

# News & Views

First Lutheran Church

January, 2024



*From the Pastor.....*

## NEW BEGINNINGS WITH BABY PEARL

When it comes to new beginnings no one is a better expert than a baby and for the last six months I've had the opportunity to learn from my daughter Pearl as she sees all things as new. At First the saying New Beginnings is a part of our life together. We see the words New Beginnings above us as we enter into the main doors to our church and every January I return to this theme at a time when our culture talks about new year's resolutions and other traditions of turning a new leaf around the changing of our calendar years.

This year I have had a chance to see the world with new eyes by caring for Pearl and paying attention to what she pays attention to. Interactions with our cat and new creatures through windows or at the zoo spark her imagination. She is just beginning to try solid food and taste new fruits and vegetables for the first time after only knowing the flavor of milk for her whole life so far.

In a crowd, unable to speak to a new friend, she can call a new friend over to her with her eyes. At our recent trip to Universal Studios, I was experiencing this unique setting with her for the first time. We spent our day going through the parts of the park that look like the world of Harry Potter so her older brother could experience it. Pearl and I spent a lot of time together since I was on a scooter with my bad foot and she was in her stroller.



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## UPCOMING WORSHIP SERVICES

We hope that you enjoyed the Christmas Services this year. Remember that we have two more special services coming up with a chance for reflection on starting a new year.

Our New Beginnings service will be during our Sunday worship on New Year's Eve. We also are working with Pat and Bill Kaiser from the Mount Hope Worship Band to create another unique Evening Epiphany service at 6pm on Wednesday, January 3rd here at First.

We are planning to join Mount Hope and Luther Memorial for Lenten Worship Services on Wednesdays this year using Holden Evening Prayer. More details to come next month!

Please embrace these opportunities to worship and collaborate together with our neighboring churches—and to hear Holden Evening Prayer sung with more voices!



Some of the Bible Study members had lunch at Jeanie's place, followed by Gary leading carols (L) They were joined by Cooper, of course! Pastor Bryant's son, Harvey, helped him get the manger scene ready at church (Above). Mike and daughter Megan helped his grandson Harrison with a gingerbread house (Below)



Thanks to a sore foot, Pastor Josh and Pearl were able to cruise the Harry Potter exhibit in Orlando in style while on vacation (L). Gary, from St. Luke's Lutheran, brought his grandson when he delivered food for our pantry (bottom R).



Our church was lovely for our Christmas Eve worship service. (R and above)



## *From the Pastor.....*

*Cont. from p. 1*

For an hour we were parked under a giant dragon that breathed fire every ten minutes and at first she was scared, but after a few times she started to think this was normal. She greets each new experience with a sense of trust in us to teach her and a desire to have her needs met, especially eating and getting changed.

Spending time with a baby is an experience that makes me feel exhausted and refreshed. Things speed up so it feels like you don't have any of the spare time you are used to and things slow down when you are with the baby and going for a time at a baby's pace. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to be Pearl's dad and I love thinking about the New Beginnings she is experiencing that bring perspective and inspiration to me as I make changes and see things in new ways.

*"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"*

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

## *Church* COUNCIL

1. The council approved Pastor Josh's use of a hybrid parental leave proposal, with the pastor working a modified schedule for two months while continuing to preach, lead Bible study, participate in Council meetings and be available for emergencies/medical visits/ weddings/ funerals.
2. The council accepted the Treasurer's report.
3. The council approved support of organist Gary Hanson's request for a 3% raise, in line with the ELCA synod guidelines.
4. The council approved expenditure of not more than \$1350 for replacement of the snow blower. (The council has already received donations to substantially reduce this expenditure.)



### **TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY**

In January, Pastor Josh will be leading Bible Studies on the theme of New Beginnings. We will look at stories of change in individuals, communities and scripture.

In February we will begin Season 4 of the Chosen, with Bible Studies going over relevant Scripture for each episode.

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

### **PASTOR JOSH'S PART-TIME PARENTAL LEAVE**

Pastor Josh was approved for a part-time parental leave from February 8th to April 8th. He will be full-time through the Annual Meeting and continue to lead worship and Bible Study during Lent with limited duties and office hours.

## OPERATION CHRISTMAS STOCKING

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

On Friday, December 8th, we handed out men's and women's totes and gift jars filled with hot chocolate, marshmallows and peppermint candy. Twenty-four gift bags and hot chocolate mugs were delivered to Serenity Inns.

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



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 December 11, 2023 Mike Plicka picked up 24 hams donated by Feeding America. The hams will be given to food pantry clients, meals for residents at Sunrise Apartments in West Allis, Christmas basket distribution by the Sons of the American Legion Post 537 and meals for Homeless Veterans. The Food Pantry was closed on Friday, December 29, 2023.

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 area schools, churches and members of our congregation. We would not be able to operate without the help of our volunteers that pick up food and assist during our Friday operating hours.

Members of the congregation are welcome to visit us on Friday mornings from 10:00-12:00.

Mike Plicka and John Horvath

## Peanut Butter Softies

Recipes  
from Matt



1/2 C. Margarine - softened  
1/2 C. Peanut Butter  
1/2 C. White Sugar  
1/2 C. Packed Brown sugar  
1 Egg  
1/2 tsp. Vanilla Extract  
3/4 tsp. Baking soda  
1/4 tsp. Salt  
1 1/4 C. All Purpose Flour

Combine margarine, peanut butter, sugars, egg and vanilla. Blend together very well. Add flour, baking soda and salt with mixer. Chill dough 15 minutes in the refrigerator. Roll into balls by hand. Place on sprayed cookie sheet and bake in 350° oven until edges are very lightly browning (7-10 minutes). Don't overcook.

## Special thanks...

to St. Luke's Lutheran in Greendale, and D.A. Berther in West Allis, for their generous donations of food for our pantry. It's been greatly appreciated!

*"Although no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending."—Carl Bard*

## A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

"The Family Meeting"--a celebration like the Rejoice Sunday we did last year-- is scheduled for January 21st. It will be an informal gathering including a meal. People will be encouraged to ask questions and make suggestions as to how the church is run.

Pastor Josh will be taking the remaining parental leave which was granted to him by vote at the last congregational meeting. He will be breaking it up and preaching most Sundays which will be a great help and savings to us.

We think we have found a company willing to do our snow removal. Because we have all sidewalks and no parking lot, it requires that the work be done by hand and with a snow blower. This makes it less desirable for companies to want to take the job.

Our Lenten services will be held jointly with Mount Hope Church and Luther Memorial Church at the Mount Hope location.

Special music was scheduled for both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services.

The synod has contacted us and suggested we meet with a Synod representative and review our constitution. The synod has updated their constitution and asked that we adjust our accordingly. The last time we did this was in 2018. We have several volunteers beginning the process.

As we enter a new year let us all work together to grow in His faith.

Sincerely,  
Werner, Council President



Epiphany beckons us to come to the light of Jesus Christ. Epiphany calls us to stare into that light until our inner darkness is fully expunged. Epiphany then sends us out into a dark and weary world as women and men with shining faces, until we say with the apostle Paul, "It is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" [see 2 Corinthians 4:6].

—Jason Gaboury, campus minister in  
New York City

*"I do not at all understand the mystery of grace — only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us."*  
—Anne Lamott



### DATES TO REMEMBER

- 1/3 - Epiphany Evening Worship
- 1/13 - Defibrillator Training
- 1/14 - Church Council Meeting
- 1/21 - Congregational Family Meeting After Church
- 2/4 - Annual Congregational Meeting
- 2/14 - Ash Wednesday

## This 'n That Around Here



In the book of Judges, the warrior Barak would go to battle only if a certain female leader went with him. Who was she?

- A. Rebekah
- B. Jael
- C. Michal
- D. Deborah

Answer: See Judges 4:1-10



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

Jackie Bayer, Donna Behringer, Rita Bukowski, David Frailey, Janet Kramer, Robert Molland, Lavone Reis, Bob, Brenda and Steve.

We grieve the loss of John Isaacson who died on Dec. 20th.



### PREDICTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR

Author Ronald Wilson, in *Stretching the Soul*, describes being certain that four things will occur in the days ahead.

- Trouble will come. Life is difficult. I must mourn as well as dance.
- In this long journey [of life], I'm not in control. God has reminded us of this.
- Many times I will fail.

I will find forgiveness and get up and go on. God will wipe up the mess I've made of things, take me by the hand and set me back on the right path.

Praise God for his sure presence during the joys and challenges the new year brings!



### Birthdays

- 1/6 - Steve Johnson
- 1/11 - Carla Ullerich
- 1/12 - Eric Kremers
- 1/12 - Maria Sanchez

### Anniversaries

- 1/14 - Wayne & Lucy Wagner - 63 yrs.

### Don't Forget!

Remember to bring in your empty ink cartridges when you replace them. We get reward money for them from Office Depot which really helps toward the purchase of office supplies! Just drop them off in the church office. Thanks!

Please check the sign-up sheets in the narthex: Altar Flowers, Eternal Light, Sunday Volunteers, etc!

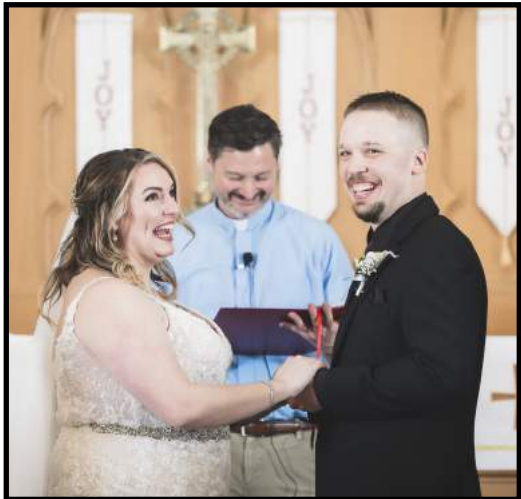
Remember to notify the church office of any address, phone or email changes!

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



Operation Christmas Stocking shared gifts with food pantry client. Gifts for Serenity Inns were packed by the Quilters, who enjoyed their annual Christmas luncheon.



Congratulations to Alexis and Scott who were married here on Dec. 2nd!



**"The Great Sunday School Game Show"**  
(L and below) featured Karlie, Eli, Paul, Z and Ziean,

Thanks to the following congregational volunteers:  
Carla, Marie & Colleen,  
Jesse & Pastor Josh,

Bill & Pat Kaiser from Mt. Hope (R) led our "Preparing Our Hearts for Christmas" worship on Wed., Dec. 6th. They'll lead our Epiphany service on Jan. 3rd at 6:00 pm.



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](mailto:firstlutheranelca@att.net)

Phone: 414-476-4664

***Worship With Us:***

***Sundays at 10 a.m.***

***Wed., Jan. 3,***

***Epiphany Service at 6:00 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**



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