

News & Views

First Lutheran Church

December, 2023



From the Pastor.....

The Hungry Little Baby Who Feeds Us All

As we enter Advent and remember the Christ child's arrival, we live into the joy of this new life and all that it means for the life of the world. As a new father I know what a baby entering into the world means. I have gotten a first hand experience of the interruptions and the joys that a baby brings. It is not always peaceful and yet we think of the baby Jesus as bringing peace. We talk of this baby having authority, and that always seemed curious until I cared for a baby. Babies are born with an authority. They have certain demands that need to be met and if they are not met in a timely manner they will let you know about it, with loud wails until you cry "mercy" and attend to their needs.

The baby Jesus comes to us as an innocent and surprising gift for all the earth, starting with the shepherds who find where the baby was lying even though it was an unexpected place. That good news stretched and grew to be trumpeted around the world. The baby who started in an unexpected place brings good news that goes to unexpected places and unexpected people, even us!

But this baby, was also...a BABY! A real live, kicking, screaming, eating and pooping baby! And this baby had certain needs that needed to be met and we assume His mother Mary and father Joseph were the first to meet them.

But the wonder of this baby is that He meets our needs. This wiggling, cuddly tiny human holds the promise of a living God showing up on earth so every human could know divine love as the language of heaven and earth. And while Jesus was a real baby with real needs, we enter into the hope and belief that He was much more and that He was not just a joy for His parents and those that met Him that night, but a joy that stretches through time and space to let us know He's arrived! The same way you would be attentive to a baby crying in your home, imagine the cry of Jesus arriving in your life, startling you, waking you, reminding you of the needs of others and your call to care.

Happy Advent and Merry Christmas!

Pastor Josh



Christmas Eve
Candlelight Worship
4:00 p.m.

Christmas Day Worship
10:00 a.m.
Featuring Christmas
Carol Liturgy

You're Invited!

Sunday School
Christmas Program

DEC. 17th
at 10:00 a.m.

**"The Great Sunday
School Christmas
Game Show"**

Holiday Craft & Vendor Fair



ADVENT DEVOTIONS FROM ELCA WORLD HUNGER

We remember this Advent the cry of the real baby Jesus and wonder whether it was a cry of hunger. We at First Lutheran have named food ministry and nourishment as a central part of our identity and mission. This year you are invited to use the ELCA's World Hunger Advent Devotional and Advent Calendars to help us remember the reality of the baby Jesus and the reality of those around the world that cry out for their needs to be met. Let us respond to them as we would to Jesus, with care in loving and serving our brothers and sisters around the world, and celebrating this life that was the Bread of Life who came to bring life and spiritual and physical nourishment to all!

Pastor Josh



Mark your calendars! The Great Sunday School Christmas Game Show is coming to First Lutheran on Dec. 17th

We would like volunteers from the congregation to help our kids win big prizes and win team bragging rights. Please contact Lori Marquez or Linda Grulke if you'd like to take part or have any questions.

Stewardship continues to be the theme for Wonderful Wednesdays (5 pm). November topics were cheerful giving and being thankful. In December we will discuss the Christmas story and practice playing our games for the program..

Church COUNCIL

Actions voted by the Church Council at November 19, 2023 Meeting:

- The Christmas Eve service will be at 4:00 p.m.
- The next meeting of the church Council has been rescheduled to Saturday, December 16, at 10:00 a.m.
- We are preparing resolutions for the annual meeting.



TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

In December we'll be using the Advent Study Devotion Booklets from ELCA World Hunger, covering weekly topics of Revelation, Invitation, Vocation and Proclamation.

If you haven't been a part of our study group in the past, this would be a great time to join! The books can be found in the narthex. We meet at 10:00 a.m. in the Fireside Room. Come check it out!

DON'T MISS OUT!

In his poem "The Inn That Missed Its Chance," Amos R. Wells writes from the perspective of the "fairly crazed" innkeeper who recalls Bethlehem becoming "a hive at swarming-time." Of the couple who requested shelter on what became Christmas Eve, the proprietor asks, "Could I know that they were so important?"

*There was a sign, they say,
a heavenly light resplendent;
but I had no time for stars.*

*And there were songs of angels in the air
out on the hills; but how was I to hear
amid the thousand clamors of an inn?*

If the innkeeper had only known Jesus' true identity, he says, he would have turned the place upside down, sending other guests out to the stables instead. When Jesus returns — "as he will surely come" — the anonymous innkeeper wants everyone to know: "Tell my Lord that all my inn is his, to make amends."



OPERATION CHRISTMAS STOCKING

Operation Christmas Stocking is a year round project that provides gift bags for Serenity Inns and Food Pantry clients at First Lutheran's Food Pantry, as well as stockings filled with age appropriate items for their children/grandchildren.

During the month of December we hand out men's and women's totes, gift jars, and stockings for their children/grandchildren. Twenty-four gift bags will be delivered to ELCA Synod Serenity Inn.

We would like to thank everyone who donated cash, knitted items, socks and toiletries to the project. We appreciate the Quilters for packing gift bags for Serenity Inn.

Respectfully submitted,
Co-chairs Greta Plicka & Colleen Siarnicki



After Thanksgiving Salad

3 1/2 C diced turkey
4 celery ribs, sliced
4 green onions, sliced
1/2 C chopped pecans, toasted
1/2 C chopped sweet red pepper
1/2 C mayonnaise
1 Tbsp. lemon juice
1/4 tsp. dill weed or dried tarragon
1/4 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. pepper
Lettuce leaves (optional)

In a large bowl combine turkey, celery, onions, pecans and red pepper. Combine mayonnaise, lemon juice, dill, salt & pepper. Stir into turkey mixture. Refrigerate until serving. Serve on lettuce if desired.

Recipes
from Matt



We have seen an increase in the number of people visiting our food pantry during the last few months. With the increase in the number of people requesting bags and the lack of food drives our shelves are looking pretty empty. We would appreciate **donations of jelly, cereal, pasta, and soup.**

On Monday, November 13, Mike Plicka picked up 24 turkeys donated by Feeding America. The turkeys will be given to food pantry clients with larger families, meals for residents at Sunrise Apartments in West Allis and meals for Homeless Veterans.

We continue to be grateful for the support we receive from Festival Foods, Feeding America, Aggies Bakery and Cake Shop, Sendik's Food Market on North Avenue and donations in cash or food from members of our congregation. A big thank-you goes out to Mitchell Grade School in West Allis for the donation of 75 lbs. of food from a food drive in November. We've also received food this month from D.A. Berthier in West Allis, St. Luke's Lutheran in Greendale and the West Allis Community Improvement Foundation.

We would not be able to operate without the help of our volunteers that pick up PACKAGED food AND bread, and assist during our Friday operating hours.

Members of the congregation are welcome to visit us on Friday mornings from 10:00-12:00. The Food Pantry will be closed on Friday, December 29, 2023.

Mike Plicka and John Horvath

The wonder of the infinite-personal God is displayed, more than anywhere else, in the Incarnation. Nothing can prepare us for the birth of God: a six-pound, four-ounce Jewish boy with dark brown curly hair born in the fall or winter of 5 B.C. in a shepherd's cave on the side of a hill in the city of Bethlehem in the Roman province of Judea in western Asia.

It is so particular it staggers the imagination. God found a parking spot, a specific place and time where his love would touch our world. [Similarly,] prayer is a moment of incarnation — God with us. God involved in the details of my life.

—Paul E. Miller, *A Praying Life*

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

We are all invited to the Thanksgiving eve service at Luther Memorial Church on Wednesday night at 7:00. When we have done that in the past the service was well attended and inspirational.

The craft fair was a huge success. Thank you to Colleen Siarnicki and all who helped.

Lori Marquez again led our stewardship drive with an inspirational letter, Sunday talk and a display showing the activities of various programs we have done in the past. Thanks, Lori.

Pastor Matt Short, representing the synod, will be helping to coach our leadership team with a focus on mission. This will help in our evangelism as well as our stewardship outreach. We are already showing improvement in the past year in both receiving new members and existing members responding to our greater needs in both time and giving.

Christmas Eve will be falling on a Sunday this year. We are planning one service on Christmas Eve at 4:00 P.M. and a Christmas Day service at 10:00 the following morning.

The committees of the church are becoming quite active, expanding and are receiving enthusiastic support after our "Find Your Fit" campaign.

Here's looking forward to another successful year and thanking God for the leadership of Pastor Josh and all the loyal members of First Lutheran Church.

Sincerely,
Werner, Council President

DATES TO REMEMBER

12/2 - Colgrove/Schmidt Wedding
12/3 - Advent Begins
12/10 - Church Christmas Decorating
12/17 - Children's Christmas Program
12/31 - New Beginnings Worship

"He was created of a mother whom he created. He was carried by hands that he formed. He cried in the manger in wordless infancy, He, the Word, without whom all human eloquence is mute."

— Augustine of Hippo



We have scheduled the Adult and Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED training for First Lutheran Church.

Training Site: First Lutheran Church

Enter through the side door

Training Date: Saturday, January 13, 2024

Time: 9:30 AM until 2:30 PM There is a 15 minute break and a 1/2 hour lunch break

Lunch: Lunch will be provided

Cost: \$128.00 (the Scholarship Fund will pick up the \$128.00 cost for the training)

We would like members of the congregation from Church Council, Ushers, Sunday School, Bible Study, Food Pantry and Quilting to sign up for First Aid/CPR/AED training so that someone that has been trained is available during all activities that are held at Church. Please note that all other members of the congregation are welcome to sign up for the training as well. We have scheduled the training for between 8 and 12 people. Applications are available in the church office or the narthex. The application will enroll you in the training and your fee will be automatically paid. If for any reason you are unable to attend the training please notify us **at least 3 days before the training** so we can find another person to take your place. If you have any question please contact: Greta Plicka at greta.plicka@gmail.com or call the church office.

This 'n That Around Here



Elizabeth, an older relative of Mary the mother of Jesus, was miraculously pregnant at the same time as Mary. What was the name of Elizabeth's husband?

- A. Aaron
- B. Zechariah
- C. Joseph
- D. Simeon

Answer: See Luke 1:5, 39-41



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

Jackie Bayer, Rita Bukowski,
David Frailey, Janet Kramer and Bob

NEW BEGINNINGS SUNDAY, DEC. 31ST



Last year we had our first New Beginnings Worship on New Year's Day. Our special worship on Sunday, Dec. 31st, will again offer a chance to reflect on the past year and hopes and faithful resolutions for 2024. Let First Lutheran be a part of your New Beginnings in the New Year!

PONDERINGS AT THE END OF A DAY — OR YEAR

Dutch Catholic priest and theologian Henri Nouwen found it useful to reflect on several questions at the end of the day: "Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone's face? Did I say words of healing?" Pondering such questions may prove valuable at the end of a year as well: "How did I contribute to peace in the world this past year? Did I bring smiles to others' faces? Did I offer words of healing?" Nouwen continued, and we can too: "Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love?"

Many of us set New Year's resolutions for self-improvement, asking, "What are my goals? How can I better myself, my weight, my work-life balance, my habits?" But Nouwen said of his self-inquiry: "These are the real questions. I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will bear many fruits, here in this world and [in] the life to come." His resolution was to share God's love with others. With God's help, it can be ours as well, for each new day and each new year.



Birthdays

- 12/7 - Terrance Steward
- 12/13 - Sarah Carter
- 12/17 - Gayle Falk
- 12/18 - Kathy Santos
- 12/27 - Mike Temke
- 12/28 - Don Moncher
- 12/29 - Joy Dowd

Thank you to all who have pledged to support our mission and ministry in 2024. Your generosity helps First live into our vision for the future as a sustainable and healthy congregation and vital presence in our community. If you haven't pledged yet, it's not too late to turn in your cards or contact the office about next year's pledge.



One pastor was sharing the Nativity story when he bumped the button on his singing Christmas tie, which didn't have a mute button. So congregants had to listen to the entire verse and chorus of "Jingle Bells."

After flames were distributed for the candlelight service, a pastor said, "Now that we're all good and lit ...," causing laughter throughout the pews.



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.

What We've Been Doing



Stuart Mitchell (above L and R) presented his beautiful INSPIRE concert here on Nov. 19. Don & Carolyn's great grandson, Graham, was dressed for Halloween. Gus Barnes (above) was thrilled to use the red chasuble donated to him by First for a recent Confirmation service. Joy's granddaughter, Bailey (R) made her acting debut as "Barry" in the 8th grade production of Kidocrats at New Berlin West.



The hearts in this picture (L) were decorated by the folks living in the memory care unit at VMP as part of their Alzheimer's Assoc. fundraiser. The picture is about 3 ft tall.



Audrey's great-granddaughter Kinsley (right) and her friends had a chance to meet Craig Counsel at a basketball game at Nathan Hale (before he fled to Chicago!)

Lit candles were placed in the cross (below) on All Saints Sunday. Sam & Karlie look great dressed up for a wedding (bottom)



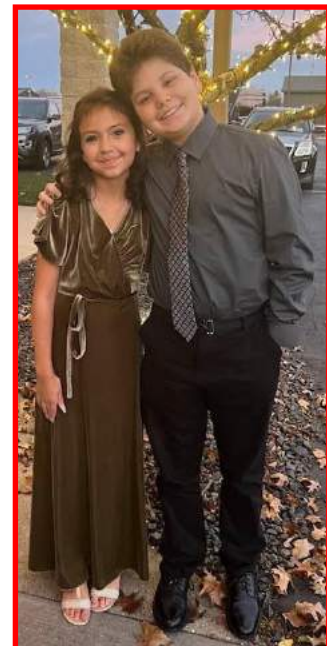
MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Meet Corey Schmidt and Alexis Colgrove, who will marry December 2nd at First Lutheran.

Alexis says they will celebrate their wedding with the unintended theme of mini-golfing. Their reception will be at a golf course, and their honeymoon resort offers a nine hole mini-golf course—full circle from their first date, when they mini-golfed!

Both Corey and Alexis love music. Corey performs in a band, and Alexis has sung in choirs. Alexis received a keyboard for Christmas last year, but says that enjoying it has to wait during busy wedding planning. The keyboard shares a music room with Corey's 7 guitars and other instruments.

The couple also enjoys cooking. Grocery shopping offers a chance for them to search out ingredients together for new recipes to try. They also love travelling. The picture shows them in front of Al Johnson's Restaurant in Door County.



First Lutheran Church
7400 W. Lapham St.
West Allis, WI 53214

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FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH (ELCA)

7400 W. Lapham St.

West Allis, WI

E-mail: firstlutheranelca@att.net

Phone: 414-476-4664

Worship With Us:

Sundays at 10 a.m.

Wed., Dec. 6 at 6 p.m.

Office Hours: Monday thru Friday 9am to 12pm

Office located at 7400 W. Lapham, West Allis

(414)476-4664

Food Pantry Hours:

Fridays, 10 a.m. - Noon



Sun., Dec. 24, one Service at 4:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship

Christmas Day Worship

Mon., Dec. 25 at 10:00 a.m.

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