



**Vacation Bible School
“Weird Animals”
Where Jesus’ Love is One-of-a-Kind!
August 4-8**

Vacation Bible School is coming!! Youth and adults will explore the Bible and learn that: even when you're left out, even though you're different, even when you don't understand, even though you do wrong, even when you're afraid...*Jesus loves you!* We will start the day at the Sing and Play Stampede, then kids will have fun with *Untamed Games*, enjoy a movie at *KidVid Cinema*, have a *One-of-a-Kind Bible Adventure*, make a project at the *Imagination Station*, and have a snack at the *Critter Café*. Everyone is welcome to come and wrap up the day at 11:30 a.m. at *the Tail End!*

This year's VBS will be a joint effort of First Lutheran and First United Churches. To register, your child must be 3 years old (by September 1, 2013) through 6th grade. You may pick up a registration form at church or you can find the form on the church web-site, www.flclittlefalls.org. Registration is free; you are encouraged to register your child even if they may not attend every day. Your advance registration helps us have adequate supplies for each child.

If you are interested in helping with VBS, there are many fun ways for you to get involved. You can participate for the full week or for part of the week. Thanks to all who have already volunteered!

The mission project this year is 'Operation Backpack'— *more info on page 9.*

For more information about Vacation Bible School contact one of the coordinators, they are: Gail Hittesdorf and Michele Miller (First Lutheran), and Diane Spillum (First United), or the church office.

**Welcome, Pastor
Hank French!
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A Note from Pastor Hank

As I get ready to begin an interim ministry with you, I thought it would be good to introduce myself to you in this newsletter so I won't be a complete stranger on August 11th when I officially begin to serve as your pastor.

I suspect that I will be with you anywhere from a year to two years and I am genuinely looking forward to getting to know you and working with you to ensure a faithful and flourishing future for First Lutheran.

I am a Lutheran pastor who retired in 2006 in order to do research and writing. Since retiring, however, I have done two interim ministries with troubled congregations. After Pastor Sperstad resigned as your senior pastor, I was asked by Bishop Aitken to consider a call to serve as your interim pastor. I was happy to accept.

I know that this is a difficult time for First Lutheran. I am sure that the circumstances surrounding Pastor Sperstad's departure have brought forth strong feelings in the congregation—including feelings of anger, betrayal, grief and sadness. I have agreed to serve First Lutheran for as long as it takes for the congregation to work through these feelings and then prepare to call and receive a new senior pastor.

A bit about myself. I was ordained into the ministry in 1975, graduating from Luther Seminary in St. Paul. After ordination I went to Japan where I served with the Japanese Evangelical Lutheran Church both as a parish pastor and a professor at the Japanese Lutheran Seminary.

In 1990, I returned to the United States to work as the Overseas Program Director for NE Asia and the South Pacific with the ELCA's Division for Global Mission. Following that, I served as Academic Dean and Professor of Christian Mission and World Religions at Luther Seminary

in St. Paul. I rounded out my career as pastor of Lake of the Isles Lutheran Church in Minneapolis.

My wife Bobbi and I moved to Little Falls exactly a year ago and have come to love this historic town. We have four adult children—two in the Twin Cities, one in Sioux Falls, SD, and one in Washington D.C.

Bobbi is a musician. She teaches violin, piano and voice at the St. Francis Music Center here in Little Falls where she also directs two string orchestras. She has performed in several different orchestras over the years and presently performs as the principal second violin in the Heartland Symphony Orchestra.

Over the next several months I want to talk one-on-one with as many of you as possible. I want to get to know you and to hear your stories so I can responsibly provide pastoral care if and when it is needed. I also want to give you a safe place to talk about your feelings about Pastor Sperstad's departure, and about your concerns, hopes and visions for ministry at First Lutheran going forward.

I will be keeping office hours Monday through Thursday and my door will always be open to anyone with a question, a concern, a request or just an interest in conversation over a cup of coffee or tea.

If you or a loved one or a friend have any pastoral care needs/emergencies, be sure to let me know as soon as possible. My cell phone number is 320-279-0647 and my personal email address is hank.french@centurylink.net. I suspect that once I get settled in I will have an email address at the church as well.

Peace and every blessing to you all.

Pastor Hank

Council Highlights

- Received the resignation of Pastor David Sperstad effective June 23.
- Met with NE MN Synod Bishop Tom Aitken, and Assistant to the Bishop Vicki Taylor to plan for temporary pastoral coverage and for interim ministry for the congregation.
- Held a special meeting to contract with Rev. Dr. Hank French as interim minister. Pastor French begins serving the congregation on Monday, August 11. *See the article from Pastor French on page 2.*

Statement for Pastoral Boundaries

We, at First Lutheran Church, love and cherish the friendship we have had with all our former pastors, but we should not ask any former pastor for further pastoral services such as counseling, funerals, weddings and baptisms. Also, according to ELCA practice, all former pastors are to respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they have previously served and therefore remain distanced from influencing all decisions of the congregation, as well as not practicing Word and Sacrament ministry with former parishioners.

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.

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 worked 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.

Thank you to all who have offered their time and talents in any way during this time of transition. Whether you have assisted with worship, with worship serving opportunities, with projects around the church building and grounds, offered an encouraging word, or lifted up a prayer, all is appreciated. Your faithful presence in worship and serving is integral to the life of this congregation! **You are a blessing!**

Adult Opportunities



Green Fair Folk Festival at St. Francis Convent

Wednesday, August 6, 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 musical acts. And 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. 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 3. Come when you can, leave when you must!

Zeb Pike Triathlon Saturday, August 23

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 (\$25 for a long-sleeve tee) 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 18

Luther Crest partners 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 2:00 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



The Followers of Christ Children's Choir Rehearsals begin:

Wednesday, September 10

All kids in Kindergarten through Grade 6 are welcome to sing with the children's choir. The first rehearsal is Wednesday, September 10 from 3:30-4:15 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. For more information, contact Becky Nelson at 749-2336 or rpnelson@brainerd.net.

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.

Oasis Central Minnesota Fundraiser



“Church Ladies Extravaganza”

**Dinner Theater
At Falls Ballroom**

**Thursday, August 14
Friday, August 15**

Bring a friend and come for this evening of food, song, and laughter and support the outreach of Oasis Central Minnesota, the host organization of the weekly Share A Meal held each Thursday at First Lutheran.

Social hour at 5:30 p.m., dinner and show begins at 6:30 p.m. The church ladies (some you will recognize!) and Prudence from Bowlus (played by Little Falls' hilarious native son, Jason Schommer) will entertain you!

Tickets are \$25.00 each and available until Friday, August 8. No tickets will be sold at the door. Advance tickets are available in the church office, St. Francis Convent reception desk, or the Oasis office in the historic courthouse building. For more information, call the Oasis office at 632-9140.

Spoke Folk are Back!

Come on out to church on Tuesday, August 5 at 7:00 p.m. and hear a lively, energetic performance by the Spoke Folk bicyclist team. This group of young adults will ride into town in the afternoon and stay overnight at church. If you can assist with dinner, breakfast or other hospitality, please contact Jay Kiel or the church office. Don't miss this great evening!

Mission Life

Oasis/Share A Meal Community Paint A Thon

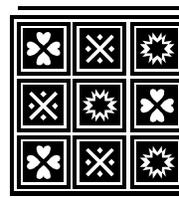
Thank you to the First Lutheran Church team who volunteered their time on Saturday, August 2 to give a fresh coat of paint to the home of a local resident. This is a great time to assist our brothers and sisters in Christ right here in our own community. Mark your calendars for the first Saturday of 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 25 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 \$20.00. 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 1-5

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 1-5. 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 9

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 11 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.

Welcome Three-Year-Olds!

Each year we help to prepare our three-year-olds for Sunday School by inviting them and their parents/guardians to participate in a welcome gathering. This year's gathering is scheduled for Wednesday, September 10, at 6:30 p.m. Children and their parents/guardians will visit their classroom, meet their teacher, share a treat, 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 Sunday, September 14. Please enroll your child to ensure they receive a Bible. If you have questions, please call the church office, 632-6667.

Sunday School: Fall 2014 Sunday, September 21, 10:30 a.m.

We are getting ready to kick-off another year of Educational ministry at First Lutheran Church. Parents and children ages 3 through grade 12 will gather in Stoltz Hall for an opening and introduction to Sunday School on Sunday, September 21. 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 the church office 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 – 12th 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. 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 20 at 6:30 p.m. We will discuss the course on Family Devotions on the Gospel of Mark which begins in September. Youth will receive the gift of a Bible during worship on Sunday, August 24.

Fifth Grade: Class on Stewardship begins on Wednesday, September 10. Watch for a letter with details about this class.

Sixth Grade: During the week of Vacation Bible School (August 4-8), youth entering seventh grade in the fall are studying the Lord's Prayer with Jay Kiel.

Ninth Grade: New Testament class begins Wednesday, September 10, 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, 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, or at church in the gathering space.

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

"Children First" Advisory Team and staff welcome back the teaching staff, Jessica Gustafson, Anna Walker, and Chrissi Gesme.

Thank you!

Thank you to Jessica Gustafson, for leading Summer Preschool Day Camp. 12 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 6, 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. Children can adopt a Stuffed 'Pet' or bring your own stuffed 'Pet' for needed repairs and TLC.
- ☞ Preschool Open House, Wednesday, August 27, 5:00-7:30 p.m. Open House is for anyone interested in visiting or registering.
- ☞ Parent Orientation, Wednesday, September 3, 6:30 p.m. at the church. Parents only please, there is much information to cover!
- ☞ Arts and Crafts Fair Booth, Saturday-Sunday, September 6-7 (Broadway and 2nd Street). Volunteers welcome!
- ☞ Classes begin for students, Monday-Tuesday, September 8-9, class sessions on these days are 1½ hours with a parent/guardian attending.

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



**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. We will meet beginning Monday, September 8 at 7:00 a.m. for breakfast at Subway. This is a great way to start your week. For more information, talk to Jay Kiel.

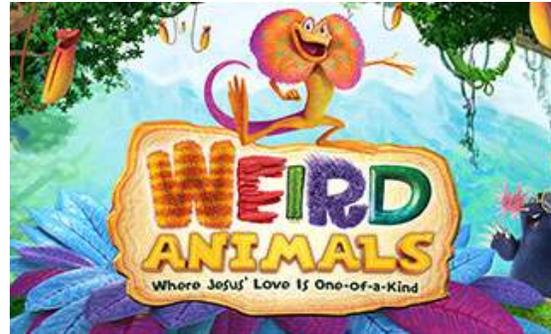
**Watch for it:
“Never Stop Praying”
Ephesians 6:18**

**See You at the Pole
Wednesday, September 24, 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.

**2015 ELCA National Youth Gathering
“Rise Up”
Detroit, Michigan
July 11-20, 2015**

Check out the white youth page for more information about this event which happens only every three years. Just think about worship with more than 30,000 other young Lutherans—AWE-some! Registration is happening now, ask Jay Kiel for more information.



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.

**Spoke Folk
Tuesday, August 5**

A group of young adult bicyclists known as Spoke Folk will be here at First Lutheran on Tuesday, August 5. The group will arrive in Little Falls Tuesday 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 or the church office.

News of the Family

Michele Allord and Jordan Giambone were united in marriage on June 7.

Angie Hoheisel and Jeremy Sanoski were united in marriage on June 21.

May God bless their lives together.



Keagen Boyd Andres, son of Eric and Stephanie Andres, was baptized on June 29. May God's blessing shine on this new member of the family of God.



Items for the **September NEWSLETTER** are due on **August 20, 2014!**



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 14. 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!

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. If you can assist with taking cans to be recycled, please contact the church office. Keep saving those aluminum cans! Thanks!