

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Beth Pottratz, Pastor



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May 2021, Newsletter

July 6, 2021

Eastertime:

Easter is not one day, but fifty!



First, we kept the forty days, with praying, fasting and works of love. Then we celebrated the three days of Christ’s passion, dying and rising. Now we delight in the fifty days of Easter, with rejoicing, feasting and giving witness! The season of Easter is fifty days long. It is a time of unbridled joy, of exuberant rejoicing.

Why is Eastertime fifty days?

The ancient cultures that gave us the Bible had great respect for numbers. They believed that numbers contained hints about God and the meaning of life. The number seven was thought to contain fullness: There are seven days in the week, according to God’s original way of ordering time, creating all that there is and resting. And so if you multiply 7 times 7, you have “fullness times fullness.”

But wait! 7 times 7 is 49! And with God, there is always more—more than we can ever imagine. So our season of Easter is even more than “fullness times fullness.” It’s “fullness times fullness” and then some: 7 times 7 plus 1. That’s what love is like: more than we can ever imagine. That’s what heaven, life with God, is like: more than we can ever imagine.

The fifty days of Easter are days for looking for the risen Lord among us, for hearing in each other’s stories of rising from the big and small deaths, days when we experience something of Christ’s triumphs. That’s why we look to the newly baptized: at Easter, they died and rose with Christ! Now they take their places with us. Together, like the apostles who were so full of the Spirit that people thought they were drunk, we rush about with good and giddy news: Death is not the last word! Life and love are forever! And slowly, painstakingly, we work together, alongside the risen Christ, to change this world into the world to come. Sing Alleluia!

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Reflections from Pastor Beth

The book of Exodus tells us the story of our Faith Ancestors being liberated from slavery and led to the Promised Land. Beginning with God calling to Moses to step up, despite his speech difficulties, rocky background, and shyness, to become the one who would lead the Hebrew people to freedom. Pharaoh resisted letting the Hebrew people leave for a while until finally he gave in and let Moses take the Hebrew people and leave Egypt. Moses led the Hebrew people through the parted Red Sea and into the desert where they were planning to cross and end in the Promised Land of milk and honey. God's plans for the Hebrew people were interrupted when the people decided to worship a golden calf idol and God punished them with wandering the desert for 40 years. The Exodus.

The Exodus means "the Leaving." The book of Exodus begins the story of the Hebrew people leaving Egypt and wandering in the desert. Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy follow the book of Exodus by telling of all the instructions that God was teaching the Hebrew people as they wandered the desert. God used the time of Exodus to teach the Hebrew people to live in the ways that God wanted for God's people. This way, when the Hebrew people arrived to the Promised Land and settled to build their new communities (starting in the book of Joshua), they would build their communities founded on God's desire for them: a people of grace, mercy, and abundance for all.

In my sermon preparation this week, I was introduced to the thought that this time of pandemic living has been a bit like an Exodus story. A year ago, Covid-19 hit our country and sent us each on a long journey away from our church home. I wonder about the Hebrew people on their Exodus desert journey and the ways they might have empathized with our pandemic journey: feeling lost, grief of what was, grief of things missed, grief of people lost, wondering when it would all come to an end and go back to living a "normal" life.

Which also makes me wonder what the lessons that God has been trying to teach us while we've been living this pandemic life. With God knowing the whole story, more than we know, it makes me think about what God is envisioning for us as we return back to our "new-normal" life - how has God been guiding us and inspiring in us ways that we can build our return to post-pandemic life founded on God's desire for us: to be a people of grace, mercy and abundance for all.

Pastor Beth Pottratz



News of the Family



Hunter Richard Sanoski, son of Jeremy and Angie Sanoski was baptized on April 17.

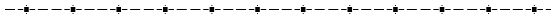


Anne Marie Neumann, daughter of Jerry and Cassie Neumann was baptized on April 18.

Welcome to the family of God!

Scam Emails and Text Messages

There is a common scam going around that comes as a fake email or text message pretending to be your pastor asking for money in the form of monetary gift cards. This scam has been happening to many churches for a while now. Please be aware, do not acknowledge this scam. First Lutheran Church, office staff, along with Pastor Beth would not request any monetary donations from you via any form of social media, email, text, or voice mail. If you have any questions, please contact the church office.



Library Corner

The church library is open! We have added a variety of new and donated books to our shelves under Inspiration, Devotion, Theology, and Family Living.

We have added a 30-book series called Annie's Attic Mysteries in the Adult Fiction section.

We are always open to suggestions from the congregation for new material.

Special Pentecost Celebration Offering

The church council has approved a special offering on **Pentecost Sunday, May 23**. This year the offering is designated for the purpose of replacing 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. A special envelope to use for this offering will be available at church, or 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. *Thank you* for your faithful stewardship!



Thank you to all who faithfully support Christ's mission at First Lutheran Church with their mail-in offerings! Giving statements will be mailed to each giving unit/household following the end of the second quarter, sometime in July. Should you wish to receive a statement sooner than that, we can provide that for you.

You are encouraged to consider providing your giving to First Lutheran through the Simply Giving® program. Simply Giving is an automated giving plan that allows the giver to choose their gift amount and frequency of that gift. Automated giving ensures that your worshipping community receives your gift on a regular basis. For more information, contact the church office. **Thank you for your faithful giving!**

Greetings from your First Lutheran Church Council

My name is Carl Rydeen, and I am your Council President. A common statement made is “these are very difficult and strange times”. This certainly is applicable to our church. Everything this pandemic has required us to do in order to be safe has dramatically impacted all of us. The church council and elected leadership of our church are looking forward to bringing back a sense of normal for everyone while ensuring we do everything possible to be safe.

I am happy we have been able to safely resume in-person Sunday worship services in our beautiful sanctuary. I am also thankful and grateful to our church members for their love and respect shown for each other in practicing social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands, etc. Special thanks go to our outstanding church staff for the work they go thru each week setting up the sanctuary, making seating assignments, extra cleaning, and all the other things necessary to ensure we are safe. We will continue to monitor state and county trends as we carefully consider opening our building and sanctuary to additional activities and organizations in the future.

Please keep Pastor Beth, her girls Maddie and Mya, and most importantly her husband Jeremie in your prayers as he is deployed on active duty in the Army. One way we as a Church, are supporting her in this time is by making a meal for Pastor Beth’s family each Wednesday. If you’re interested, contact Lola Fau Fau for details.

I would be remiss if I did not specifically thank Barb Stumpf for her hard work and dedication she showed during her time as council president. From a pastor leaving, to a

pandemic, and everything else in between she displayed outstanding leadership, vision, caring, and a great listening ear if someone wanted to talk. Thanks Barb, on behalf of all of us we appreciate it.

I will try my best to live up to the bar that Barb set. I am blessed to serve with an outstanding church council made up of a diverse group of very smart, forward thinking people who take their faith seriously and seek to serve the needs of First Lutheran Members and all in our community.

I am humbled and honored to serve as your council president. If you would like to talk to me about something related to church, do not hesitate to call or email me. I will always listen and do my best to address the concerns you bring. My phone number is 320-630-9842.

Email is rydeencarl@gmail.com

Yours in Christ,
Carl

Ministry Teams:

We at First Lutheran have many different ministry leadership opportunities for you to partake in.

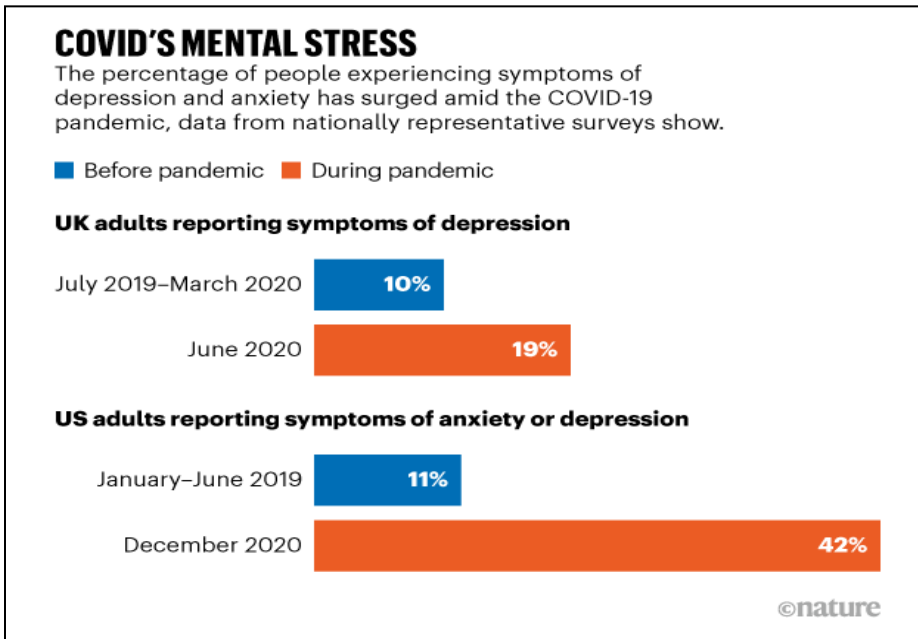
Ministry teams always welcome new members and your ideas! The teams are: Congregational Life, Education, Facilities and Property, Health, Mission and Worship and Music. If you are interested in joining one of the teams or have questions, please contact the church office, (320) 632-6667.



Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including those on social media. It’s good to be informed but hearing about the pandemic constantly can be upsetting. Consider limiting news to just a couple times a day and disconnecting from phone, tv, and computer screens for a while.
- Connect with your community- or faith-based organizations. While social distancing measures are in place, try connecting online, through social media, or by phone or mail.
- Take care of your body.
 - Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
 - Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
 - Exercise regularly.
 - Get plenty of sleep.
 - Avoid excessive alcohol, tobacco, and substance use.
 - Continue with routine preventive measures (such as vaccinations, cancer screenings, etc.) as recommended by your healthcare provider.
 - Get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine when available.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.

Source *cdc.gov*



Season of Hope for Lutheran World Relief Personal Care Kits

During Lent we participated in Lutheran World Relief's Season of Hope appeal. We collected items to assemble Personal Care Kits that give people around the world tools to stay healthy in life's most challenging situations. We hope to assemble 100 Personal Care Kits. Here are the items for collection:

Bars of soap, 4-5 ounce, any brand in original wrapping; Bath towels, lightweight, 52"X27" max, dark color is best; Toothbrushes, adult size, in original packaging; Combs; Nail clippers, metal, attached file optional.

You can still contribute items. Lutheran World Relief will distribute the assembled kits to people around the world who lack even the most basic needs. Thank you to all who donated supplies, made monetary donations, and for Thrivent Action Team funds for project support. Thank you for caring for others around the world who lack these basic necessities. God's work. Our hands.



Creation Care:

Watch for an upcoming date and time for this outdoor creation care activity. Your assistance with this event is appreciated. God's work. Our Hands.

- Roadside cleanup of the two-mile section of Hwy. 238 assigned to First Lutheran. We will schedule this cleanup as weather and conditions will permit. Thank you to all who have signed up so far.
- Place your aluminum cans in a securely tied bag by the garage door for recycling. Proceeds support youth ministry—Thanks!

Wrapping Our Quilts Around Hunger 2021

First Lutheran Quilters have donated a beautiful quilt for the online NE MN Synod Assembly silent auction. Silent auction bids begin, Thursday, April 29th at 9:00 a.m. and close on May 2nd at 6:00 p.m. Visit <https://nemquilts2021.givesmart.com> to place a bid on our quilt (Real Red Pinwheel) and other items. All proceeds support ELCA World Hunger.

Youth Servant Opportunity

We have a resident that is needing assistance to unload groceries from their vehicle on occasion. Location is on the west side of Little Falls. Resident will pay cash. If you are interested in helping, please contact Tracy Moe at (320) 282-5928

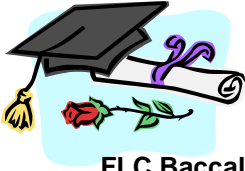


First on First Fun Fest Event

All are welcome to join the Photo Scavenger Hunt on Wednesday, May 5th, (weather permitting). Form your own team. Make sure everyone can fit in your vehicle and remember to bring your phone to take pictures! Meet in parking lot of First Lutheran church at 6:00 p.m. Slideshow, Pizza, and Prizes will follow at 7:30 p.m.

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. Thank you!



Graduating Seniors

FLC Baccalaureate Sunday, May 23

10:30 a.m. Worship Service

We will honor the graduating seniors at the 10:30 a.m. service on May 23. Following worship, they each will select a quilt as a gift from the quilting group. Please keep the graduates in your prayers.

Emma Ahlin

Noelle Allord

Ava Bednar

Samantha Beto

Madeline Dahlberg

Emma Gustafson

Aidan Kaddatz

Nathaniel Kludt

Chloe Laager

Kayla Lease

John Rivettes

Courtney Strohmeier

Spencer Strunk

Congratulations! Go with God!



Worship services air on the following sites each Tuesday. You can access as you are able.

Webpage: www.flclittlefalls.org

Facebook: First Lutheran Church,
Little Falls MN

Public access television Charter/Spectrum #180
Sundays at 1:00 p.m., Mondays at 1:00 a.m. and
1:00 p.m.

Greetings from

"Children First" Christian Preschool!

This was our 20th year as a preschool! The year has come and gone so quickly! We didn't have the opportunity to share in a larger celebration as we had hoped, but we celebrated each day we were able to come together as a classroom. April was filled with Dinosaur activities and Earth Day Recycling activities. We also experienced Space! It was so popular we extended this theme into a second week! The last week of April was a week of spring! We are looking forward to outdoor May activities and will be having a special field trip class day as we take a trip to Pine Grove Zoo. This will coordinate with our weekly theme of Zoo! It is a bittersweet time for us as we say goodbye to Preschoolers headed to Kindergarten. We have loved our time together and pray they continue to grow in God's love.

Thank you to all who keep "Children First" in prayer and support us in so many ways. We appreciate all who keep us in prayer. Thank you for another awesome Preschool year!

"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 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 632-6667. God's blessings. Happy Summer!

Yours in Christ's Service,
Gail Hittesdorf, Director

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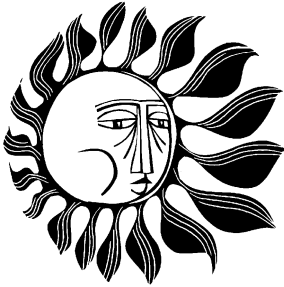
**First...
Servants of All!**

Sunday Worship Schedule

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

Holy Communion is served at all services.

Come and See!



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

Can Care Collection

Keep saving those aluminum cans! Place your cans next to the garage in a securely tied bag.

Save a can – Save the earth –

Save our youth budget! Keep those cans coming! Thank you!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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