBT cards. For more information call 763-450-3880. The August distribution date is Monday, August 2. Plan ahead to stretch your food budget.

Caregiver Small Group: This support group is for those who are providing primary caregiving for a family member. This gives caregivers a safe and supportive environment to share thoughts, ideas, tears, and laughter. The next caregiver meeting will be at Zoomski's on Wednesday, July 14, 11:00 a.m. If you are a caregiver, please come for lunch and a little social time away. For more information, contact Parish Nurse, Tracy Moe at 320-282-5928.



'Halo Polishing' Opportunities

Every day your fellow servants at First Lutheran are quietly serving in and around the congregation and community. There are always many ways to be servants (sorry, some are not glamorous!). Here are a few suggestions: provide a meal for someone in need, sharpen and replace the pew pencils, help with weeding the landscape areas, help to bring aluminum cans for recycling, bring donated items to the Morrison County Food Shelf, assist with inventory of kitchen dishware, and more! If you might have time or interest in any of these opportunities, please contact the church office. Thank you for the endless ways that you serve one another in this place!

Grief Support Group

CHI Health at Home Tea is offering an eight-week grief support group on Mondays, starting July 12, from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. at CHI - St. Gabriel's Hospital (Franciscan Room). Possible topics include, understanding grief experience, handling the difficult emotions of grief, managing the stress of change, preparing for holidays and special occasions, and finding meaning after loss. Space is limited and registration is requested.

For more information about joining this grief support group, please contact Jeff or Lori at Jeffrey.Lawson@commonspirit.org or 631-5588, or Lori.Czech@commonspirit.org or 631-5581.

Connections Cafe'

Horizon Health is now offering a monthly, two-hour session for those living with Dementia along with their caregivers. Connections Cafe' is a safe and comfortable space where caregivers and their loved ones can socialize, listen to music, play games, and engage in meaningful activities that focus on strengths vs weaknesses. The sessions provide mutual support, information, refreshments, followed by a breakout session for care receivers and another for caregivers.

Connections Cafe' will focus on different aspects of dementia providing a unique experience for both care receivers and caregivers. Activities are varied, but tend to focus on topics that are apt to cause one to reminisce about times gone by. That "connection" to the past can be as comforting as it is medically beneficial. Caregivers will connect with other caregivers and take away valuable tools to help their loved ones in the journey of dementia. The five domains of a brain-healthy lifestyle include nutrition, exercise, socialization, mental stimulation, and spirituality.

Connections Cafe' is a wonderfully welcoming place for individuals with Alzheimer's Disease or any other form of dementia, or other brain disorders (care receivers). In addition, the sessions are designed for those wanting to make connections with other caregivers who are being challenged in a similar manner. Caregivers bring their loved ones (care receivers) to the sessions.

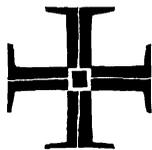
Horizon Health is inviting 10 individuals who are challenged with memory illness with their caregivers (20 people total) to the first session scheduled at the Little Falls Senior Center on July 21st, 1pm – 3pm. There is no charge to attend, but pre-registration is required. For more info or to register, please contact Michele Henifin at Horizon Health, 468-6451 or mhenifin@horizonhealthservices.com

Thrivent Choice Program

Eligible Thrivent members can direct Thrivent Choice® dollars throughout the year at www.thrivent.com or call 800-847-4836. First Lutheran and “Children First” Christian Preschool are both registered to receive Choice dollars. Let’s take advantage of this great opportunity! For more information, contact your Thrivent representative.

Thrivent Action Teams

Thrivent Financial encourages its members to participate in generous living in their community and around the world. Thrivent members are eligible to apply for Action Team funds in the form of a \$250 gift card once or twice per calendar year. These funds can be used for a many projects and needs. Thank you to the Thrivent members who have used the program to support ministries here at First Lutheran! For more info, contact your Thrivent representative or contact the church office.



Financial Update

Thank you to all who faithfully contribute to our shared ministry at First Lutheran Church!

Summer finds many of us traveling and vacationing. Mission and ministry continue here at First Lutheran. We appreciate your mail-in offerings when you are unable to be in worship.

Watch your mailbox for your giving statement for the first six months of 2021. Please review your statement for accuracy and contact the church office should you have questions.

You are welcome and encouraged to participate in an electronic funds transfer giving plan, Simply Giving. Simply Giving® allows you to automate your giving. This benefits First Lutheran by ensuring regular giving throughout the year and benefits the giver with ease of use. First Lutheran covers the nominal fee per transaction. Thank you to the new enrollees! Please see Angie in the church office to enroll.

Lutheran Social Service Rummage Sale

Wednesday, August 25, noon to 5:30 p.m.
Thursday, August 26, 8:00 a.m. to noon

Start cleaning your closets now! This rummage sale will be in August and is now being held annually instead of bi-annually. The sale is sponsored by Bethel and First Lutheran, and will be held at Bethel, 901 West Broadway.

All proceeds benefit the Little Falls area, Lutheran Social Services group homes and other local LSS programs. Your donations of clean usable clothing, household items, small working appliances, books, craft magazines (only), and toys are appreciated (please, no textbooks, reference books, encyclopedias, televisions, computers, or computer parts). Items may be dropped off at Bethel church starting on Monday, August 16th (*their office is open, Monday thru Friday from 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.*) Please note that set up starts on Tuesday, August 24th, so it would be greatly appreciated if you have your items to donate to the church by Tuesday morning. Thank you for all your donations and help; it is greatly appreciated.

Help with setup on Tuesday, August 24th starting at 8:30 a.m. is welcome. Volunteers are needed to work during the sale and clean-up of the church after the sale (we will need help for about 2 hours after the sale.) Please bring a bag lunch on Tuesday, August 24. Bethel is not serving lunch due to Covid but will have individually wrapped bars for sale.

We really wish to thank all those who have so faithfully worked and contributed items for this sale. The LSS group homes really appreciate all that we have done. If you are interested in volunteering (half a day, 1 day, the whole sale) or would like more information, contact Karen Haaland at 320-632-8828.





“Children First” Christian Preschool

“Children First” Christian Preschool 2021-2022 Fall registration continues! “Children First” is a non-denominational Christian preschool serving Little Falls and surrounding communities. Children enrolled experience the grace of God, a safe, inviting environment in which to learn, experience healthy socialization with their peers and develop readiness skills for Kindergarten. There are 2-day, 3-day, 4-day or 5-day classes available. Classes meet from 8:30am-11:30am. Registration forms are available on our preschool website <http://flclittlefalls.org/preschool.html> or by contacting the First Lutheran Church office at 320-632-6667. A non-refundable registration/activity fee of \$50.00 is required at the time of registration. You may drop off completed forms along with fee at the First Lutheran Church office or mail them to First Lutheran. Please make checks made payable to: First Lutheran Church. If you have questions, please contact Gail Hittesdorf, Director at 320-632-6667.

Thank you to all who keep "Children First" in prayer and support us in so many ways. We appreciate you! Watch for us in a few upcoming Summer events and thank you again for another awesome Preschool year!

God's blessings. Happy Summer!
Yours in Christ's Service,
Gail Hittesdorf, Director
320-632-6667
email: childrenfirst@flclittlefalls.org
website: www.flclittlefalls.org/preschool

Registration for Sunday Morning Ministry, age 3-grade 12 Confirmation, grades 2-11 Youth Groups, grades 3-12

Parents of children ages 3 years – 12th grade: Watch your mail this summer for a mailing on Education & Youth Ministry for the coming year. Registration and health forms for kids, and list of opportunities for adults to work with youth, will be included. Please note that registration is required each year for participation in Education and Youth Activities. Additional forms will be available in the church office or on the church website at www.flclittlefalls.org



Youth Ministry Confirmation Ministries 2021-2022 planning is underway!

Sixth Grade (going into Seventh): Class on prayer during the week of Vacation Bible School, August 2-6, 9:00 a.m.— 12:00 p.m. (noon). Youth entering seventh grade in the fall will be studying the Lord's Prayer. Letters have been mailed to families, if you did not receive a letter or for more information, please contact the church office.

Seventh Grade (going into Eighth): Due to Covid, the Seventh graders missed out on this in-person confirmation opportunity on prayer. You are invited to participate in a combined grade-level class during the week of Vacation Bible School (August 2-6). Letters have been mailed to families, if you did not receive a letter or for more information, please contact the church office.

Confirmands and Mentors: Mentor Gatherings will be at First Lutheran on Wednesday, July 14 and Wednesday, August 11 at 7:00 p.m., in Stolz Hall. Watch for more information to come on these gatherings.

News of the Family



Ivy Helene Kahl, daughter of Joe and Kaley Kahl was baptized on June 20.

Theodore Lee Monnier, son of Sean Monnier and Shauna Maurer was baptized on June 20.

Welcome to the family of God.
Let your light shine!

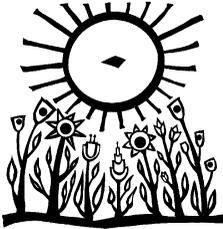


Dave Larsen died on November 14, 2020. His graveside service was June 5, 2021, with Rev. Beth Pottratz presiding.

Jim Lilienthal died on December 20, 2020. His celebration of life was held at First Lutheran on June 11, 2021.

Bruce Pederson died on June 15, 2021. His funeral service was held at Shelley Funeral Chapel on June 22, with Rev. Beth Pottratz presiding.

May God grant peace and comfort to their family and friends.



Worship Schedule

Sunday Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.

Worship services at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. continues throughout the year. Stay after the 8:30 a.m. service, or come early for the 10:30 service, for coffee (leaded and unleaded!), treats and fellowship in the Gathering Space. Everyone is welcome! Enjoy your vacation but don't take a vacation from church! Aren't you glad God doesn't take the summer off?

Items for the **August NEWSLETTER** are due on **July 19, 2021!**

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

**First Lutheran
Church**

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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