



# *“Building on Blessings”*



## **Worship Space Enhancement Project**

After nearly two years of planning, preparation, prayer, and construction the worship space enhancement project is coming closer to completion. We have enjoyed the use of Stoltz Hall for worship during the past few months and stretched ourselves in worship in a new space. Those in attendance at worship on Sunday, August 4 had a taste of the newly enhanced worship space. We are thankful for the progress to date and the ability to have the use of the sanctuary during the week of Vacation Bible School. Thank you for your patience and understanding as the project items are completed and kinks are worked out.

A Celebration Day is scheduled for Sunday, October 6. Please plan to be present in worship that day. God has called us to build on our blessings! We give thanks to God for the many blessings we have received. We pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to lead and guide us into the future.

Thank you to all who have given support to the project in any way. To date 124 households have given \$303,043 in pledges or one-time gifts for the “Building on Blessings” campaign. You can still be a part of this campaign, pledge cards are available in the gathering space at church or you may contact the church office to receive a card in the mail.

We appreciate the members of the Worship Space Enhancement team who continue to work diligently on the project. Please thank them when you can, they are: Stephanie Adams, LaVerne Hempeck, Bob and Sonya Just, Darrell Larsen, Bruce Moller, Paula Monahan, Nancy Ratzloff, and Tammy Zwilling.

**Adult Opportunities**  
*see page 3*

**Music Ministry  
Opportunities**  
*see page 4*

**Mission Life**  
*see page 5*

**Youth Education**  
*see page 6*

**“Children First”  
Christian Preschool**  
*see page 7*

**Youth News/  
Vacation Bible  
School**  
*see page 8*

## Pastor's Article

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Selections from The Gospel of Luke the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter...

<sup>29</sup> *But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

<sup>36</sup> *Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor?* <sup>42</sup> *there is need of only one thing.*

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I embarked on my sabbatical on May 15, with Ray Stumpf driving me to Virginia Beach, Virginia. On the morning of May 19, I dipped my rear bicycle wheel into the waters of Atlantic Ocean and departed from Yorktown fully intent on asking people a couple of questions: Where do you see, and how do you experience God? I asked this question for about a week. Then I started to feel as if it was sort of an arrogant question of me to ask of people I met. God seemed to be telling me to listen rather than to ask. As I did I really began to hear what God had to say. Truly, I learned that God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason; "The need to listen twice as much as we talk." That is what a sabbatical is all about – listening to God.

As I rode and people would ask why I was on the trip? If I was doing it for a cause I was then able to tell them my story... that I was a pastor from Minnesota on sabbatical and this is what I had wanted to do since I was about 15 years old. People began to speak and God spoke through them.

So what did I hear? I heard that God has made a wonderful creation. The countryside I experienced was beautiful every pedal of the way. (*Yes, even the drought plagued western Kansas and Eastern Colorado region of the country was beautiful.*) Not only is the countryside beautiful but also the creatures, from the smallest of turtles, to the quickness of a red tail fox, to the largest of deer 'hiding' under the railroad bridge for shade to escape the heat.

I heard that God speaks many different languages. I heard people speak of God in a variety of ways and with a variety of names.

I heard that God speaks through many different churches: A variety of Baptist, Episcopal,

Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and simple Community Churches. I stayed in approximately 20 churches and each one of them had a feeling that God is in this place and I was made to feel like I was welcomed home. At every place the people seem to genuinely feel and trust that God had given them their faith they had and they welcomed me – the Lutheran pastor – even though our theology, our understanding of God, was vastly different. I was accepted as a brother in Christ. It was a humbling experience for me. I was the poor beggar asking for a hand out and they gave me more than a simple handout. They hosted me like a king; they cared for me like Abraham cared for the three who arrived at his tent, they cared for me like I was an honored guest. Yet you saw how I looked on my return, many said that I looked homeless. Fact is I was and yet I wasn't homeless. I was in the house of the Lord the entire 4,300 miles, I was cared for through the power of the Holy Spirit who guided me and I believe protected me every pedal of the way.

At the beginning of the journey I had many plans, I had plans down to where I was going to stay over a month after my departure. I had a list of questions I was going to ask—yet I was unable to keep the schedule that I had drafted. I was unable to ask the questions I wanted to ask. Someone else had a schedule and someone else wanted me to answer some questions directed at me. Such questions as: In whom do you trust? What is it you need in life? I learned... there is only need of one thing... the same thing Mary learned and Martha needed to hear – don't get bogged down with the details but sit and listen to the Word of God. Sit at the feet of Jesus and listen.

Pastor David

## Adult Opportunities



### **Green Fair Folk Festival at St. Francis Convent**

**Wednesday, August 7, 4:00-8:00 p.m.**

This outdoor event sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls is an evening of ecological awareness with music, food, exhibits, storytelling, other activities, and much more. Many local and state businesses and educational groups will be present. From 6-8 p.m., St. Francis Music Center will present music from Sestri, a women's Slavic chorus, and a fiddle contest. Other local musicians will celebrate music as a universal language that crosses all borders. Young people from First will make balloon (biodegradable!) animals—they're always a big hit! Come gather to enjoy, learn and see many local favorites and use these wonderful opportunities to enhance our care for the planet and make our world a better place for all.

#### **Bible Studies:**

##### **Women's Bible Study**

Watch for more information on a new study for the fall. This group will meet on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. Start date and sign up to be announced soon.

##### **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. Our next meeting time is Wednesday, September 4. Come when you can, leave when you must! Pastor Dave leads this study. Contact him for more information.

### **Zeb Pike Triathlon Saturday, August 24**

Start training now or continue your training for the Zeb Pike Tri! We'll start at Lindbergh Park at 8:00 a.m. and pedal a 20 mile bike loop around Zebulon Pike Lake, a 2 mile paddle on the Mississippi River and a 3 mile run on Lindbergh Drive. Race it alone or gather up a team; your entry fee of \$20.00 for adults or \$10.00 for kids also provides you with a Zeb Pike t-shirt! A potluck will follow the race and award ceremony. Call organizers Scott or Amber Sobiech at 616-9626 for more information.



### **Luther Crest Bible Camp Quilts for Camp Extravaganza held at Carlos Creek Winery Saturday, October 19**

New this year! Luther Crest is partnering with Carlos Creek Winery's Fall Apple Fest event with over 5,000 participants. Apple Fest begins at 11:00 a.m. with fun events such as: pumpkin carving, pumpkin chucking with catapults and trebuchets, pie eating contest, live music, and more. Quilt viewing begins at noon in the barn. There will be silent auction, artisan crafts for sale, wine tasting, live quilt auction begins at 4:30 p.m. This event will be fun for the entire family all day long! Food and beverages will be available to purchase throughout the day. Carlos Creek Winery is located at 6693 County Rd 34 NW, Alexandria, near Luther Crest. Let's support the Bible Camp at this event!

## Music Ministry Opportunities:



### **Praise Team Appreciation Lunch Sunday, August 18 following 10:00 a.m. worship**

If you have provided worship leadership as a part of the praise team, or if you would like to become involved in this ministry in the coming year, you are invited to this “Thank you” lunch following 10:00 a.m. worship on Sunday, August 18. Singers, instrumentalists, media/sound operators and families are invited. For more information, and/or to RSVP, contact Becky Nelson at church or at home, 749-2336 or via email at [rpnelson@brainerd.net](mailto:rpnelson@brainerd.net).

### **The Followers of Christ Children’s Choir Rehearsals begin: Wednesday, September 11**

All kids in Kindergarten through Grade 6 are welcome to sing with the children’s choir. The first rehearsal is Wednesday, September 11 from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Transportation from Lincoln and Lindbergh Elementary schools to First Lutheran Church will be provided by school bus. Parents are asked to register for this singing opportunity. Registration forms are available in the gathering space or on the church website at [www.flclittlefalls.org](http://www.flclittlefalls.org). For more information, contact Becky Nelson at 749-2336 or [rpnelson@brainerd.net](mailto:rpnelson@brainerd.net).

### **Adult Choir Wednesdays at 1:00 p.m. Beginning September 11**

Senior Choir resumes rehearsal on Wednesday, September 11, at 1:00 p.m. We hope the new time will accommodate singers who prefer to come out during the daytime hours. If you enjoy singing God’s praises, and are high-school age and up, come for singing and fellowship. We welcome new singers! We plan to sing three Sundays per month at the 8:00 or 10:45 a.m. services. For more information, contact Becky Nelson, at 749-2336, or Kathy Pederson, at 468-2324, or 630-3731.

### **Share Your Musical Gifts**

Would you like to share your musical gifts with the congregation? There are many ways to participate in this important part of congregational life. If you or someone you know is interested in any of these opportunities, please contact Becky Nelson, Director of Music Ministry, at 749-2336, or the church office.

- ♪ Praise Team – the Praise Team leads worship weekly at 9:30/10:00 a.m. service. Vocalists, guitar, drums, flute are part of the team. The commitment is two Sundays a month.
- ♪ Cantor – the cantor leads various settings of the liturgical worship service. Commitment on an as needed basis.
- ♪ Solo or ensemble gift of music – share vocal or instrumental gifts of music during worship as available.
- ♪ Pianist for services at local care centers. Accompanist for worship services as you are available.

## Mission Life

### **Oasis/Share A Meal Community Paint A Thon**

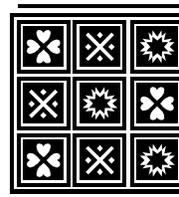
Thank you to the First Lutheran Church team who volunteered their time on Saturday, August 3 to give a fresh coat of paint to the home of a local resident. This is a great time to assist our brothers and sisters in Christ right here in our own community. Mark your calendars for the first Saturday of August 2014 and plan to assist with this annual event. Thank to Jerome and Karen Haaland for coordinating the team.

### **Ruby's Pantry Food Distribution**

Oasis Central Minnesota hosts distribution of food from Ruby's Pantry on the fourth Monday of each month. Monday, August 26 will be the next distribution date. Surplus food is provided to anyone interested, there is no income qualification. Recipients are asked to bring their own box and a cash donation of \$15.00. Distribution takes place at Bethel Lutheran, 901 Broadway Avenue West from 4:30-6:00 p.m. For more information, call Oasis Central Minnesota, at 632-9140.

### **Home Delivered Meals September 16-20**

First Lutheran participates in the Home Delivered Meals program locally. Together with other groups in the community we share the delivery of meals a week at a time. Our next dates to deliver meals are Monday-Friday, September 16-20. Volunteers meet at the Buckman building at 10:00 a.m., you will pick up the meals and deliver to the assigned route. You'll be done between 11:00-11:30 a.m. This is a valuable service that assists people to remain in their homes. If you or someone you know would consider being First Lutheran's coordinator for this servant opportunity, please call the church office at 632-6667. Thank you!



### **Camp Knutson Annual Quilt Auction Saturday, August 10**

Camp Knutson, nurtures the well-being of persons with special needs in a setting which celebrates God's love for community and creation. In 2010, over 1,000 campers with heart disease, HIV or AIDS, Down syndrome, severe skin diseases, autism or other diseases were served. A quilt from the First Lutheran quilters along with many others will be auctioned. First Lutheran provides assistance on the day of the sale. Your support of the auction is greatly appreciated. If you would like to attend and share a ride, contact Marlene Williams, 632-4290.

### **Luther Crest Scramble A Fun(d) Raising Golf Tournament Monday, August 12 Camp Changes Lives!**

Why not gather a foursome for this fun(d) raising "Best Ball" tournament on the course at Lake Miltona Golf Course, Alexandria. Registration begins at 10:00 a.m.; "shotgun start" tee time is at noon. Supper will be served at Lake Miltona at 5:00 p.m. The fee is \$100.00 per person covers green fees, cart rental, and meal. You are encouraged to give a gift in support of Luther Crest at this event. Past tournaments have made a significant impact on the camp's ministry. To register, call the church office, 632-6667.

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### Welcome Three-Year-Olds!

Each year we help prepare our three-year-olds for Sunday School by inviting them and their parents to participate in an orientation gathering. This year's gathering is scheduled for Wednesday, September 11, at 6:30 p.m. Youth and their parents will visit their classroom, meet their teacher, and get acquainted with one another. Any child who is three years old by September 1 is welcome. Three-year olds will receive the gift of a story Bible at worship on Rally Sunday, September 15. Please enroll your child to ensure they receive a Bible. If you have questions, please call Gail Hittesdorf at church, 632-6667.

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### Sunday School: Fall 2013 Sunday, September 15, 10:30 a.m.

Rally Sunday – We will kick-off another year of Educational ministry at First Lutheran Church. Parents and children ages 3 through grade 12 will Rally in Stoltz Hall for an opening and introduction to Sunday School. We will review parent expectations and responsibilities and introduce Sunday School leaders and Commission for Education members. There will be a special treat for all!

Education Commission members and volunteers have been recruiting teachers, leaders and helpers for the upcoming Sunday Morning ministries. If you are interested in sharing your faith through cooking, storytelling, song, music, games, arts and crafts, etc., please contact the church office, any Commission for Education member or Gail Hittesdorf, Education Coordinator at 632-6667.

### Registration for Sunday Morning Ministry, age 3-grade 12 Confirmation, grades 2-11 Youth Groups, grades 3-12

Parents of children ages 3 years – 12<sup>th</sup> grade: Watch your mailbox for a mailing on Education & Youth Ministry for the coming year. Registration and health forms for kids, and list of opportunities for adults to work with youth, and a schedule for confirmation is included. Please note that registration is required each year for participation in Education and Youth Activities. Additional forms will be available in the church office or on the church web-site at [www.flclittlefalls.org](http://www.flclittlefalls.org). Forms should be returned to First Lutheran as soon as possible. See the mailing for more details!

### Confirmation Ministries

**Third Grade:** Parents and youth entering third grade are invited to attend a Bible overview meeting on Wednesday, August 21 at 6:30 p.m. We will discuss the course on Family Devotions on the Gospel of Mark to begin in September. Youth will receive their Bibles during worship on Sunday, August 25.

**Fifth Grade:** Class on Stewardship begins on Wednesday, September 11. Watch for a letter with details about this class.

**Sixth Grade:** During the week of Vacation Bible School (August 5-9), youth entering seventh grade in the fall are studying the Lord's Prayer with Jay Kiel.

**Ninth Grade:** New Testament class begins Wednesday, September 11, at 7:00 p.m. Watch for a letter with information about this class.

**Tenth Grade:** don't forget your mentor activities. Confirmation day will be here before you know it!

## "Children First" Christian Preschool Update

Greetings from the Preschool,

This fall we offer the following classes.

- ☺ *Noah's Animals*—for children 33 months to three years old, meeting Monday and Wednesday (this class is full), or Tuesday and Thursday from 9:00-11:30 a.m.
- ☺ *Jesus' Gems*—for four and five year olds, meeting Monday and Wednesday, or Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00-11:30 a.m.
- ☺ *Friday Friends*—for 33 months to PreK, this additional class creates a three-day week.
- ☺ Interested families are encouraged to inquire and register early to allow time for the necessary paperwork and/or medical appointments to be completed. Registration forms are available on the church website, [www.flclittlefalls.org](http://www.flclittlefalls.org), or at church in the gathering space.

If you are able to financially assist a family with tuition expense scholarship, please let us know.

### Thank you!

Thank you to Jessica Gustafson, for leading two weeks of Summer Preschool Day Camp. 23 children ages 3-5 enjoyed learning about how God made them special, and about their five senses through stories, craft projects, puppets, songs and games. What a fun time. ☺

Upcoming dates for preschool families or those interested:

- ☞ Green Fair Folk Festival, Wednesday, August 7, 4:00-8:00 p.m. at St. Francis Campus, Little Falls. Visit the preschool booth at this free family-friendly event that promotes a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.
- ☞ Preschool Open House, Monday, August 26, 5:00-7:30 p.m. Open House is for anyone interested in visiting or registering.
- ☞ Parent Orientation, Wednesday, September 4, 7:00-8:00 p.m. at the church. Parents only please, there is much information to cover!
- ☞ Arts and Crafts Fair Booth, Saturday-Sunday, September 7-8 (Broadway and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street). Volunteers welcome!
- ☞ Classes begin for students, Monday-Tuesday, September 9-10, class sessions on these days are 1½ hours with a parent/guardian attending.
- ☞ "Give Us a Hand!" come to Kids' Day at the Morrison County Fairgrounds on Saturday, September 28. Children can place their handprint on a quilt top to be donated to Habitat for Humanity.

Thank you to all who support "Children First" in any way, preschool operations are supported only by tuition, donations, fundraisers, volunteerism, and your many prayers. First Lutheran graciously provides the facility needs. Thank you for your continued support of this ministry to children and families!

In Christ's Service,  
Gail Hittesdorf, Director, (320) 632-6667  
[childrenfirst@flclittlefalls.org](mailto:childrenfirst@flclittlefalls.org)



## VBS Mission Project

We are supporting “Operation Backpack” once again. We are collecting backpacks (new or gently used) and the school supplies needed to fill them. Backpacks will be distributed to nine local schools for area kids in need. Last year over 90 backpacks filled with supplies were donated to local schools! Supply lists are available on the gathering space bulletin board. Donations may be brought to the collection box in the gathering space.



## Vacation Bible School “Kingdom Rock” Where Kids Stand Strong for God! August 5-9

### F.O.C.U.S. (Fixed on Christ Until Sunday) Youth Bible Study Monday morning at 7:00 a.m. when school is in session

Youth in grades 6 through 12 are invited to meet each Monday for breakfast and bible study each week when school is in session. Watch for more information about this great way to start your week. For more information, talk to Pastor Dave.

Another majestic week of VBS is underway here at First Lutheran. More than 216 children and nearly 40 adults are learning and sharing about standing strong for God. What a terrific and regal time we are having! Thanks to all the people who have volunteered their time and talents to make this week a fun faith experience for everyone and to all the children and families for attending! Stand Strong!

### Spoke Folk Friday, August 9

A group of young adult bicyclists known as Spoke Folk will be here at First Lutheran on Friday, August 9. The group will arrive in Little Falls Friday afternoon and will present an interactive, contemporary music program at 7:00 p.m. for all ages that includes music, drama, and puppets. The members of the Spoke Folk team represent many states. The group is on a 12-day tour, biking about 40 miles a day from a training site to six other area communities. Each evening while “on the road,” they share the musical program. First Lutheran will host the group for supper, breakfast and provide sleeping room at the church. Come and enjoy this event, there is no charge, a free-will offering will be received. For more information, contact Jay Kiel.

**Watch for it:  
“#ifthen”  
2 Chronicles 7:14  
See You at the Pole  
Wednesday, September 25, 7:00 a.m.**

See you at the Pole™ is all about prayer. It’s about you coming together and laying aside all the labels and groups for one day, to simply connect with God in prayer and connect with fellow Christians in unity around the flag pole. Come and pray for your school, friends, families and the world.

## **Council Highlights**

- Welcomed Pastor David Sperstad back from his sabbatical!
- Heard that the Worship Space Enhancement project is on schedule and looking wonderful!
- Regretfully accepted the resignation of Larry Engel from the council.
- Received a report of successful youth trips from Jay Kiel.
- Approved hosting the group Spoke Folk on Friday, August 9. The group of high school and college age youth will spend the night at church and provide a concert on Friday evening. The congregation will provide supper, sleeping space, and breakfast.

**Thrivent Choice:** Thank you to all who have designated their Thrivent Choice dollars to First Lutheran Church and to “Children First” Christian Preschool. This year we have seen an increase in the number of Thrivent members who are eligible to donate these funds, and an increase in the amount. Thank you for putting your Thrivent Choice dollars to work in mission and ministry at First Lutheran! If you have questions about this program or would like assistance in designating your Thrivent Choice dollars, please contact the church office.

## **Nominating Committee**

Each year steward/members are elected at the annual meeting of the congregation, and two are appointed by the council to serve on the Nominating Committee. This team is asked to give prayerful consideration to selecting steward/members to serve in leadership positions on the church council. This group does their work throughout the fall months to give those considered sufficient time to pray and consider their serving. If you or someone you know might be interested in serving in a leadership position, please contact a committee member, pastor, or the church office. Nominating committee members are: Debra Yliniemi-Ahlin, Mark Hanson, Darrell Larsen, Doug Luepke, Paula Monahan and Jim Weiss.

## **Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA**

First Lutheran Church has long been a participant in the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA. As a congregation we know that ministries are empowered through MIF and we know that we are the part of a continuous circle of relationships. Through investment in MIF, ministries and congregations are strengthened and energized. Dollars invested in the MIF are used to provide support to congregations. First Lutheran Church has investments with the MIF and is in process of working with the MIF to finance the worship space enhancement project. Individuals and households are also welcome to invest with the Mission Investment Fund. This shared ministry allows us to work together to do great things. If you or someone you know is interested in investment with the Mission Investment Fund, please contact the church office, for more information.

## **Simply Giving**

Simply Giving® is an easy way to make your regular contributions to First Lutheran Church through automated giving. The program is designed to assist you in conveniently, consistently and joyfully giving financial gifts to the congregation's ministry. You can use electronic funds transfer to give your weekly, semi-monthly or monthly offering. Simply Giving® is a reliable and safe way to move your stewardship plan into action. There are no checks to write and no missed offerings. First Lutheran benefits from receiving steady, more predictable offering throughout the year and greater confidence in meeting the congregation's financial commitments. For more info or to enroll, contact Sue or Gloria in the church office.

## News of the Family

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Howard W. Wegner died on July 22. His funeral service was July 25 at First Lutheran Church.

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Items for the **September NEWSLETTER** are due on **August 20, 2013!**



### Summer Worship Schedule

Sunday Worship at 8:00 and 10:00 a.m.

Summer Worship at 8:00 and 10:00 a.m. continues through September 1. Stay after the 8:00 a.m. service, or come early for the 10:00 service, for coffee (leaded and unleaded!), treats and fellowship in the Gathering Space. Everyone is welcome! Enjoy your vacation but don't take a vacation from church! Aren't you glad God doesn't take the summer off?

### Can Care Collection

Recycling is one way to save the earth. Bring your empty cans to the church secured in a plastic bag—you can leave them next to the garage door. This on-going fundraiser provides money for youth activities.

Keep saving those aluminum cans! Thanks!