

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

David J. Sperstad, Pastor
Anthony D. Oltmann, Pastor

FIRST

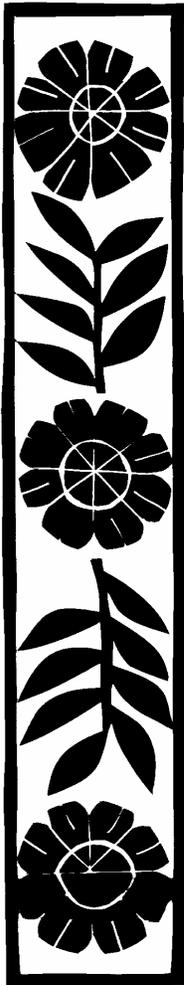


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“Servants of All”

April 2012, Newsletter

June 12, 2012



**Holy Week and Easter Worship
and Activities**

April 1—Palm Sunday

Hosanna!

8:00 a.m. Holy Communion

9:30 a.m. Contemporary Worship
and Holy Communion

10:45 a.m. Holy Communion

April 5—Maundy Thursday

The service of Christ: footwashing and meal

7:00 p.m. – Holy Communion with
footwashing and second grade students
receive communion

April 6—Good Friday

The passion and death of Christ according to John

1:00 p.m. – Good Friday Worship

7:00 p.m. – Tenebrae Service

April 7—Saturday

9:30-11:30 a.m. – Easter Eggstravaganza!

*special event for youth age 3 thru second grade
see page 4 for more information*

April 8—The Resurrection of our Lord

The resurrection of Jesus is announced

7:00 a.m. – Sunrise Holy Communion

8:00-9:30 a.m. – Easter Breakfast

10:00 a.m. – Holy Communion

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Enhancement**
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Pastor Dave's Article

"See, I am making all things new."

Revelation 21:5 NRSV

You have heard this verse before, many times I suppose. It's a verse that is often used at funerals. It is a good verse to be read at funerals, as a reminder that this life, that death and the grave is not the end. It does give us comfort and hope.

But let us read that verse again – not at a funeral but right now in the middle of our life. What does it mean for us, what does it mean for you? *"See, I am making all things new."* Jesus and the Holy Spirit are alive and well in your life today. It is easy to look around and see the renewal of life in nature this time of year, the grass is greening, the trees are budding, bees are gathering pollen somewhere as they return to their hives.

Let's stop looking around and let's start looking within us; how *has* he and how *is* he making you **new** today? Does the fact that you profess to be a Christian matter in your life? Does it show in your daily actions and interactions with and in the world?

Why do I ask this? I have recently read a couple of books—*"Soul Searching"* by Christian Smith with Melina Lundquist Denton and another *"Almost Christian"* by Kenda Creasy Dean. They analyze a national study on youth and religion. The findings are shocking and disturbing to say they least. Not because of what it tells us about teenagers and their faith but because of what it says about our own faith and how we have shared with, taught, and modeled to the younger generation.

The books raised a lot of questions for me and I pose some of them to you: Who is God? (Is he a butler, a therapist, a sugar daddy?) Does the fact that God exists and has given me faith make a *real* difference in my life? In my actions and interactions with others? (Do I truly love as he

loves?) What does God really want of and for me? What does he expect of me? (Is it simply to be good to others or simply to be happy and feel good about ourselves?) These and many, many other questions came to mind as I read these two books...

Neither of the books supplied answers, nor do I have answers to give you – but together we could talk about these questions within our own lives.

The answers are in the community of believers. They come to us in the Word and Sacrament that God has given. They come through scripture, through mutual and caring conversations, and through the community of believers. For God is with us and the Holy Spirit will give us the wisdom to answer... "the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words." *Romans 8:26*, and God *is* with us "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them." *Revelation 21:3*

I will see you in church!

Pastor Dave
dsperstad@flclittlefalls.org



Worship Space Enhancement Update

We have been faithfully meeting with Brian Berg of Zerr/Berg architects and talking about the worship space that has served very well for almost 50 years. We are prayerfully looking at how it will continue to serve for the next 50 years... it is a very exciting process!

With Brian's help and some computer-generated imaging, we have looked at what our worship space might look like with some updates and modernizations. We have looked at everything from the floor to the ceiling and everything in between, including flooring, pews/seating, lighting, sound, and furnishings. As a group we are only focused on the sanctuary as it is the third leg of improvements to the facility: education, fellowship and now the worship space.

When the group comes to a consensus decision, we will make a presentation to the congregation and have a time of discussion and conversation with the entire congregation. Nothing will be done without the congregation's knowledge and approval.

If you have questions, do not be afraid to ask Pastor Dave or any of the committee that includes: Stephanie Adams, LaVerne Hempeck, Bob and Sonya Just, Darrell Larsen, Bruce Moller, Paula Monahan, Nancy Ratzloff, and Tammy Zwilling.

2012 NE MN Synod Assembly "Bearing the MARKS" April 27-29 Zion Lutheran Church and Ruttger's Sugar Lake Lodge, Grand Rapids

First Lutheran Church voting members Craig Ahlin, Ted and Mary Pfohl, and Pastor Dave Sperstad will attend the Northeast Minnesota Synod Assembly Friday-Sunday, April 27-29. This year's focus will be on "Bearing the MARKS." The focus will be on Galatians 6 and the marks of being a disciple: pray † study † worship † encourage † serve † give † invite.

Keynote speakers are Rev. Jessicah Duckworth, who is Assistant Professor of Congregational and Community Care at Luther Seminary, and Secretary of ELCA, Mr. David Swartling.

Saturday afternoon will be spent in reaching out to the community through mission events such as, Miles for Malaria, Second Harvest Food Shelf, cleanup at Camp Hiawatha, Habitat for Humanity, GRACE House, and assembling quilts or kits for Lutheran World Relief.

First Lutheran's quilters are donating a quilt to the silent auction, you can place a bid on this quilt which is assembled from a beautiful vintage top, before it is sent to the assembly, watch for the display in the gathering space. Available again this year is The Marketplace, a Silent Auction of new items and services, if you have an item or service to donate, please contact the church office. All proceeds from both auctions will benefit ELCA World Hunger Appeal.



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**
God's work. Our hands.



Eco-Palms for Palm Sunday Worship

One small way that First Lutheran practices stewardship is through the purchase of Eco-Palms. Traditional harvesting of palms in Mexico and Guatemala has contributed to destruction of the forest and harm to the indigenous communities. Eco-Palms are harvested in a way that preserves the trees and also gives the workers a fair wage. May God bless the hands that do this work.

Easter Flowers

Share in the Spirit of Easter by sharing your Easter flowers (for example: lilies, tulips, etc.) with your First Lutheran family. The flowers may be given in remembrance of a loved one or in celebration of a special event or person. Flowers may be dropped off in the Library on Holy Saturday. Please label your flowers. If you would like a remembrance noted in the bulletin regarding your flowers, please call the church office by Monday, April 2.



Easter Breakfast

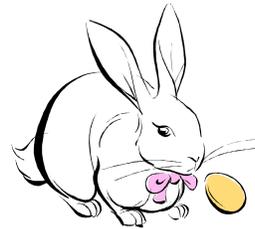
Come and enjoy the fellowship of Easter Breakfast on Sunday, April 8, from 8:00-9:30 a.m. A free-will offering will be received. We are serving a hot breakfast of pancakes, sausage, egg bake, fruit, muffins, juice, milk and coffee. Thanks for your support! Thank you to the Men's Bible Study group for coordinating. For more information or to offer your assistance, contact coordinator, Doug Luepke, 584-5957.

Lenten Worship and Soup Suppers

This year during Lent we gathered together with the congregations of First United Church and Episcopal Church of Our Savior to share fellowship over a bowl of soup and to worship together. Thanks to all who have come together as the body of Christ to share in this Lenten worship.

Thank you also to all who shared in the fellowship of Lenten soup suppers. Whether you provide soup or food items, work in the kitchen, or come to share a simple meal, all is appreciated. Thanks to this year's coordinator, Linda Weiss. The freewill offering received at each supper supports mission causes at both congregations.

If you have feedback about this shared worship and fellowship time, please contact Pastor Dave Sperstad. Thank you!



Easter Eggstravaganza Scramble! Saturday, April 7, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Kids! age 3 through second grade, please come with an adult for this **free** event here at First Lutheran. Experience the Easter story through sight, sound, taste, touch and smell as families work together to complete the Easter Story Challenge. We'll have games, crafts, lunch, an Easter egg hunt, and hear the Easter story from a special guest. Don't miss this *egg*citing time!

World Malaria Day
April 25, 2012

Malaria is a leading cause of death in Africa, claiming the life of a child every 45-60 seconds. In Liberia, malaria accounts for 30 percent of all deaths seen in hospitals. Since the launch of the ELCA Malaria Campaign last year, Lutheran churches are working in Angola, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe to control this preventable disease. They are distributing mosquito nets and medicine, and educating communities on prevention. However, there are not enough funds to begin the work in Liberia.

Our sisters and brothers in Liberia are ready. They have a large network of Lutheran hospitals, clinics and community leaders that are doing the best they can to serve hundreds of thousands of people. They know what it takes to prevent and treat malaria. But they need our support, now.

World Malaria Day is April 25. The ELCA will observe the day for one week—April 25-May 1 with the goal of raising \$200,000—enough to expand the anti-malaria work to Liberia.

First Lutheran will join with congregations across the church to receive an offering for the ELCA Malaria Campaign on Sunday, April 29. Together we can make this dream a reality.

Please keep those who work in the campaign and those who are directly affected by this disease in your prayers and plan to give a gift to the malaria campaign. Checks may be made out to First Lutheran with “World Malaria Day” written in the memo line. Thank you!

Food for Kidz Food Packaging
Sunday, April 1
8:00 a.m.-12:00 noon

Food for Kidz is the mobile packing arm of the organization known as Feeding Children of Stewart/FCS. This organization, based right here in Minnesota, has grown from feeding 1 million children in 2003 to over 10 million children last year! First Lutheran is committed to being active in packing food for our brothers and sisters around the globe. Sunday, April 1, we will take a break in our Sunday morning routine and package food. Worship at one of the services and then bring a friend and/or the family and come to Stoltz Hall and give a little time to package food. We can package thousands of meals in a small amount of time—thank you!

Fair Trade

Thank you for your ongoing support of the fair trade products in use at First (coffee) and purchased for your own home use (coffee, tea, chocolate, cocoa, nuts, cranberries). Products available for purchase in the church office provide needed income to those who labor to produce them. Thank you!

Oasis Central Minnesota/Share A Meal

First Lutheran Church has provided the meal site to O/SAM as part of our mission for 14 years. Commissions and other groups take turns hosting one meal per quarter with the help of congregation members. First has also sponsored a Paint A Thon team for many years. If you would like to get involved in this valuable, ongoing community ministry of serving our neighbors please contact the church office at 632-6667.

42nd Anniversary of Earth Day:

“Mobilize the Earth”

Sunday, April 22, 2012

Earth Day, officially April 22, is celebrated globally by thousands of communities as a collective expression of our hopes and dreams for a better world. The “Green Generation” campaign began in 2009 and culminates on the 42nd anniversary of Earth Day, April 22, 2012.

In all the stories of Jesus feeding a hungry crowd of 5000, God’s abundance is demonstrated when just a small quantity of food becomes a feast shared by many. Again and again, our faith teaches us that God’s abundance is given for all to share, yet in our stewardship of creation we often fail to consider how our use of resources will affect other people in our world and the generations who will come after us.

Earth Day is a day to reflect on how we all can be effective stewards of God’s creation and what role we as individuals and as a spiritual group can play in addressing this worldwide problem.

A Billion Acts of Green ® promotion continues, you can pledge one way that you will act to steward creation. **Here are a few ways you can make a difference:**

- *Don’t drink bottled water!* Fill a re-usable container with tap water. Americans use a half-billion plastic bottles each week.
- *Plant a tree!* Trees increase levels of oxygen in the air and filter out some of the pollutants.
- *Bring your own bag!* Use a cloth bag or reuse a bag when shopping. Local stores have re-usable bags available for about \$1.00.
- *Read to a child!* Help educate future care givers of the earth. Read an environmentally focused book such as The Lorax.
- *Speak to your elected leaders!* Call, visit, write, or e-mail your leaders and let them know you’re concerned about stewardship of creation.



- *Start a compost pile!* Composting organic wastes reduces the amount of garbage produced by your household by as much as a third.
- *Don’t drive!* Walk, bike, run, skate, or carpool. First Lutheran will host “Ride a Bike to Church” day in June.
- *Get a recycling bin!* Reduce, reuse and recycle materials used both at home, at work and at church.
- *Replace a light bulb!* Exchange an incandescent bulb with a compact fluorescent bulb. They last ten times longer and use only one-fourth of the energy.
- *Use your own mug!* When you buy coffee, bring your own mug. Each year Americans throw away 23 billion Styrofoam cups. 500 years from now, the foam cup you used this morning will be sitting in a landfill!
- *Visit the Farmer’s Market!* Buy locally produced foods instead of goods that are trucked in.

Check out the Earth Day web-site at www.earthday.org for more information. Take the Ecological Footprint Quiz and find out how many planets would be needed to sustain life if everyone on earth lived as you do!

Consider this...

Abundant Living: As you welcome Christ into your life, is your shout of “Hosanna!” a message that carries Jesus’ hope for a cleansed and forgiven Earth? Americans consume 32 times more than people in the developing world. That means more greenhouse gases, more waste and greater economic inequalities.

Over the last 30 years, U.S. material consumption increased 57 percent. In 1992-2000, raw material usage increased by more than one third. In 2002, the United States used a total of 22.7 metric tons of stuff per person, 50 percent more than Europe.

Identify stuff in your life that is unnecessary or can be reused or borrowed from within your community.

Reprinted from Living Earth, ELCA web devotions, 2008.

Adult Opportunities

April Women's Circle
"A Wholly Different Week":
The Gospel of Mark
Session 8: A Last Meal – Mark 14:28

Martha Circle

The Martha Circle will meet Monday, April 16, at 1:30 p.m. Hostess is Betty Bengtson.



Scott Luing Benefit

Friday, April 27

4:00-8:00 p.m.

First Lutheran member, Scott Luing, was recently diagnosed with malignant brain tumors. He is recovering from complications following surgery and is also undergoing chemotherapy. You can follow Scott's story at the Caring Bridge website: <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/scottluing>. Scott and his wife, Lisa, and their family appreciate your prayers and concern. Scott is owner/operator of his own business, Falls Auto Glass.

A fundraiser benefit for the family is Friday, April 27, 4:00-8:00 p.m. at the Falls Ballroom. A spaghetti dinner will be served. A Silent Auction will be held, and a 2-mile Phun Run will be held at 6:00 p.m. Donations may be sent to Scott Luing Benefit, c/o Morrison County Pheasants Forever, PO Box 123, Little Falls, MN 56345.

There are several ways that you can assist with the benefit. You can provide items for a silent auction or bake sale items. We are also looking for people to serve the meal, either from 4:00-6:00 p.m. or 6:00-8:00 p.m. If you can assist in any way please call the church office. Or for more information, contact Mark Hanson, 632-6505.

Adult Studies and Events

Cornerstones Potluck (Seniors age 55 and better)

Are you interested in participating in senior fellowship? Bring a friend and a food item to share and come for potluck lunch on Tuesday, April 17, at 11:30 a.m. We'll gather in Stoltz Hall to share food and conversation.

Men's Bible Study Breakfast

All are welcome to come for breakfast and Bible study! We meet the first and third Wednesday of each month at 6:15 a.m. Come when you can, leave when you must! Pastor Dave leads this study. For more information, speak to him.

Monday Night Study

Beginning Monday, April 16, at 6:30 p.m. we will gather to study the New Testament book of James. Pastor Dave leads this study. Bring your Bible and a friend for study and conversation.

Book Discussion Club

All adult readers are welcome to read with this group. The selections for April: Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet by Jamie Ford; and for May: Lay That Trumpet in Our Hands by Susan Carol McCarthy. Readers, please secure your own copy of the books. The group will meet in the church library on Tuesday, April 24, at 7:00 p.m. to share and discuss the month's book. For more info contact Tifanii Dahl, 632-8207.

Library News

Stop in and find a new book to read—we have on display newly donated books and great Easter books for children. Thank you to all who have provided materials for the library! Happy Reading!

"Children First" Christian Preschool Update

Greetings from the "Children First" Christian Preschool!

March was full of learning fun: our five senses, St. Patrick's Day, ocean life, and dinosaurs, check out the dinosaur artwork in the hallways!

Thank you for your support of the preschool at the Pancake Breakfast! The annual flower bulb sale is in progress now. Place your order by Monday, April 16. Bulbs should arrive in time for Mother's Day on May 13.

2012/13 enrollment is underway for current families and First Lutheran families. Community enrollment begins April 9.

Class offerings are:

- ☺ Noah's Animals (33 mos-3 year olds) Monday and Wednesday, 9:00-11:30 a.m.
- ☺ Noah's Animals (33 mos-3 year olds) Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00-11:30 a.m.
- ☺ Jesus' Gems (4-5 year olds) meets Monday and Wednesday, 9:00-11:30 a.m.
- ☺ Jesus' Gems (4-5 year olds) meets Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00-11:30 a.m.

- ☺ Friday Friends (33 mos-5 year olds) meets Friday, 9:00-11:30 a.m. for those families wanting a three-day experience for their preschooler.
- ☺ Registration fee is \$50.00 and is non-refundable. Monthly tuition is \$80.00 per month. Friday Friends class will be an additional \$35.00 per month. Brochures and registration forms are available in the First Lutheran Church office or by contacting Gail.
- ☺ Interested families with preschoolers are invited to a "Come and See" Day, Monday or Tuesday, April 16 or 17, 5:00-7:30 p.m. This is an opportunity to visit and play in the classroom, meet the staff, ask questions and enjoy a snack.

Thank you to all who keep us in prayer and support us in so many ways. Your on-going encouragement is so much appreciated! God's blessings to you all.

Yours in Christ's Service,
Gail Hittesdorf, Director

Confirmation Ministries

Second Grade: students completed their sessions on First Communion. Students and parents made clay chalices and patens and experienced passing on the faith at a Christian Seder Meal. Second graders will have their feet washed and receive Holy Communion together on Maundy Thursday.

Seventh Grade: class on the Apostles' Creed at Luther Crest Bible Camp during the week of June 17-22. Pastor Dave leads this class. If you have not returned your registration, please do so or call the church office with your intentions. Thank you!

Tenth Grade: Students meet for "Means of Grace" class on Wednesdays, April 18 and 25, at 6:45 p.m. Parents, mentors, and students will share Holy Communion on April 25 at 7:30 p.m. **Note: this is a date change.**

Sunday School News

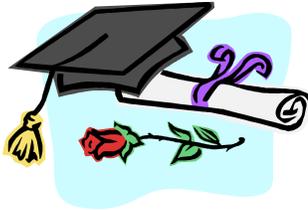
- ☺ Palm Sunday, April 1, we will pack meals for Food for Kidz from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon in Stoltz Hall. Bring the family and come before or after worship.
- ☺ The last TREK rotation for grades K-5 is "The Empty Tomb." Children will hear the Easter Story from the Gospel of Luke. They will explore how Jesus' followers felt when they found the tomb empty, and learn about how Jesus' resurrection gives us new life. Lots of great activities are in store: creating stained glass windows, a batik project, homemade bread or puffy donuts, cave races, soap surprise, herbal oils, weaving an Easter story and more. Prayerfully consider how you can share your time and talents with the children of the congregation. Thank you!



Vacation Bible School
August 6-10, 9:00-12:00 noon
“Sky”
Everything is Possible with God!
Mark 10:27

Imagine kids trusting God forever—the sky’s the limit! Be a pilot or part of the flight crew and help fly Vacation Bible School as we learn that no matter who you are...trust God! Share your leadership, excitement, and creative ideas by becoming part of the VBS Leadership team. Planning begins in April with a meeting each month until we fly the skies at VBS August 6-10. If you wish to be part of the planning or have questions contact Gail Hittesdorf, 632-2218 or 632-6667.

Can Care Collection
 Keep saving those aluminum cans!
 Save a can – Save the earth –
 Save our youth budget! Keep those cans coming!



Graduating Seniors

Mark Sunday, May 20 in your planners. We’d like to honor you and your parents at a special service of worship (10:45 a.m.) and brunch (11:45 a.m.) Watch your mail for more information and an invitation.

Thank you!

Big thank you to all who supported youth activities through our recent fundraisers. Whether you came to the Not at Your House, House Party, made a purchase, had dinner at Pizza Ranch, made or purchased lefse, sponsored a ‘mile,’ responded to an ‘ask’ letter, gave a financial gift or held us all in prayer—we appreciate it all. Without your support we would not have the opportunity to gather with more than 30,000 other ELCA youth from around the country and world to worship and serve on the Gulf Coast and in New Orleans. Thank you!!

Traveling to the ELCA National Youth Gathering July 13-23 in New Orleans are:

- Youth:*
- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Tremayne Collins | Kali Neu |
| Rachel Groves | Haley Olson |
| Kirsten Henagin | Michael Orr |
| Jordyn Himley | Sam Rydeen |
| Nikolas Himley | Timothy Wilbur |
| Haylee Hittesdorf | <i>Adults:</i> |
| Hannah Krupke | Tonie Dickmann |
| Emily Marlette | Jay Kiel |
| Justin Moe | Danielle Motschke |
| Austin Motschke | Pastor Dave Sperstad |

Thank you to all who faithfully support Christ's mission at First Lutheran Church with their mail-in offerings! Giving statements will be mailed to each giving unit/household following the end of the second quarter, sometime in July. Should you wish to receive a statement sooner than that, we can provide that for you. Please contact Sue or Gloria in the church office for this information.

You are encouraged to consider providing your giving to First Lutheran through the Simply Giving® program. Simply Giving is an automated giving plan that allows the giver to choose their gift amount and frequency of that gift. Automated giving ensures that your worshipping community receives your gift on a regular basis. For more information, contact the church office. **Thank you for your faithful giving!**



Items for the May NEWSLETTER are due on **April 20, 2012!**