

News & Views

First Lutheran Church

January, 2021



New Beginnings!

A message from the pastor

When I ran a young adult gap year experience in Toledo, Ohio, part of my orientation week was an exercise called the “Steeple Chase”. Perhaps you have heard of the term “Holy Toledo” before. There are a few versions of how this small city in Northwest Ohio got this moniker. One is that it was a place where mob figures during prohibition would try to get to, with the promise that if they made it to Toledo, they could “Hole up” there for a time and be safe. In fact, my apartment in Toledo used to be the hangout of Al Capone’s gang when they were “vacationing” in Toledo. But the other story that probably is the original reason for the term “Holy Toledo” came from the amazing number of steeples in this city. Milwaukee is another holy city where it’s easy to note the impact of churches on the life and skyline of the city.



In the Steeple Chase exercise, that we did with our ALT Year young adults, I split them up in teams and had them drive, walk or bike in different directions, going from steeple to steeple as they appeared on their trip. At each stop they would look at the church building and identify what about the outside of the building communicated to those outside of it, something about what happened on the inside and what the people that gathered there cared about. What were the values, identity, history of the community connected to that building... and would anyone know it without going inside? The team would also knock on the door and if anyone answered they would ask questions about the connection between the church and the neighborhood. Often no one was there, but sometimes they would get tours of buildings and

Continued next page.....

“Let our New Year’s resolution be this: we will be there for one another as fellow members of humanity, In the finest sense of the word.”

Göran Persson



Continued from p. 1

good conversations with church staff and pastors. Sometimes they even helped the churches think about their mission in new ways.

First Lutheran's mission is "Reaching out in our community to share the Word of God" and we do that in many ways. Our messaging outside our building, on our door and on our sign case, lets people know we are not meeting here currently and where to find out information about us and who the pastor is. A sign above our front door lets people know what our name is and that we are a part of the ELCA. And underneath that sign is a message that I know. It is a sign that says something about who we are and what to expect if you enter into the building: New Beginnings.

When we reach out in our community to share the word of God, this is one of the ways that FLC has chosen to do that work. "New Beginnings" is a promise that we can always start again, and renew and revitalize our lives in new ways. It is a promise that this is a community where we can be honest with ourselves and God and others, and when we do that we can always see things in a new light.

As we begin a new year in our annual calendars and a new season of Epiphany in our church calendars, we are thinking of New Beginnings. Isn't it amazing how many times we have had new beginnings and new adjustments to our lives in the past months? We may all be leaning into the promise of a return to a normal we remember from before the pandemic, but I hope we also lean into the promise of a new beginning together as we enter into what's next.

Epiphany is a time to reflect and celebrate how we are part of God's manifestation and appearance in this world and neighborhood through our church building, our community, and more and more through our presence online. Epiphany is also a time when we can go out and see how God is at work around us, in other churches, and also in places and people we may not always expect or see as carriers of the gospel.

First Luther church council wants to invite you into exploring what's next and those questions of our church history, identity, values, community presence and mission. We are looking for new members who are interested in leading this church into new beginnings and investing in conversations with me and other leaders as we explore where God is leading us next!

.....Pastor Josh



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

Mary Dana, Joy Dowd, Diane Gallegos, Dale Hedman, , Joan Hirschinger, Jim Ribnek, Mary Selner, Jan Stasiak, Rachel Tripi, Cooper Venticue, Kimberly Zappa and Becky

*God has called you
and placed you
where you are for
His purpose. ...*



There will be several openings available on our 2021 church Council. Please consider a "yes" to serving God and your church. Meetings are on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 7pm. Until we can gather again, the meetings will be on Zoom. You can join by computer, tablet, smart phone or just dial in using your regular phone or cell phone using a special phone number and code. There is lots of help available. Help us move our congregation forward in 2021 and beyond.

.....Nominating Committee

Christian Life

JANUARY SUNDAY SCHOOL



Our Sunday school continues to meet on Zoom. We usually meet twice a month on Saturday mornings around 9:00. We are still looking for guest readers for the lesson story. We learned a special 12 Days of Christmas that we sang for a virtual Christmas program. A favorite craft was a graham cracker and gum drop Nativity scene that we could eat later for a snack. If you have children or grandkids that would be interested in joining the class, contact the church office.

TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY



Beginning on Jan. 5th, we'll resume our study of Bible women. Join us on Tuesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. for thought-provoking Bible Studies led by Pastor Josh. We use Zoom for the studies and you can Zoom from your computer or just from your telephone. Contact the office for more information. We'd love to have new members!



December's
Sunday
School Project:

Gingerbread
Manger Scenes



Thanks to our teachers:

Linda Grulke and
Greta Plicka



We're doing God's work



GREETINGS BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST:

First, thank you for all the prayers for my recovery from Covid-19 which has taken the better part of this past month. I am feeling much better. I continue to pray for the health, safety and well-being for each of you and your families as we continue to struggle with increasing numbers of illness and death in our country.

I thank the Council for their continued efforts to provide worship opportunities including Zoom, outside under the tent and most recently the partnership with Luther Memorial for shared worship. The willingness to "look outside the box", although not always what "we" want, provides worship options. The Holy Spirit is ever present in His loving presence and guidance.

As "we" move forward in uncertain times with Covid, flu season, worship and government issues, etc., the constant and reassurance of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ for His children is our strength. Hold fast to the love of Jesus and our faith to bring us through the rough times.

As we all prepare for the new year, I would like to share the following prayer:

Loving God, help us remember the birth of Jesus that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds and worship of the wise men. Amen.

On behalf of the entire Council best wishes for a blessed new year filled with joy, happiness and love.

Happy New Year,
Heidi Leiser-O'Neil, Council President

PS: Covid-19 is on Santa's naughty list. We need to laugh!!!!

OPERATION CHRISTMAS STOCKING

On Fridays, Dec. 11th and 18th, we handed out 62 decorated mason jars filled with laundry detergent, 32 gift bags for men and 30 gift bags for women. This year we provided 58 stockings filled with age appropriate items for the children and grandchildren of those who attend our First Lutheran Food Pantry. The week of Dec. 14th Jackie and Warner Bayer delivered men's totes and Holiday mugs to the men at Serenity Inn, a program supported by our Synod.

We would like to thank the members of First Lutheran and the community members who donated cash and items used to fill the gift bags, and toys for the children's stockings.

Respectfully submitted,
Co-Chairs Greta Plicka and Colleen Siarnicki



Thanks to our faithful Cookie bakers and packers, decorated boxes of Christmas cookies (right) were delivered to our homebound members.

Thank you to those who donated poinsettias to decorate the church for our Christmas videos.



Werner and Jackie Bayer in celebration of two new great-granddaughters

Shirley Cogan in memory of her parents, Norman and Dorothy Cogan

Shirley Cogan in honor of her sister, Donna Douglas and her two children, Jacquelyn and James Jay

Joy Dowd in memory of Mike Dowd

Gayle and Jerry Falk in celebration of Maxwell Falk and Elliott Falk

Gayle and Dan Sopa for prayers answered

Gayle and Dan Sopa in memory of loved ones

Jeanne Stummeier in memory of her brother, Dan

Wayne and Lucy Wagner in memory of loved ones



The Lord bless you and keep you! May the Lord let His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!

And may you all have a blessed, healthy and Happy New Year.

MANY THANKS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CHRISTMAS EVE!

Thank you to Pastor Josh, Gary Hanson and Dave Grulke for all of their work as part of the Christmas Eve worship service at Luther Memorial where we partnered with Luther Memorial and Mt. Hope. The tiny dot in the center of the circle in the picture below is Pastor Josh leading worship. Gary made numerous trips to the church to record Christmas hymns and Dave spent hours working on set-up and putting together the music selections. Thanks to all of you!





"Faithbook" Quips

Before you sleep, Pray
When you wake up, Pray
When life gets hard, Pray
When you're happy, Pray
If you are unsure, Pray
God is always with Us, Amen!

At the end of the day, I am thankful that my blessings are bigger than my problems.

- Positivity in Life

"If we approach with faith, we too will see Jesus ... for the Eucharistic table takes the place of the crib.

Here, the Body of the Lord is present, wrapped not in swaddling clothes but in the rays of the Holy Spirit."

—St. John Chrysostom (347-407)



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT RESOLUTIONS?



The Bible certainly encourages us to examine our lives and resolve to change them if necessary (although not just at the beginning of a new year). The Psalmist, for example, made a resolution to keep his speech pure: "I have planned no evil; my mouth has not transgressed" (Psalm 17:3).

Why, however, do so many of our resolutions fail? Sometimes it's simply because they aren't realistic. Instead, they're only wishful thinking, with no way to make them actually happen. For example, you might resolve to make a million dollars this year, but if you don't have any way to earn it, it probably isn't going to happen. Other resolutions fail because we aren't willing to make the sacrifices necessary to reach them.

But the real problem is within ourselves - within our own hearts and minds. We'd all like to be better people, but no matter how hard we try, we find ourselves tripped up by our own moral failures and weaknesses. Even the Apostle Paul experienced this: "I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (Romans 7:18).

What is the solution? The solution is to turn to God, confessing our sins to Him and seeking His help to live the way we should. Begin the New Year by turning to Jesus Christ and inviting Him into your life. Then ask Him to help you become the person He wants you to be. This is what Paul did, and that's why he could say, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

Begin the New Year with Christ, Billy Graham Evangelistic Assoc.

JUST A NOTE...

As 2020 draws to a close, I'd like to thank everyone at First Lutheran for all of the support you've given me through this year of challenges. I appreciate each and every one of you and I hope you know what an amazing church First Lutheran is. Through the challenges of Covid, you've continued to support the ministries of the church, whether through your offerings, emails, food pantry, Bible Study, Operation Christmas Stocking and worship services online. I know that once the church is able to open again, you'll be stronger for what you've been through and have a new appreciation for your community.

God bless you all,
Barb Reed

This 'n That Around Here



January Birthdays

- 1/1 Nancy Krizan
- 1/11 Carla Ullerich
- 1/12 Christina Behmke
- 1/12 Maria Sanchez
- 1/21 John Isaacson

January Anniversaries

- 1/14 Wayne & Lucy Wagner 60 yrs.

Thanks From..

John Bennethum for the cards, prayers, phone calls, cookies and afghan.

Best wishes to Roger and Betsy Gray (below) who are pulling up stakes and moving to Chicago. We'll miss you both on Food Pantry Fridays!



Supporting Our Church - It's Easy!

First Lutheran offers Simply Giving, through which you can donate weekly or monthly without having to write out checks. You can also make donations on our website. For more information contact Dave Grulke or the church office.

Thank You!

To Stuart Mitchell who provided music for us in December

To West Allis Community Improvement Foundation for their generous donations to our food pantry.

To Lily, a student at Divine Savior Holy Angels, who collected 16 bags of food for our food pantry.

To AA Group 23 for their donation to our church.

A COLORFUL body

Melt crayons to show how the body of Christ works together.



What you need:

- Crayons
- Metal baking sheet
- Adult help
- Metal gingerbread man cookie cutter

What you do:

1. Remove labels and break crayons into 1-inch pieces.
2. Scatter pieces on the baking sheet, about two layers thick.
3. Bake for 10 minutes at 350 degrees until melted. Allow to cool 15 minutes.
4. When melted crayons are the consistency of playdough, press the cookie cutter through them (while still on pan).
5. Cool the pan in freezer for 15 minutes until crayons are hardened.
6. Remove from pan and break apart the shapes.

Be sure to "Like" First Lutheran on Facebook and share with your friends!



In the story of the Magi, what word is used to give a sense of Jesus' age when the wise men visited? What does it tell us?

1. "baby"; Jesus was still a newborn in a manger
2. "child"; when the wise men visited, Jesus had grown past infancy
3. "youth"; Jesus was probably between 10 and 14
4. No word is used to suggest Jesus' age at the time of the wise men's visit.

Answer: See Matthew 2:1-12.



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Please check our website for information on
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