December, 2016 - January, 2017

First and Nativity Lutheran Churches

News and Views

Dates to Remember……

12/4  Hanging of the Greens at both churches following Sunday worship

12/11 Piano dedication during coffee hour at Nativity

12/17 1:30 p.m. Christmas Concert at Nativity

12/18 9 a.m. Sunday School Christmas Program at First Lutheran; 11 a.m. Children’s Program at Nativity

12/24 5 p.m. Christmas Eve Worship at Nativity; 7 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship at First

12/25 Christmas Day Worship: 9 a.m. at First Lutheran, 11 a.m. at Nativity

1/15  Stewardship Brunch at First

1/21-22  New Member Weekend

1/28--29 Healing Service at all services Nativity Annual Meeting

NATIVITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
6905 W. Bluemound Rd.
Wauwatosa, WI
www.nativitylutheran.us
Nativity Phone: 414-476-1853
Nativity Phone (basement): 414-257-9980

PRESIDENT: JAMES RIBNEK, III
VICE PRESIDENT: MAUREEN JONES
SECRETARY: NICOLE DEBACK
TREASURER: JILL MICKELSON

An inviting and nurturing community
dedicated to proclaiming the Gospel and serving Christ

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
7400 W. Lapham St.
West Allis, WI
www.firstlutheranelca.org
E-mail: firstlutheranelca@att.net
Phone: 414-476-4664

PRESIDENT: DAVID GRULKE
VICE PRESIDENT: JAMIE SCHOBERG
SECRETARY: ODENARIS (MARI) DIXON
TREASURER: WERNER BAYER

Christian Education: Jamie Schoberg
Evangelism: Joy Dowd
Finance: Werner Bayer
Memorial Fund: Marie LePage
Social Ministry: Earl Casto
Stewardship: Werner Bayer
Worship & Music: John Bennethum

Reaching out in our community
to share the Word of God
Dear sisters and brothers,

The Advent season is nearly upon us! It is a season of preparation, a season of waiting, a season of wonder, a season of anxiety. Every Advent season we wait for the arrival of the Light of the world. Every Advent season we hope for the joy that the Christ child will bring this world. We wait and we wait and we wait and yet the world doesn’t seem to change.

As disciples of Christ we are called to be that change in the world.

Now, it’s been a few weeks since the election. If you voted you were probably hoping your candidate would bring about policies and changes to government that you agree with. If you voted you were probably anxious about the possibility of your candidate losing the election. As a country we waited and we waited and we waited until election day came and then we watched to see what would happen.

And whether you’re happy or upset or indifferent with the results, our calling as disciples of Christ hasn’t changed. The promise given to the world in the birth of our Savior hasn’t changed. As people of God we are called to “speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God’s love to the world."

This was and is and will be our calling. I don’t think it can be stated enough just how difficult this is to live out in the world. To stand with the marginalized, to speak out for those without a voice, to rise up with those who have been put down is extremely risky and dangerous.

The Savior we are waiting for did not come to pat us on the back. The Savior we are waiting for did not come to say everything is going fine. The Savior we are waiting for did not come to commend those in power.

Jesus did the exact opposite of everything we thought he would do. He ate with sinners. He picked 12 nobodies to be his disciples. He didn’t follow all the traditional religious rules. He forgave the unforgiveable. He healed the sick. He brought life where there was once death. He calmed storms. He took nothing and made it everything.

The Savior we are waiting for is quite different than we would have ever imagined. Jesus “spoke publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, called for justice and proclaimed God’s love for the world.” And we killed him because of it.

The Savior we are waiting for this Advent season is one we don’t deserve. The Savior we are waiting for this Advent season will act in ways we don’t expect. And as followers of the very Savior we are waiting for we are called to do the same.

Because to follow Jesus is political. It doesn’t matter who is in power at the national, state, county, or city level – as follows of a Savior who stood with the outcast we are called to do the same. As people of God this has always been our calling – this most recent election does not change that.

So in this Advent season what are we waiting for? The call to be disciples of Jesus has never been easy no matter who is in power – and yet our call remains: To speak publicly in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, call for justice and proclaim God’s love for the world. It won’t be easy. So, during this Advent season, what are we waiting for? There is a world in need of light in the darkness – a light in Jesus Christ that shines through you.

Peace,
Pastor Bryant
TUESDAY MORNING
BIBLE CLASS

During the month of December we will conclude our study of the book of ACTS. We will have no class on 12/27 or 1/3 due to Christmas and New Years. On January 10th we will have our Christmas Lesson at John Bennethum’s apartment in Franklin and then go to the Green Tea Garden (76th & Rawson Ave) for lunch. All are welcome. When we resume class on January 17th we will begin the study of DEUTERONOMY. We meet in the Fireside Room at First Lutheran from 10:00 -11:00am. Bring your Bible and join us. John Bennethum is our Teacher. Make a resolution to join our class!

500TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE REFORMATION

RICK STEVES, a leading authority on European travel, has made a one-hour public television special entitled “Luther and the Reformation”. This special, commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, will be aired on PBS in January, 2017. In support of “Always Being Made New”, the campaign for the ELCA, Steves is sharing advance copies with congregations.

John Bennethum attended an advance showing of the program in Mukwonago and has brought a copy back to First Lutheran. We’ll plan a special showing of the DVD in 2017.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Our Fall 2016 Sunday School theme this year was “Finding Jesus Under the Sea”. Our weekly memory verse was from Romans 8:39 “Neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is Christ Jesus our Lord”. Each week the children learned different sea creatures including dolphins, crabs, sharks, stingrays, whales, starfish, jellyfish, sea turtles and the Coral Reef. Each lesson included a Bible focus and a lesson from the Bible. Some of our lessons include skits and crafts. Every Sunday the children gathered up front to hear Pastor Bakkum’s children’s sermon and receive a special blessing. Gloria and Lorenzo have been our skit presenters. Sunday School was offered every Sunday except Thanksgiving weekend. The Fall Session concludes with our Children’s Christmas Program on December 18th.

Our Spring 2017 theme is “Finding Jesus’ Toy Box”. Each week the children will have a lesson from the Bible and learn about various toys that are familiar to them. We will also present lessons related to Easter.

Anyone interested in assisting with Sunday School please contact the Church Office.

Submitted by: Jamie, Linda, Greta, Mary and Gloria
**First Lutheran News**

**Food Pantry**
Thank you to our awesome dedicated volunteers and donors who help us feed the hungry in the West Allis area. On any given Friday there are about 25 volunteers present to do God’s work and help set up, cook, serve food and beverages, pack and hand out bags and clean up. We could not be successful with you!

Each week we hear “thank you” from grateful families, young adults and seniors needing help to make ends meet. We especially want to thank Peggy, Glenn, Chris and Mike, friends of First Lutheran, who make a delicious lunch for us to serve to about 100 people a week. We’d also like to thank our shoppers Mike and Greta Plicka, John Hrovat, Natalie Jaeger, Patt and Mike Temke and David Wegener for getting food to First so it can be bagged, stocked or cooked. We are so grateful for the resources that God provides this ministry. We are so happy that Pastor Bryant is able to join us each week to pray with us, comfort those in need, share the week’s lessons and spread the “good tidings” of God.

**Food Pantry Donations…**
The First Lutheran food pantry can always use donations of food, money and volunteers! They can also use donations of adult winter clothing. Unfortunately, there is no room to store baby clothing, out of season clothing, furniture or household items. If you have donations to bring, please contact the church office first. Any items left outside the doors will have to be discarded due to weather and animals in the area.

**What is your New Years Resolution?**
We need more volunteers to greet food pantry visitors and check them in so they can receive food on Friday mornings. Training is provided and you will always work with an experienced person. It is great to “give back” in 2017.

**Outside Volunteer Opportunities**
We have recently become affiliated with an organization called Just One More Meal Ministries (JOMM) near 64th and State St. in Wauwatosa. The organization makes daily collections of cooked and fresh food from restaurants and stores and repackages it into frozen meals for 2 or 4 people. Once a month we receive pans of meats, vegetables and rice/potatoes, which we heat and serve for lunch in our food pantry. As part of our participation, the Just One More Meal organization requests that we provide volunteers to help collect and package the food, clean up and various other duties. If you have an interest in helping hungry families but are unavailable on Friday’s for our pantry, perhaps you’d be interested in helping JOMM. A complete list of volunteer opportunities is available in the church office or on the bulletin board near the church front door. You can work an hour or two each week or as often as you are able. You will be representing First Lutheran Church Food Pantry.

**Social Ministry at First**

Many, many thanks to St. Luke’s in Greendale, Luther Memorial and Holy Trinity in West Allis, Panera Bread and General Mitchell Grade School for their generous support of our Food Pantry. The donations from other churches and our community help our pantry immensely!
SHARE CHRISTMAS CHEER

We’ll be visiting, delivering cookies to and sharing a little holiday cheer with our homebound members. The home-baked cookies are available for delivery on December 7th. We have 15 homebound members whom we would like to visit. The sign up sheets will be available in December. Thank you to Marie LePage, Natalie Jaeger and Joyce Favre for baking the cookies.

Thank you!
The Sew and Sew Quilters thank everyone who sponsored a quilt on Quilt Blessing Sunday in September. Funds received covered the shipping costs and then some for the 25 quilts sent to Lutheran World Relief. We also thank those folks who donate “sewing stuff” throughout the year. We appreciate all of your support to our quilting ministry.

Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, which is Christ the Lord.
Luke 2:10-11

Operation Christmas Stocking
Oct. 30th – Dec. 4

Operation Christmas Stocking is First Lutheran’s annual holiday outreach remembering those in need in our church, community and Synod. Throughout the month of December we will be distributing decorated Christmas mugs with hot cocoa packets and sweets, gift totes for the men and women that visit our food pantry and decorated children’s Christmas stockings. We will also deliver men’s totes to Serenity Inn, our Synod supported program for recovering substance abusers.

We would like to thank the community and congregation members at First Lutheran and Nativity Lutheran for your donations of money and items that fill our holiday gift packages. We also could not do this special project without the people that help sew and decorate our children’s stockings, as well as the people who knit hats, mittens and scarves. Thank you Matt Grulke for knitting for us again this year, and Sandy Hager, a new knitting volunteer. Linda Grulke’s co-workers always go above and beyond to help us fill the Christmas stockings. The food pantry tables will be decorated with holiday picture frames made and donated by Colleen Siarnicki.

NEW MEMBERS

We will recognize new members at all services during the weekend of January 21-22.
**Nativity Christmas Concert**  
**Celebrates the 200th Anniversary of the Silent Night Text**

In 1816 Fr. Joseph Mohr created the text to "Silent Night!" in the form of a poem in Mariapfarr in the Lungau region of Austria where he was living at the time. 1818, in the schoolhouse of Arnsdorf, on Christmas Eve, school teacher and church organist Franz Xavier Gruber composed a melody to fit the text. "Silent Night! Holy Night!" had its world premiere on Christmas Eve 1818 in the St. Nicholas church of Oberndorf near Salzburg, performed by Gruber and Fr. Mohr.

On Sat., Dec. 17th, at 1:30 p.m., soprano Susan Platt and organist Dennis Jon Wolfgang will be joined by Byron Jones, (bass/baritone), the Incarnation Lutheran Gospel Choir, and Incarnation organist James Stoebe in a celebration of Silent Night including a performance of Gruber’s original version of Silent Night and performances of Silent Night in different styles and arrangements.

The concert will be full of other holiday favorites and an audience sing-a-long. The concert is free though free will offerings will be made to cover expenses. A reception will follow.

**POINSETTIA ORDERS**

It’s time to sign up for poinsettias at both churches to decorate for Christmas. The deadline for sign-up at First Lutheran is Sun., Dec. 4th. The deadline for sign-up at Nativity Lutheran is Sun., Dec. 11th. The sign-up sheets are in the narthex at each church. Poinsettias can be picked up following the Christmas Day worship services. Let's make the sanctuaries beautiful for Christmas Eve and Christmas!

**THE ANIMALS CHRISTMAS EVE**

The Sunday School Christmas Program will be presented at First Lutheran on Sunday, December 18th at 9:00 a.m. Family and friends are invited to join us in worship to learn the Christmas story from our children. Following the worship service, join us in the Fireside Room for coffee and refreshments.

**Caroling at the V.A.**

We will be caroling at the VA on Thurs, Dec 8. We’ll meet at First Lutheran at 1:30 and carpool to the VA hospital on 51st and National. We will be visiting the older veterans who live at the VA and singing our old, favorite carols. Song books are provided and all singers are welcome. Sign up in the narthex at First or call the church office.
Stewardship Update...

We are taking a slightly different approach to our Stewardship program this year. Pastor Bryant and President Dave Grulke spoke to us in church in November emphasizing our continued need for Stewardship—both financial and personal involvement. This will be followed in December by two letters from Pastor Bryant. Pledge cards will be mailed with one of these letters.

Our Stewardship program will culminate on Sunday, January 15th, with a brunch after the service where we will celebrate our involvement in our church, the generous legacy left to us by Jackie Judkins and the returning of our pledge cards.

Werner Bayer
Chairman, Stewardship Committee

Endowment Fund Action...

At their meeting on 11/3, First Lutheran’s Endowment Committee voted to recommend to the Church Council the following:

1) The permanent resolution to establish the Mission Endowment Fund of First Lutheran Church of West Allis
2) A Gift Acceptance Policy for First Lutheran Church
3) A pledge that 10% of the Endowment Fund’s gain shall be given to others annually
4) Annex Wealth Management as managers of Endowment Fund
5) In the spirit of first fruits giving, a tithe of 10% of the initial fund balance shall be given to others. The elected Endowment Committee will determine the recipients and proportions of this tithe.

Having achieved their assigned task, this Committee is now dissolved. A permanent Committee of five members will be elected at the Annual congregational meeting held in February, 2017.

At the meeting on 11/10/16, the council approved the above recommendations to be voted on at the annual meeting in February. Copies of the approved documents are available in the narthex.

Earl Casto, Chairman
**Happenings Here**

Nativity Quilters (above) gave Pastor Bryant a lesson in tying quilts. First Lutheran Sew & Sews took a quilting break to decorate stockings for Operation Christmas Stocking.

**GOOD SAMARITAN OUTREACH CENTER**

Please continue to bring donations of food for Good Samaritan Outreach Center. They are also requesting donations of Bibles. There is a box in the narthex at Nativity for your donations.

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**Overcoming Despair**

Christmas can be a difficult time for people who are hurting or grieving. In the 1860s, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow had reason to despair: America was at war with itself, his son was severely wounded in battle and his wife died in a fire. The first Christmas after his wife’s death, Longfellow wrote, “How inexpressibly sad are all holidays.”

Three years later, on Christmas Day 1864, Longfellow penned a poem that later became the song “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.” The lyrics move from despair to hope — and, thanks to Jesus, so can we.

And in despair I bowed my head.
There is no peace on earth, I said!
For hate is strong, and mocks the song
of peace on earth, good will to men!

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
God is not dead, nor doth he sleep!
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
with peace on earth, good will to men!
Local Opportunities

CLEMENT MANOR
Center for Enrichment
9405 W. Howard Ave., Greenfield

Lifelong Learning Book Club - 1st Tue. at 12pm
   December 6 - The Art of Hearing Heartbeats by Jan Philip-Sendker

Tuesday's Bridge Group - Every Tuesday at 9:00 a.m.

Club Loomineers - A No-Needle Knitting Group. Meets First Wednesday of every month 12pm

Write-On: A Weekly Writer’s Group - Meets every Wednesday from 1-2pm. Any kind of writing you want.

Early Stage Support Group - Meets first Monday of each month from 2:30-4pm. For those in early stages of Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia and their care partners.

Alzheimer’s Assoc. Family/Caregiver Support
   Meets third Wednesday of each month from 2-3pm.
   Call 546-7302 for registration or information.

Interfaith Older Adult Programs is collecting gifts for individuals who will be alone during the holiday. Items such as coffee, tea, bath soap, large print crosswords & word searches, stationary and Pick ‘n Save gift cards are some of the needed items. Donations can be taken to 1236 S. 115th St., West Allis, by Mon., Dec. 12th. They’re also always in need of volunteers to work with seniors. Call 414-774-1747 for more information.

West Allis
Community Alliance Against Drugs
New Year’s Eve Family Night
West Allis Central High School
8516 W. Lincoln Ave.
Saturday, December 31st
6:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Enjoy food, basketball & volleyball, face painting, music and family swim, Balloon drop at 9:45 p.m. Food & attraction tickets 4 for $1. All night wristband for inflatable attractions $5. $6 per person ages 4 & older. CAAD members admitted free. $20 per family annual membership.

On the Lighter Side

Share the Magic of the Season with Library Square Holiday Open House
Saturday, December 10
1:30 – 3:00 pm

- Delightful music that will get you in the holiday spirit
- Model Train Exhibit put on by Milwaukee Lionel Railroad Club
- Delicious Holiday Treats
- Christmas Carol Bingo at 2:30 pm
- Tours of Library Square will be available

“First Church will do anything to steal our Christmas pageant surprises!”
This ‘n That Around Here

Oh, the weather outside is frightful!

In case of REALLY bad weather, check out TMJ4.com/closings. Or watch WTMJ Channel 4. If worship services or activities need to be cancelled because of the weather, you can find out at one of these sites.

FIRST LUTHERAN FINANCES 2015

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need pastoral care? contact us!

Please remember to notify the pastor or church office if you are ill or hospitalized so that we can offer prayer and support directly to you. If you have a pastoral emergency (hospitalization, death in the family, etc.,) you can reach Pastor Bryant by calling him at (414)856-7672.

BIBLE QUIZ...

How many wise men followed a star to Bethlehem to worship Jesus?

A. two
B. three
C. four
D. We don’t know because the Bible doesn’t say.

Answer: (See Matthew 2:1-12.)

HOMEBOUND?
ON VACATION?

If you’ve been away, or are homebound and unable to get to church, listen to Pastor Bryant’s wonderful sermons by clicking on the Sermon button on First Lutheran’s website at www.firstlutheranelca.org.

COUNCIL INFO...

If you want to keep up with the actions of the First Lutheran church council and committee, you can find minutes and reports posted on the bulletin board outside the church office.

E.L.L.F. (Exercise, Listening, Learning and Fellowship) - also known as Senior Exercise, will not meet at Nativity in December. Classes will resume in January. This is a great way for seniors to stay in shape and help keep mobile. Most exercises are done sitting in chairs, or standing with chairs used for balance. Following class there is always coffee and treats. Why not make going to class a new year’s resolution? It’s never too late to start taking care of yourself!
This ‘n That Around Here

Winter Anniversaries!

First Lutheran
12/11  Carrie & Joseph Muffler
12/12  Garrett & Cindy Labadie
1/14   Wayne & Lucy Wagner

Nativity Lutheran
No December or January Anniversaries

Nativity Lutheran
Birthdays
12/4  Roger Reinert
12/5  Marcus DeBack
12/13  Maureen Jones
12/18  Wallace Buske
12/29  Joshua Avendano
12/31  Lorraine Kuchma
12/31  Lori Leiser
1/4   Gary Soerfass
1/5   Katie Bakkum
1/7   Alexander Leiser
1/21  Anna Sullivan

First Lutheran
Birthdays
12/1  Monica Bayer
12/2  Linda Kaehler
12/5  Jennifer Roessler
12/6  Kenneth Masch
12/12  Crystal Zehe
12/17  Gayle Falk
12/17  Crystal Wegener
12/18  Kathleen Santos
12/20  Jason Zehe
12/22  Maxx Jaeger
12/27  Michael Temke
12/28  Donald Moncher
12/29  Joy Dowd
12/29  Dorian Jaeger
1/1   Nancy Krizan
1/5   Katie Bakkum
1/6   Robert Laturi
1/9   Jill Petermann
1/11  Carla Ullerich
1/12  Christina Behmke
1/14  Timothy Wegener
1/15  Melissa Wallow
1/21  John Isaacson
1/30  Lois Taylor
1/31  Joshua Armstrong

Please keep in your prayers the families of Virginia Martin, who died on October 15th, and Michael Dowd, who died on October 22nd. May the hope of the resurrection give them peace.

PRAYER CAN HELP...
If serious illness or other life factors affect you or those you love, contact the church office and we will send your request through our prayer chain. We have people who will pray for your need. If you are interested in joining a prayer chain, contact the church office.

As a community we pray for those with immediate needs of healing and strength:
Elsie Boese, Laverne Breed, Don Brauch, Wally Buske, Steve Clark, Terry Favre, Patricia Frailey, Tom Hackl, Leah Halvorson, Jean Leppien, Jody Monty, Dennis Schoberg Sr., Chrystel Schumann

For our homebound members & those with ongoing concerns:
From Nativity: Carol Garza, Ruby Horst, Dorothea Isermann, Louise Kohn, Lorraine Kuchma, James Larson, Harriet Miller, Helen Peterson, Jeanne Vermeulen

From First: Gail Bartolera, Pastor Tim Benninghoff, Marlin Bradway, Beverly Brunn, Marie Casto, LaVerne Guthrie, Pr. Henry Hammerling, John Isaacson, Earl Junck, Alfred Korth, Betty Roeder, Myra Shields, Joyce Staub, Lois Taylor, Barbara Troller and Pat Zuback

For all those serving in the armed forces:
Sean Brown, Robert Chrzanowski, Jason Dowhie, Andrew Dowd, David MacDonald, Sam Rogers, Robert Simmer and Zach Tennison
First and Nativity
Lutheran Churches (ELCA)
Office Hours: Monday thru Friday 9am to 12pm
Office located at 7400 W. Lapham, West Allis
(414)476-4664

Rev. Bryant Bakkum, Pastor
Henry Hammerling, Pastor Emeritus at First
Dennis Jon Wolfgang, Dir. of Music/Organist
Jamie Schoberg, Sunday School Superintendent
Barb Reed, Secretary
Natalie Jaeger, Custodian, First Lutheran

Worship With Us:
Saturdays at 5:30 p.m. First Lutheran
Sundays at 9:00 a.m. at First Lutheran
Sundays at 11:00 a.m. at Nativity Lutheran

Sunday School is at 9:00 a.m. on Sundays
at First Lutheran

If you no longer wish to continue receiving this newsletter, please contact the church office.