

News & Views

First Lutheran Church

April, 2020



Jesus, promises us saying, “I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me”. (John 10:14)

Dear First Friends, Family and Flock,

This has been a very unusual way to start my time with you as pastor. I hope we have a chance to be together soon.

Our Lenten journey was interrupted by Covid-19, but it continues through our time of physical distance. We suddenly may feel like monks that have taken stricter vows than we intended this year! Throughout the rest of these 40 days, when we turn on the news we will be reminded of the reality that “we are dust and to dust we shall return”. But Lent is also intended to be a time for us to assess our lives, to reflect on what is important and what isn’t. It’s a chance for us to experience living without things that we like, but that aren’t essential for life, and showing that life goes on even if we don’t have “what we want when we want it”.

Now our whole society has been invited into a Lenten fast. Those of us that have practiced Lenten discipline and these fasts may be more prepared for the realities of this post Covid-19 life than those that do not, but I know it is still hard for us too. And it’s scary to face the unknown. A lot of us want to deny the threats and we all hope that the worst possibilities will not emerge, but this already is a time of hardship that may get worse. God will not magically take us out of this valley, but God has found a way into it with us and we need to remind each other of God’s presence in the days ahead.

I just hosted our first online Bible study on Zoom, a program that we have been helping people join so that we can still see and hear each other while we are apart. We all checked in one by one and named things that were most challenging for us about being physically apart and isolated and also the things that we have been able to appreciate during this unique time.

It is important for us to find ways to balance the fears and strangeness of this time, with the stories of hope and encouragement that bring us strength to get us through. The First Lutheran community wants to be a source of strength for you during this time, but we need some help from you too!

In the coming days we will ask you to participate in a survey either through your computers or phones that will help us connect you with your church family. This is not something to annoy you or for you to dismiss. This is an essential church “census” that will help us follow Jesus’ lead of counting and knowing all the sheep in our flock. In times like this we need to care for each other and encourage one another and this will help us do that—so we remember that we are never alone when we walk in faith.

We hope to be together soon. We may not be able to gather together on Easter Sunday like we planned, but whenever we come together again to worship it will be Easter!

I pray you will experience God’s blessings and companionship on your journey.

Pastor Josh

Christian Life



TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

While we're all maintaining safe distances from one another, you're welcome to join our Tuesday morning online Bible Study. If you're interested, contact the church office and we'll send you the information you'll need to sign on with us.

We'll take a break from the book "Bible Women: All Their Words and Why They Matter" and will try Bible Studies led by Pastor Josh based on the texts for the next Sunday. You can go to: www.workingpreacher.org to find the texts, commentaries and other resources for future Sundays.



As a community we pray for those with immediate needs of healing and strength:

Gary Hanson, Shannon Irvine, John Isaacson, Carrie Pflugradt, Dan Sopa, Jan Stasiak and Rachel Tripi

AN ORGANIST UPDATE!

After having a quadruple bypass our organist, Gary, is doing well.

He was released after 12 days in the hospital to his sister's home. She is a retired nurse and watches over him like a hawk. Her home is in a beautiful countryside location and they're keeping isolated from outside sources, but able to take nice walks in the fresh air.



Happy EASTER!



Our Spring theme this year is "Builders in the Bible". Each week we include a lesson about special events and people in the Bible. Along with a weekly lesson there are crafts, science, games and music. Our March/April lessons include Wedding in Cana, Jacobs Ladder, Jacobs Bowl, Ruth & Naomi, A Room for Elisha, The Last Supper, The Cross, Palm Sunday and Esther the Queen. When we studied the Wedding in Cana we didn't turn water into wine but Greta and the children did an experiment called "Walking Water". Linda talked about friendship between Ruth and Naomi and how the disciples became friends of Jesus. She is teaching the children the Twelve Disciples song.

First Lutheran Happenings



What a change a month can make. We are facing difficult times and difficult decisions. Know that the Executive Committee and Council at large, along with Pastor Josh, have met, discussed and all decisions made have had the safety, health and welfare in mind of those entering our FLC doors. This includes FLC members, group meetings, pantry attendees and those involved with food distribution. All recommendations by the CDC, federal, state and local health departments have been followed. While most of the decisions made have been totally out of our hands, there is still much in our control as a community of brothers and sisters in Christ. We need to remain connected whether through prayer, phone calls, e-mails, cards and letters. I believe we can become a stronger Christian community through banding together---“Onward Christian Soldiers”---the battle is COVID-19, a destructive virus that is testing many of us with social distancing, self-isolation, hand washing and disinfecting, feelings of separation and loneliness.

We turn on our TV’s and constantly hear the numbers of positive testing individuals, the rapid spreading, deaths, those losing their jobs, small business owners struggling for survival and families facing financial difficulties not to mention school and child care closures and needing to home school. Reports say “the worst is yet to come”, so what does this mean??? Many question, “Where is God in all this?” There’s the confusion, questions, uncertainty, fear of the unknown and when will life return to **normalcy**. I believe there will be a new normal and I believe God is present in our midst because I know His love, grace and protection is with us. I also believe the Holy Spirit is guiding and directing total strangers to help neighbors with stretched out hands of help and support—directly and/or indirectly to meet their needs. I encourage each of us to make our needs known and those able to “step up” and assist, do so with faith and Christian love. I also believe that any of those “not here yet” will recognize the love of Jesus and open their hearts, minds and souls and invite the Holy Spirit to bring them to their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My final thought occurred the other day when a sales clerk noticed me standing and looking at all the pretty little Easter dresses and bonnets and she remarked “Easter is cancelled for this year” and my eyes filled with tears. I felt instantly sad for her. It was in that very moment that the Holy Spirit warmed my heart, put a smile on my face and I boldly replied to her “Easter is never cancelled because I know that Christ died and rose again for my sins, salvation and promise of everlasting life”. Christ is Risen and no-body or COVID-19 can ever change that.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I wish you and your loved one’s a Blessed Easter. Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed---Hallelujah!!!!

Heidi Leiser-O’Neil
Council President

POSTPONED:-(



Our Spring Craft and Vendor Fair has been postponed. Be sure to check our website for updates!

The “Meet the Authors” event that was scheduled for March 24th was cancelled and will be postponed until next year.



Challenged to Care

We are all challenged to care for others even though we sometimes doubt our ability to take care of ourselves! Each week our food pantry provides a hot lunch and a bag of groceries (food for the body) plus scripture and prayer (food for the soul). Last year we served 3,200 lunches and provided over 1,400 bags of food to area families, seniors and the homeless.

Please consider donating to our “Dare to Care” food pantry fundraiser, which runs until Easter Sunday, April 12. Donating is easy during this challenging time, either mail your donation to church clearly marked for food pantry, or give online using the new link on our church web page. Click the link to Give Plus, select the fund you’d like to donate to (food pantry), enter the amount, enter your check book information or credit card and click to “give”.



Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

.....Luke 9:16-17



We owe a huge thanks to Friends of LaFollette Park for their generous donation of \$353 and boxes of food, all of which were collected at their annual Empty Bowls fundraiser.



Thanks to all of our food pantry volunteers during this challenging time.

OPERATION CHRISTMAS STOCKING

accepts monetary donations year-round, as well as the items needed to fill the stockings and bags distributed at Christmas. For a list of needed items, contact the church office.



Hold the Date!

The Post Office food drive is May 9th. We will need helpers at All Saints Church in Oak Creek and here at First Lutheran. Watch for information next month.

Meet Our New Pastor!

Pastor Josh Graber joins us after serving Mt. Zion Lutheran in Wauwatosa as their Interim Senior Pastor. Prior to that he was the Founder, Developer and Director of Abundant Life Together. The primary focus of ALT was developing and facilitating a discipleship gap year for young adults called ALT Year. Pastor Josh based this ELCA ministry in New Haven, Connecticut before moving it to Toledo, Ohio. He has a passion for ministry that reaches people where they are at while inviting them into a life of faith that engages a love for humanity, art, nature, and justice.



Pastor Josh was born in Washington State near Holden Village (www.holdenvillage.org) a remote Lutheran retreat center in an abandoned mining village deep in the Cascade Mountains. This unique Christian community shaped the lives of his family and their friends. In 2017, Pastor Josh returned to Holden to serve as visiting pastor.

Pastor Josh grew up in a small town on Lake Pepin, a wide point of the Mississippi River, and what the locals call the West Coast of Wisconsin. His parents still live there in their retirement. Pastor Josh's father was an English teacher, lay minister and poet and his mother was a homemaker, writer, editor and waitress at his uncle's restaurant in Pepin, WI. He has an older sister who is a talented artist and a great mom, who lives with her family in Minnesota and a brother who is a professor at Valparaiso University in Indiana where he lives with his family. Pastor Josh spent much of his summers growing up either at his family's rustic cabin in the North Woods or the Mount Carmel Retreat Center in Alexandria, Minnesota where his aunt and uncle were directors.

He received his bachelor's degree from Trinity Lutheran College in Issaquah, WA, and his Master of Divinity from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. He was chosen for the Transition into Ministry program during his First Call to Trinity Lutheran in Moorhead, MN which allowed him to meet influential theologians like Eugene Peterson and get specialized training through the Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE). During his twelve years in ministry he has received training in community organizing, mission development, coaching, and interim leadership, and he hopes to use this training to equip all members at First to become better leaders and ministers who can help lead First into a promising future..

Pastor Josh spends much of his free time with his girlfriend, Sarah and her son Paul. Since moving to Milwaukee, he has taken improv classes at Comedy Sportz and Ampersand Theater. He loves exploring the small businesses and restaurants of Milwaukee's many neighborhoods and the parks and lakefront of this beautiful part of Wisconsin. He enjoys sports, playing fantasy football with his cousins, and taking photographs.

He is happy to be called to serve at First Lutheran, where he hopes people remember Jesus said that last will be First! This is his personal ministry statement that he submitted in his ELCA Rostered Minister Profile, "As a pastor I get to help people connect stories of their lives to God's story of grace, love, and hope. I get to convene God's conversation with humanity about the gift of Jesus Christ and connect it to the stories of justice and transformation in the communities and the world around me. The power of my witness comes in knowing that as I carry these stories, and am blessed to share them, they also carry me."

"FAITHBOOK" Quips from Facebook

"Faith isn't a feeling. It is a choice to trust God, even when the road ahead seems uncertain."

"I guess God got so mad about all of our fighting down here that he sent us all to our rooms."

This and that around here.....

CHURCH COUNCIL ACTIVITY

Feb. 19, 2020 Meeting

- Election of Officers

NEW BUSINESS

- Pastor Joshua Graber accepted compensation pkg. If approved, will be called to a 3-yr. term call. He presented a document stating how he views his leadership at First Lutheran.
- Congregational meeting to approve call will be held on March 8.

OLD BUSINESS

- Snow clearing service has been hired.
- Complaints regarding cleaning should be forwarded to Barb Reed.

Next meeting will be held on 3/18/20.



**HUNGER TASK FORCE
STOCK BOX DELIVERY**
WEST ALLIS SENIOR CENTER
7001 W. NATIONAL AVE.

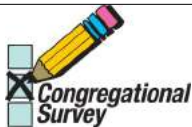
The next distributions at the Senior Center will be on April 14th between 1-2 p.m.

A REASON TO LAUGH



The week after Easter, some churches observe Holy Humor Sunday — a tradition dating back to the 4th century. Early Christian theologians coined the term "*risus paschalis*," or "the Easter laugh," saying God played the supreme joke on death. Some believers celebrated Bright Monday, gathering the day after Easter to mock Satan's defeat.

On the first day of April, remember that "we are fools for Christ" (1 Corinthians 4:10, NIV). Then later in the month, take time to smile and laugh, knowing that victory is yours, thanks to Jesus.



HAVE YOU COMPLETED YOUR SURVEY?

We've created a survey to update contact info and find the best way of connecting members. Online members will be sent a link where each household can update their own information. Other members will be contacted by phone. Please take the time to give us this important information. Thank you!

LET LAUGHTER SPRING FORTH

"Spring is when you feel like whistling, even with a shoe full of slush." (Doug Larson)

"Easter is the only time when it's perfectly safe to put all of your eggs in one basket." (Evan Esar)

"Spring is the time of year when it is summer in the sun and winter in the shade."
(Charles Dickens)

"The world is mud-luscious and puddle wonderful." (e.e. cummings)

A NOTE FROM ERAS SENIOR NETWORK (formerly Interfaith)

Services Provided During COVID-19

Medical Appointments: Transportation to essential medical appointments through volunteers.

Grocery Delivery: Volunteers are available to grocery shop for clients and deliver food pantry stock boxes to those in need of food.

Phone Calls to Seniors: We are beginning to place wellness check-in calls to our clients to ensure they have what they need, and to provide a break from social isolation.

Milwaukee County: 414-488-6500, Waukesha County: 262-549-3348.

April Birthdays

4/6 Kevin Lone
4/9 Janell Cyrus
4/9 Skylar Fox
4/13 Sandy Wymelenberg
4/14 Louis Cyrus
4/18 Jennifer Herbert
4/20 John Bennethum
4/22 LaVerne Williams
4/26 Terrence Favre
4/29 John Dixon
4/29 Colleen Siarnicki



April Anniversaries

4/27 Werner & Jackie Bayer 63 yrs.

As you have probably already heard activity at the First Lutheran building is suspended until further notice due to Covid-19. We look forward to being back together when it is safe! Please go to firstlutheranelca.org to find out how we are meeting and connecting online and sign up for our daily email."



Many thanks to Pastor Kelly Taylor-Schaus for all of her support of First Lutheran during the last few months!

Bible Quiz

Three of the Gospels tell that when Jesus was crucified, darkness covered the earth from noon until three in the afternoon. Which Gospel does not mention this event?

- A. Matthew
- B. Mark
- C. Luke
- D. John



Answer: See Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, and John 19



Friendly Reminders

Don't Forget to notify the church office of any address, phone or email changes!

Need pastoral care?

Please remember to notify the 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 during non-office hours (death in the family, hospitalization, etc.) contact Pastor Josh at (414)476-4664, ext. 2.

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West Allis, WI 53214

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Worship With Us:
Saturdays at 5:30 p.m.
Sundays at 9:00 a.m.

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

Office Hours: Monday thru Friday 9am to 12pm
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