

# News & Views

First Lutheran Church

February 2024



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

As we prepare for our Annual Meeting on February 4<sup>th</sup>, this is always a time when I reflect on the previous year of ministry, especially since it is also the anniversary of my call here to First. We grew together during my three-year term call, but as your official called pastor in the last year, we were able to put the new vision, mission and values into practice. I'm grateful for all those who helped prepare the way for that work, through the work of the Congregation, Mission Team and Council.

Once adopted, I joined the effort to more fully adopt our mission, values and vision statements, making them a part of worship bulletins and liturgy and placing our mission statement up in the building, all making them more visible in the life of the church.

We began 2023 with a flurry of spring activity including Lenten Soup suppers with studies of our 5 new values statements, a successful Easter Egg Hunt with help from our friends who were members at Saint John's, a Spring Cleaning gathering, and a beautiful Good Friday service coordinated with leaders and musicians from 5 other congregations. We enjoyed the long-awaited Trivia event hosted by Jeopardy Champion Michael Falk in April, partnering with Outreach for Hope and raising awareness and funds for the new Central Cities Camp Scholarship Fund. These events were aided by a new volunteer coordinator position filled by Joy Dowd, working with the Media and Publicity team to develop promotion plans, and creating a promotional postcard.

In the second half of 2023, we shifted focus from activities and events to reorganizing our congregation around our new mission by organizing committees and teams into our four mission groups (Stewardship of Resources, Growing in Faith, Serving with Joy, and Sharing God's Blessings). The volunteer coordinator and I worked closely to call together existing committees and teams even if they hadn't met in some time, in order to assess their work, communication, and preparation and ways of involving new members. This information helped inform the first "Time and Talent" survey our congregation had done in over a decade.

We held a Celebration Sunday on September 10th that included presentations from leaders of teams and committees and tools to help members "Find Your Fit at First". This work was successful in

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**Ash Wednesday Worship**  
6:00 p.m. on February 14  
at First Lutheran



Wednesday evening worship services during Lent, from Feb. 21 through March 20, will be held at Mt. Hope Lutheran, 8633 W. Becher St., at 6:00 p.m., preceded by soup suppers at 5:00 p.m. each week.

# CONGREGATIONAL FAMILY POTLUCK

Sunday, Jan. 21st



At the Congregational Family Potluck on Jan. 21st, members heard from various council members about plans for 2024. Deb Johnson presented a baby quilt to Pastor Josh, Sarah, Paul and Baby Pearl, which was made by the quilters.

## From the Pastor.....

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identifying many new leaders in areas like Worship and Music, Property, Christian Education and Scholarship, Social Ministry and Evangelism (Events/Organizing, Hospitality, Media and Publicity, Mission Outreach).

### LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

I feel that First Lutheran is more prepared to invite and grow in the years to come because of the work we have done in 2023 and the years before. We laid out a vision and now we are actively living into it. I look forward to our committees' work making our congregation more efficient and effective in forwarding our mission. I am excited for improvements in Media and Publicity for First, growing our call to justice and creation care locally and globally, and expanding our capacity for children and youth ministry. In 2024 we will also be able to respond to the Mission Listening Teams recommendations for worship, outreach, and social ministry that reflects the needs and interests of the community around us.

In the immediate future I'll be taking a part-time parental leave from February 8<sup>th</sup> through April 8<sup>th</sup>. My wife Sarah is going to be teaching two new classes at UW-Madison while running her collaborative center and we decided this was the time where my parental leave would be most helpful for us. I'll be here for services and to provide leadership in Worship, Music and Bible Study but my Thursdays and Fridays will be free to be with baby Pearl. Sarah and Rev. Matt Short will be guest writers for this column in the next two months.

*Pastor Josh*



### TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Our Tuesday Bible Study will be listening to and learning from black theologians during February using excerpts from Martin Luther King Jr., Prof. James Cone, ELCA Pastor Rev. Lenny Duncan's recent book Dear Church, and local ELCA Pastor Joseph Ellwanger who was a white supporter of the Birmingham Campaign of the Civil Rights Movement. I hope that hearing these perspectives can bring awareness of the black Christian experience and perspectives on Scripture and how justice and equality are important values for any church.

**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!**

## ANNUAL MEETING

**Feb. 4th, 11:00 a.m.**



### Council Actions Taken on January 14, 2024

- Gift acceptance policies: A motion to change the current Gift Acceptance Policy to the Endowment Gift Acceptance Policy.
- Gift Acceptance Policies: A motion to approve in principle proposing a new First Lutheran Gift Acceptance Policy. This policy would state that for all undesignated gifts over \$500 a 10% tithe would be put into a Mission Partners fund to help maintain a constant minimum \$5000 annual gift to our ministry partners, in years when the endowment fund does not have a surplus to fund gifts totaling \$5000 to our Ministry Partners.
- Benevolence Giving: Currently, 100% of money given to Benevolence goes to the synod. A proposal to alter our benevolence giving to a 70/30 split, with 70% going to synod and 30% going to our Ministry Partners.
- Current term limits for council officers: A motion to change elective terms of secretary and treasurer to two year terms in office, with a limit of two consecutive terms.

## 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 our clients' children and grandchildren.

Needed to fill the gift bags and stockings:

- 50 pairs of heavy men's socks
- 75 tubes of toothpaste
- 50 men's deodorants
- 30 women's deodorants
- 75 bars of soap
- 25 pairs of men's gloves and hats
- 50 cans of men's shaving cream
- 75 small packs of Kleenex
- Christmas mugs
- Small toys (ages 3 to 10)
- Crayons, colored pencils and magic markers
- We would like to include colored pencils and adult coloring books (found at Dollar Tree) for women.

We collect needed items all year. Donations can be dropped off at the Church Office.

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.

The Food Pantry was closed the on Friday, January 12, 2024 due to weather. Mike Plicka took the food that was donated by Festival Foods, Aggies Bakery and Cake Shop, Brownberry Bread and Sendiks to Sunrise Senior Apartments.

The Boy Scouts will hold their annual Food Drive on Saturday, March 16th. They will be dropping off food at First Lutheran from 10:00 to 12:00. If you are interested in helping unload, weigh, sort and shelf food let Mike, John or the church office know.

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, 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.

Mike Plicka and John Hrovath

## Cheese Bread

Recipes  
from Matt



- 2 C Flour
- 4 tsp. Baking Powder
- 1 1/2 tsp. Salt
- 1 1/2 C Shredded Cheese
- 1/4 C Butter, melted
- 1 C Milk
- 2 Eggs
- 1/4 C + 2 Tbsp. Grated Parmesan Cheese

Preheat oven to 350°. Combine flour, baking powder and salt. Stir in cheddar cheese and 1/4 C parmesan cheese. Mix together eggs, butter and milk. Add to dry ingredients. Stir only until moistened. Batter will be somewhat lumpy. Do not overmix. Pour into a greased 9" x 5" loaf pan. Smooth down the center with a wet spoon to flatten top. Sprinkle evenly 2 Tbsp. Parmesan cheese. Bake about 45 min. Serve warm or sprinkled with cheese and toasted the next day.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

- 2/4 - Annual Congregational Meeting after church
- 2/14 - Ash Wednesday
- 2/18 - Church Council Mtg.
- 3/16 - Boy Scout Food Drive
- 3/23 - Easter Egg Hunt!

*A Verse to live by:*

*My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this:*

*Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.....James 1:19*

## THE REALM OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

The wonderful thing about praying is that you leave a world of not being able to do something and enter God's realm, where everything is possible. He specializes in the impossible. Nothing is too great for his almighty power. Nothing is too small for his love. —Corrie ten Boom



## CALLING FOR CANDY!

We had so much fun and so many kids for the combined "First and St John's" Easter egg Hunt last year we decided to have it again! We are in need of treats to fill hundreds of little plastic eggs! A collection box will be available in the narthex. All candy must be **individually wrapped** and in regular or Easter wrapping (please no Halloween or Christmas wrappers). Best types of candy are soft, chewy candy like gummies or Sour Patch kids, Hershey's kisses, little candy bars, Skittles or Jelly Belly's, things that dissolve quickly. Please avoid hard candy like Jolly Ranchers, Life Savers and Jaw Breakers that could be a choking hazard for a young child. There will be plenty of opportunities to help with this fun ministry!

**The Eater Egg Hunt will take place on Saturday, March 23rd at 11:00 a.m.!**

## A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

We had our last council meeting for the year 2023. It's been a productive year in terms of membership growth, collaboration with the synod, and activities in the church.

The church council has been working hard in cooperation with Pastor Josh to offer positive leadership. Each council member has been an active leader in at least one committee.

At the February meeting we will be electing new officers. My tenure as president will end, probably for the last time. I want to thank all of you for the support you have given me and the entire council. We have strived to be as open and transparent with the congregation as we could. We know that each member of the congregation is important and interested in being a part of the decision process of the church.

In the next few months, we are looking forward to having the synod coaching us in our evangelism outreach, as well as other leadership duties of the council.

The next year looks to be shaping up to be a good one. Let's hope that we continue to grow and be as productive as we were in this last year.

Sincerely,  
Werner Bayer, Council President

## This 'n That Around Here



Use one word (perhaps in different forms) for all the blanks to complete this Scripture passage: "Dear friends, let us \_\_\_\_\_ one another, for \_\_\_\_\_ comes from God. Everyone who \_\_\_\_\_ has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not \_\_\_\_\_ does not know God, because God is \_\_\_\_\_."

- A. believe
- B. help
- C. love
- D. forgive

Answer: See 1 John 4:7-8



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

Jackie Bayer, Donna Behringer, Rita Bukowski, Jennifer Caras, Shirley Cogan, David Frailey, Janet Kramer, Pr. Fred Thomas-Breitfeld, Bob, Brenda and Steve.

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

### Valentine's Day Jokes for Animal Lovers

What did one sheep say to the other?  
*I love ewe!*

Why do skunks love Valentine's Day?  
*They are very scent-imental creatures.*

What question did the penguin ask on February 14?  
*Waddle I do without you?*

What do you call two birds in love?  
*Tweethearts!*



#### Birthdays

- 2/1 - Shirley Armato
- 2/14 - Kent Nicolet
- 2/16 - Kale Schoberg
- 2/21 - Paul Carter
- 2/23 - Jennifer Wudtke
- 2/25 - Lavone Reis

### 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!

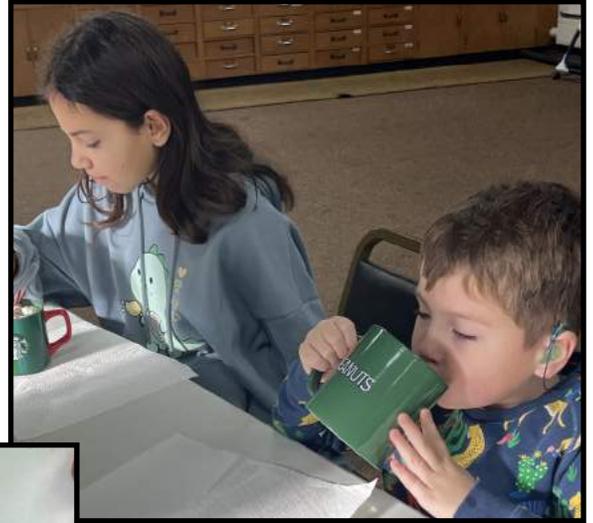
Please check the sign-up sheets in the narthex: Altar Flowers, Eternal Light, Sunday Volunteers, etc!

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.

"Where there is love there is life."  
—Mahatma Gandhi

# What We've Been Doing



The Sunday School class decorated cookies while talking about prayer and praise. They made ornaments and had a Wonderful Wednesday Christmas party and hot chocolate bar. Above is Eli's picture of a shepherd during Pictionary. Sam and his dad, who coaches his hockey team, after winning a tournament in Sun Prairie (L). Barb and her son took JJ to the New Berlin Winterfest (R). Below is the custom made quilt tag attached to the back of the quilt made by the quilters for baby Pearl.



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

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid

Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
Permit No. 3633

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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:*

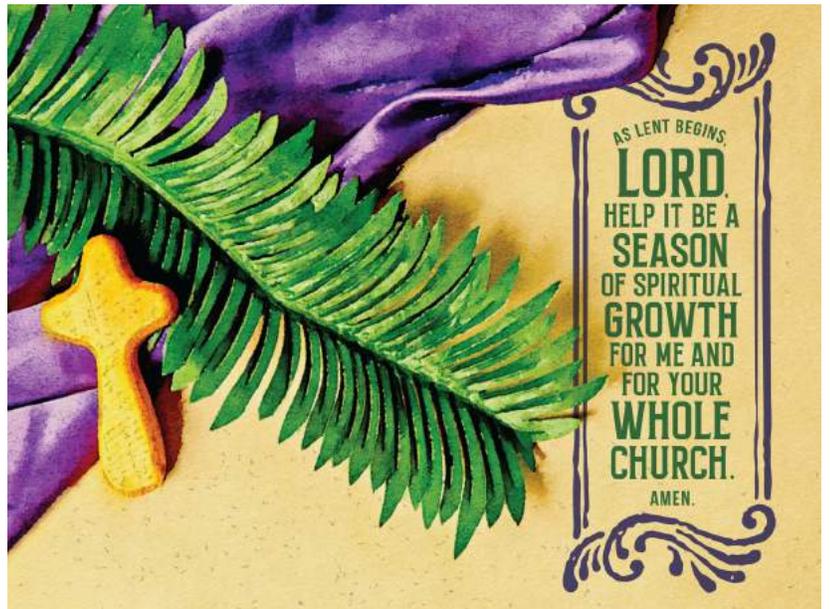
*Sundays at 10 a.m.*

*Wed., Feb. 7, at 6:00 p.m.*

*Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14, 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 receive this newsletter, please contact the church office.