

**FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH**

*Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

Beth Pottratz, Pastor



**FIRST**

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*“Servants of All”*

June 2021, Newsletter

July 6, 2021

**BE THE CHURCH**  
Protect the environment.  
**Care for the poor.**  
**FORGIVE OFTEN.**  
**REJECT RACISM.**  
Fight for the powerless.  
Share earthly and spiritual resources.  
**EMBRACE DIVERSITY.**  
**LOVE GOD.**  
Enjoy this life.

Pastor Beth's  
Reflections  
see page 2

Health News  
see page 4

Mission  
Opportunities  
see page 5

Happenings  
Around First  
see page 6

“Children First”  
Preschool News  
see page 7

## Reflections from Pastor Beth

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As the last couple Sundays in May have had scripture that focuses much on the HOLY SPIRIT, I have spent a lot of time reflecting the ways that she is moving and working in our lives and the life of our congregation, First Lutheran Church.

The Holy Spirit has been present and moving since before the beginning of creation, blowing over the waters of the formless void. (Gen. 1) With God being our Creator, Jesus our Redeemer, the Spirit is our Sanctifier – the one who makes us HOLY. “It is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are CHILDREN OF GOD.” (Rom 8:16)

The Holy Spirit moves in, around, and through us constantly. It is often that the Holy Spirit takes on the metaphor of wind – in the Old Testament, originally written in Hebrew, the word for wind/breath is the same word that means Spirit. Wind and Holy Spirit are interchangeable, because the Holy Spirit MOVES through our lives and our world much like wind does.

In fact, John 3:8 say “The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

That’s the challenge with wind. And the challenge with the Holy Spirit. She goes where she chooses, we don’t know where she comes from or where she goes to next. The Spirit’s movement can be unpredictable! But the Spirit’s constant presence with us assures us that even in the unpredictable nature of the Spirit, she is still with us constantly. Together with Christ, the Holy Spirit GATHERS us in, CALLS us, SANCTIFIES us, and SENDS us into the world.

The Holy Spirit brings comfort and peace at times, and at others the Spirit encourages and challenges us to grow in our understanding of the world, other people, our faith, how we know God, and how we live out our faith walk as disciples. Both to us as individuals and to us as a church community.

DISCERNMENT is one of the ways that we name the process of the Holy Spirit encouraging and challenging us to know ourselves better and how who we are, our gifts and passions, and the needs of the

world all match up together. And to explore if there are new ways in which the Holy Spirit is calling us to live as disciples, sent into the world to work for love, grace, and God’s justice. Discernment is a PROCESS. A lifelong process of discovering and rediscovering who we are, and how we serve our neighbor. At times over our lives, we passively engage in gradual discernment, and at other times we are intentional about our discerning. As a congregation we discern as individual members, and in a collective group – because the Holy Spirit speaks to and through all of us, not just to one or a small group of us.

“Now there are VARIETIES of GIFTS, but the same Spirit; and there are VARIETIES of SERVICES, but the same Lord; and there are VARIETIES of ACTIVITIES, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the COMMON GOOD.” (1 Cor. 12:4-7) As a congregation discerning the Holy Spirit’s unpredictable movement, we look to the variety of ways in which each of us who are part of our congregation bring different gifts, services, and activities to the table to be used to the common good of all in this world.

Coming out of the pandemic, we will be doing intentional discernment. An article on Laura Stephens-Reed’s blog recently asked some challenging post-pandemic questions for congregations to discern about our ministry as we come out of pandemic life:

- What are the VALUES that define us and that we must stay true to as we make decisions?
- What OPPORTUNITIES (and newly-discovered tools) do we have to be CREATIVE in our ministry?
- How have our PRIORITIES permanently changed in the past twelve months?
- What are we hearing from the larger community about its HOPES and NEEDS right now, and HOW MIGHT WE CONTRIBUTE in ways that align with our values and gifts?

~ Pastor Beth Pottratz

## Report from 34th Annual Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly

The 2021 Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly was via Zoom on Friday, April 30, and Saturday May 1, with First Lutheran members Andrew Halvorson, Steve Jones, and Liz Rydeen attending as First Lutheran voting members. Pastor Beth Pottratz also attended. The theme was, “Love Ignites Us!”

In addition to hearing reports from the year from around the synod, assembly business included, elections, approval of the 2022 synod budget, approval of 2022 compensation guidelines, five amendments to the Synod constitution, and resolutions from the Conferences and/or Synod Committees. First Lutheran member, Mary Pfohl was elected layperson, female on the Synod Discipline Committee.

First Lutheran was asked by the Synod to share ministry through song. Gifts of music were recorded by Beth and Emma Ahlin, and Camilla and Emma Larson, accompanied by Becky Nelson. Thank you to the singers and Becky for sharing your talents! Gifts of music were played during the Sunday Morning (May 2) Synod Worship service. To view the worship service and gifts of music, please visit [nemnsynod.org/post-assembly-2021.html](http://nemnsynod.org/post-assembly-2021.html)

A total of \$5,092.00 was given for the work of ELCA World Hunger through the online Quilt Auction and Marketplace. Thank you to the First Lutheran quilters for the beautiful quilt given to the quilt auction.

The Synod Assembly provided an opportunity to worship online, learn about the many ways our synod is at work in the world, pray, and grow in our discipleship and mission to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. Questions, concerns, or comments? Please contact those who attended or check the Synod webpage found at [nemnsynod.org](http://nemnsynod.org). Next year’s assembly will be at Cragun’s Resort, April 29-May 1, 2022.

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### Notes from voting member Liz Rydeen:

*First Lutheran voting member to the assembly Liz Rydeen shared some highlights of the Assembly.*

*Thanks, Liz!*

Like so many gatherings and conferences, this year’s Synod Assembly was virtual. With just a few glitches, the technology worked well to connect over 240 clergy and lay delegates on Zoom. Because we could not be together under one roof, the opportunity for in-person worship and to share communion was certainly the downside.

One highlight for me was the keynote address from Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. Her down-to-earth speaking style made it seem like she was in my living room. She’s a woman of faith, grateful for the good work our synod is doing and our ongoing generosity. I think she has a good handle on leading a huge national organization and knows what’s important. “Strengthening lay people in their faith and leadership roles is absolutely essential,” she remarked. Even amid a pandemic, our support for the national and worldwide church did not diminished. She emphatically thanked us for our \$463,218 contribution in ELCA mission support.

I learned about our synod’s missionary support and partnerships with congregations in India, Russia.

Pastors celebrating ordination milestones were honored, including our own Pastor Beth for five years and Bishop Amy Odgren for 20 years. And three pastors celebrated 60 years in active ministry. Wow!

I was reminded that we are part of a larger church, both at the synod and national levels. **As in one body we have many members, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ.**

Thank you for this opportunity to represent First Lutheran as a delegate.

### Thank you!

- ✠ Thank you to all who graciously assisted with yard cleanup here on the church grounds.
- ✠ Thank you to all who donated items and/or helped to assemble the 100+ Personal Care Kits for Lutheran World Relief.
- ✠ Thank you to all who faithfully tend to the week-in, week-out needs of ministry in this place. You are appreciated!



**Caregiver Group**  
**Wednesday, June 16**  
**11:00 a.m.**

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, June 16, 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.

**Caring Meals**

As a part of ministry to members and friends of the congregation, from time to time we provide meals to those experiencing challenges or joys. If you would be able to assist with this caring activity, please contact the church office, 632-6667.

**Ride A Bike to Church Day**  
**Sunday, June 13**



This is a Day for the Heart – Think of all the benefits: exercise for your physical and spiritual muscles, care for the planet, and worship for the heart of a Christian! Get your bike ready and don't forget your helmet. Feel free to ride your bike whenever you are able!

How wonderful it is, how pleasant, when God's people dwell (and sing) together in harmony!  
 Psalm 133

Finally! We are emerging from the quagmire of the covid pandemic. On May 30, people coming to in person worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. will be invited to sing along (wearing masks) with the cantor and praise team. We are on our way to a "near normal" summer and a "new normal" fall here at First Lutheran.

What did you miss most during the church shut down? I missed hearing the congregation sing during worship. Singing is a rather unique activity. When else do people get together and focus on staying together, listening to each other, blending with each other, and come together in harmony? Harmony is one of many musical life lessons (maybe second only to the number one lesson which is you cannot procrastinate when there is a recital in your future). As the Psalmist wrote, "How wonderful it is ... when God's people dwell (and sing) together in harmony." There is not a lot of harmony in the world, but following Jesus, we can focus on staying together, follow our leader, listen to each other and blend. We sing different parts, but the effect of the whole is wonderful.

First Lutheran church needs you and the music ministry, a vital part of First Lutheran's worship services, needs you. If you are currently serving as a singer or reader, thank you, thank you, thank you! However, we are always in need of singers and instrumentalists. Please fill in the yellow insert in the bulletin indicating your interest in sharing your musical gifts.

Looking ahead! With the free will offerings from the Christmas CD "Christmas Eve 2020" we were able to purchase tone chimes. We will be putting together two tone chime choirs this fall, one for children and one for adults. Please let us know if you are interested in joining one of these groups. The Followers of Jesus children's choir and the Grace Notes adult choir will begin rehearsing in September also. All are welcome.

*Written by Director of Music, Becky Nelson*



## Mission Opportunities



### What Should I Save?

There are many ways that you can be involved in mission right from your own home. We can all be good stewards of the earth and help others at the same time by saving a variety of things. Here is a list of ways that you can help. If you know of other projects, you may contact the church office with this information for future publication.

- Sign up online for Coborn’s More School Rewards for “Children First” Christian Preschool to receive dollars from points earned from your regular shopping.
- Cotton fabric (large enough for 7-inch squares) for the First Lutheran quilters. Bring to the church office.
- Aluminum cans for the First Lutheran youth program. You can leave bags of cans by the church garage. Please close bags securely. Volunteers to take cans to the recycler are also welcome.
- The church recycles spent batteries (such as 9volt, AAA, etc.). Please do not throw in trash.
- Donate items, or better yet, volunteer at the local New to You store. Proceeds support the Boys and Girls Club.

- Re-use: save those items that you no longer need or use and donate them—the LSS Rummage Sale, a cooperative event of Bethel and First Lutheran is one place to donate. Your donation provides funds for Lutheran Social Service group homes.
- Building materials, new and used, and other items may be donated to the Habitat for Humanity ReStore. The ReStore generally accepts: building materials, furniture, cabinets, appliances, plumbing, electrical and much more! If you have an item to donate call the ReStore to see if it’s something they can accept at 218-828-8517.
- Recycle—at home and at church. Your assistance with recycling is appreciated. We can recycle office paper, newspaper, glass, plastic, cans, cardboard, and more. Recycling containers for glass, plastic, and cans are located in the kitchen.
- Consider other ways you can reduce your plastic use: bring reusable bags to the store and recycle the plastic bags you do use, use a reusable water bottle, eliminate plastic straws, use beeswax wrap instead of plastic wrap, there are many more options too!

### Personal Care Kits

During Lent we participated in Lutheran World Relief’s Season of Hope appeal. We collected items that we will use to assemble Personal Care Kits that give people around the world tools to stay healthy in life’s most challenging situations. We had supplies to make 130 kits! Our care kits from 2020 were sent to Ecuador. Thank you to all who donated supplies, made monetary donations, help assemble kits, and for Thrivent Action Team funds for project support. Thank you for caring for others around the world who lack these basic necessities.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Scramble to benefit the ministry at Luther Crest Bible Camp Monday, August 9 at Lake Miltona Golf Club

Why not get a foursome together and spend a fun day playing this “Best Ball” tournament on the course. Registration begins at 11:30 a.m.; “shotgun start” tee time is at 1:00 p.m. You can play this scramble for \$100 per golfer. The fee per golfer covers green fees, cart rental, golf balls, driving range, and meals will be provided.

You are encouraged to give a gift in support of Luther Crest at this event. To register, call the church office, 632-6667 or register online at [www.luthercrest.org](http://www.luthercrest.org)

### **Worship Service and Small Group Update**

After May 28, First Lutheran will no longer take reservations, not have assigned seats, and will eliminate capacity limits during worship. Masks or full-face shields will still be required.

We will invite the congregation to sing hymns together. Social distancing is requested. We will have coffee hour over the summer months outdoors with coffee but no treats, when the weather allows.

All small groups can resume meeting indoors, while following current CDC guidelines. If you have any questions, please contact the church office.



### **Quilters Group**

The Thursday morning Quilters Group will meet Thursdays in June at 9:00 a.m. The group welcomes anyone 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. There are a variety of ways to serve, and we are open to new ideas. We share stories over coffee and treats and have a great time. We accept cotton sheets and cotton material in good condition. For more information, call Pat Moller, 320-630-4880.

### **Servant Opportunity**

We have congregation members who are in need of rides to Sunday morning worship services. If you are interested or able to assist in helping with rides, please contact the church office 632-6667.

### **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.

### **New Members**

If you or someone you know would like to become a member of First Lutheran, we are preparing for the next new member group. We have set aside a time for the group to meet; we ask that you attend this session. The group will meet on Wednesday evening, June 9 at 7:00 p.m. New members will be received at both worship services on Sunday, June 27.



The group session is meant to help new members to find their place in the mission of the congregation, get to know others in the congregation, and discuss the foundations of the faith we share.

If God is calling you to membership at First Lutheran, this session is for you. For more information, or to sign up for the group, please call the church office at 632-6667.



Gear up for an epic in-person adventure at “Treasured” Vacation Bible School! VBS 2021 will be held August 2-6, from 9:00am-Noon, at First Lutheran Church. At “Treasured” VBS, Kids Preschool – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade will dig into action-packed, faith filled adventures to discover God's greatest treasure isn't diamonds, gems, or gold — it's them!

Adult and youth volunteers are welcomed. Please contact the church office or Gail Hittesdorf for more information. Watch for registration forms and donation opportunities in early June.

“Treasured” where kids discover that they are priceless to God!

## Lutheran Social Service Rummage Sale

Wednesday, August 25, noon to 5:30 p.m.

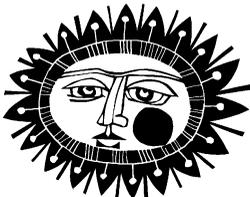
Thursday, August 26, 8:00 a.m. to noon

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.



## Greetings from "Children First" Christian Preschool!

We have completed our 20<sup>th</sup> preschool year! We enjoyed the spring weather and experienced many outdoor activities on the church grounds and on our playground during the month of May. We also had a special class day at the Pine Grove Park and Zoo! We played on the playground, had outdoor snack, visited the zoo animals and took a walk/exercise challenge on the Pine Grove Park exercise path. We highly encourage you, as a family, to make time to visit the zoo or experience the Pine Grove Park exercise path. The preschoolers loved it!

"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](mailto:childrenfirst@flclittlefalls.org)

website: [www.flclittlefalls.org/preschool](http://www.flclittlefalls.org/preschool)

## News of the Family



Emery Ann Lukasavitz, daughter of Brad and Emily Lukasavitz was baptized on Sunday, May 16.

Anniston Jade Plevell and Milo Elijah Plevell children of Alex and Darla Plevell were baptized on Sunday, May 23.

Welcome to the kingdom!



Armand Robert Marx died on November 25, 2020. His memorial service was held at First Lutheran on June 8, 2021. May God grant peace and comfort to his family and friends.



### Sunday Worship Schedule

8:30 a.m. Traditional Worship using a variety of liturgical settings

Outdoor Coffee Hour Between Services  
*(weather permitting)*

10:30 a.m. Contemporary Worship led by a Praise Band

Holy Communion is served at all services.

**Come and See!**



Items for the **July NEWSLETTER** are due on **June 17, 2021!**

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Church**

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

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