



December 2013

December 2, 2013

## *Advent and Christmas Worship*

**Advent One:** Sunday, December 1:  
Worship at 8:00, 9:30 and 10:45 a.m.

**Wednesday Advent Worship:**

Wednesdays, December 4, 11, and 18  
at 7:00 p.m.  
Holden Evening Prayer

**Advent Two:** Sunday, December 8:  
Worship at 8:00, 9:30 and 10:45 a.m.  
*Sunday Education at 10:30 a.m.*

**Advent Three:** Sunday, December 15:  
Worship at 8:00, 9:30 and 10:45 a.m.  
*Sunday Education at 10:30 a.m.*

**Advent Four:** Sunday, December 22:  
Worship at 8:00, 9:30 and 10:45 a.m.



## *Christmas Eve*

**Tuesday, December 24:**  
**Festival Worship at 4:00, 6:00 and 10:00 p.m.**  
Holy Communion at all three services

**First Sunday of Christmas: December 29**  
Two Services of worship at 8:00 and 10:00 a.m.

*Come and Celebrate!*

*Come, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come*

**Pastor Dave's Article**  
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## Pastor Dave's Article

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In the sixth chapter of the book of Acts we hear about Stephen. Stephen was accused by the leaders of the church that he was changing the customs of Moses. He was declaring the lack of importance of holding onto tradition. He was encouraging people to let go of “the way things have always been done” and to instead let the Gospel of Jesus hold on to the people. Stephen was stoned to death for asking the people to change their thinking. It seems people have never really liked change.

Change? What good is change? Is change good at all?

Change is something we cannot avoid. Everything in our life has been changing since the day we were born. No matter how hard we try to keep things the same, change is going to happen. Why is it that some change is good and other change is harder? How should we be prepared to change? How do we come to terms with the fact that change is an inevitable element of every human life? Without change we do not progress, advance, or learn how to cope. Without change, we would not grow from a babe in arms to a toddler, from a toddler to a teenager, and on into adulthood. Change, evolution, progression, adaptation and ultimately education are all a part of who we are. Our learning curve of life is the only ingredient we are assured of once we are born, even if we progress straight into death, we still changed—

from alive to dead; that's a change, that's a progression.

During the season of Advent when as you come to worship you will notice a change in the sanctuary. Where's my pew? How do I get to my seat? Will you look at this change as a negative or as an opportunity to be changed? Think about a caterpillar for if it didn't accept the inevitable change there would be no butterflies. The only place in this life we will not see change is when we are in a cemetery. However, we believe what Paul tells us in the 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15, “*we will all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*” This is the Gospel promise!

So as we come to worship this month let's focus on the change that God is doing within us, rather than on the change of the seating arrangement and how do I get to my seat. Let's focus on the mystery of the Gospel and what or how is God calling me to change in my life!

See you in church!

*(from a new vantage point)*

Pastor David Sperstad

**Wishing you and yours  
a Blessed Christmas Season!**

First Lutheran Church Staff Ministry Team

## Parish Nurse Ministry

Parish nursing is a health promotion, disease prevention ministry based on the care of the whole person. There are seven key functions of the Parish Nurse. These functions are as integrator, the mixing of, faith and health, through the ministry of health educator, personal health counselor, referral agent, trainer of volunteers (Health Ministry associates), developer of support groups, and health advocate. This nursing role does not embrace the medical model of care or invasive practices such as injections, medical treatments, dressings etc. It is a professional model of health ministry using a registered professional nurse. The focus of the practice is the faith community and its ministry. This ministry is intended on being integrated into the life of the congregation revitalizing the mission of health and healing of the congregation with the parish nurse being a regular member of the ministerial staff.

## The Gift of Generosity

We thank everyone who has supported First Lutheran Church this past year with their time, talent and financial contributions. We have experienced a year of growth and a flurry of activity with the addition of the Worship Space Enhancement project and all of the other ministries that take place here each day. We are thankful for your continued faithful and generous support.

Numerous stewards/members appreciate the convenience of automated giving through Simply Giving®. If you would like a convenient way to make regular offerings or if you plan to make an additional gift before the end of the year, we encourage you to look into our electronic giving options. As the pace of life speeds up, especially around the holidays, you may find electronic giving a most welcome way to make contributions. Contact Susan Gustner or Gloria Kofoed in the church office for more information. Thank you!



## Council Highlights

- Heard that the Pastor Parish Relations Team will coordinate the pie fellowship following the Thanksgiving Eve service on Wednesday, November 27.
- Approved hiring Amber Sobiech as part-time Administrative Assistant.
- Discussed the ministry of Parish Nurse and possible inclusion of this ministry staff position in the coming year. *see article on this page.*
- Expressed enthusiasm for the numbers of young people and activities happening at First Lutheran.



## Tolerance and Fear of Islam

All are welcome to this evening dialogue on this topic on Wednesday, December 4, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. This event is hosted by the Franciscan Sisters and will be held at St. Francis Hall. The goal of this event is to promote positive discussion based on tolerance and respect, and to build greater understanding of those of a different faith tradition than our own. The dialogue will include a panel of speakers from both the Muslim and Christian faiths. For more information, call 632-0649.



## 2013 Giving

The last date for offerings received to be credited for the year 2013 is Tuesday, December 31, 2013. Thank you for your faithful giving throughout the year.

## Advent and Christmas

### GoodShop.com

You can make every gift count this holiday season. You can find coupons for more than 1,600 top stores and a percentage of virtually every sale will be donated to First Lutheran Church. Just go to GoodShop.com and designate "First Lutheran Church – Little Falls" as the cause you support and then click over to your favorite store and shop! Or you can add the toolbar to your browser at <http://www.goodsearch.com/toolbar> and your purchases will automatically earn a donation for the church even if you forget to go to GoodShop first. Thank you for supporting First Lutheran through your online shopping! Spread the word.



### Christmas Poinsettias

Your donations of holiday poinsettias to decorate our sanctuary for Christmas are welcome. You may donate in honor/memory of a loved one. The church office will order poinsettias for delivery for Christmas. The cost per 6" plant is \$10.00. Submit your request to Susan in the church office by Friday, December 13.

### Thank you

Dearest First Lutheran family,

How can we ever thank all of you for your kindness, concern, and love during our journey with Ray these past 3+ years? Your continued prayers and support have meant so much to all of us.

Thank you to all of you who have brought food, helped serve in the kitchen, set up for his "Celebration of Life" both at First Lutheran and at the LF Middle School.

You have truly been the "Hands and Feet" of Jesus in your ministry to all of us.

We are humbled and thankful for each and every one of you. Ray had a passion for youth and youth ministry as many of you know.

The "children" of this community and especially of First Lutheran have always been dear to his heart. All of you, children and adults alike, have indeed lived out First Lutheran's mission to truly be "First...Servants of All."

With grateful hearts,  
Ray's family

Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

### Advent Wednesday Worship December 4, 11, and 18 at 7:00 p.m.

In preparation for the coming of the Christ child we gather to worship each Wednesday during Advent using the service of Holden Evening Prayer. Invite a friend to come with you and let the quiet beauty of song prepare your heart for Christ's birth. Refreshments will be served following the service.

### Advent Devotionals

You may wish to set aside a time for Advent devotions during December. There are many resources available for your use, both hard copy and online. One resource is God Pause, provided by Luther Seminary. You can sign up for a daily email at <http://www.luthersem.edu/godpause/>. We will also have the copies available at church. Contact the church office if you would like to receive a copy in the mail.



## Adult Opportunities

### Men's Bible Study Breakfast

All men of the congregation and friends are invited to a Men's Bible Breakfast study. The weekday study meets on the first and third Wednesday of each month (December 4 and 18) at 6:15 a.m. at the church for breakfast. You are welcome to attend – come when you are able, leave when you must. For more information, contact Pastor Dave.

### Book Club

The Book Club will not meet in December. The book that we will read and discuss in January is Room by Emma Donoghue. Readers may secure their own copy of the book. We will meet on Tuesday, January 28 at 7:00 p.m. For more information, contact Tifanii Dahl at 632-8207.



### Office Volunteer Appreciation Event

This year, have you helped to fold newsletters or bulletins? Have you been part of a team to put together bulk mailings? Have you answered telephones and helped with projects as an Office Hospitality volunteer? If you have used your gifts to serve in the First Lutheran Church office during this past year, **you are invited:**

### Volunteer Appreciation Reception Thursday, December 12, 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Please come for fellowship, treats, and our thanks to you for your service to God. Your ministry is vital to the mission of First Lutheran. We look forward to seeing you there!

### Women's Circle: "In Good Company: Stories of Biblical Women"

Miriam, A Loving Protector  
Exodus 2:3-4

### Martha Circle

The Martha Circle meets Monday, December 16 at 12:30 p.m. at the Black and White Restaurant.

### Young Adult Group

Planning is underway for an opportunity for younger adults—those ages 21-45 or so—to gather for fellowship, fun, and conversation around things that matter to you and to the world. Mark your calendars now for Saturday, January 25, our first date for this group. The evening will begin with a fun activity for the adults. Child care will be provided during this time as needed. Then we will gather back at church for a meal together, also provided for you. A few events throughout the year will be planned. This will be a great time to get to know others better and find support and shared interest. We hope this will be a place to engage in discussion about our lives of faith and our questions about faith. If you are interested in getting involved with planning or have questions, please contact the church office.



## Ways that First Folks are “First...Servants of All”

### Angel Tree Gift Giving

You are invited to share your gifts with families and children in our community who are living at or below the federally recognized poverty level. Take a tag from the Angel Tree located in the Gathering Space. Return your unwrapped gifts with their tag to the church by Sunday, December 15. Thank you for your continued participation in the Angel Tree project! Your generosity helps many around us to celebrate this holiday season with thanks and praise. For more information, contact Annalee VanDenheuvel at 320-232-9366.



### Thanksgiving Offerings

The church council has designated the offering received on Thanksgiving be given to those in need outside of the congregation. Gifts will be shared with Lutheran Disaster Response for Pacific Typhoon Haiyan Response and with Kidz Against Hunger. Designated gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response are used in full – 100% – for relief efforts. And, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans has announced a 2-for-1 match up to \$500,000 for gifts given to LDR for Typhoon Haiyan through December 31. You can you're your check Thank you for your generous giving!

### God's Work – Our Hands

#### Thank you!

- ☞ Thank you to those who delivered meals to the homebound during Thanksgiving week.
- ☞ Thank you to all who provided food and/or served the community Share A Meal on November 21.
- ☞ Thank you to those who provided items or worked at the Lutheran Care Center Fall Sale.

### Making a Joyful Noise!

#### For the Morrison County Food Shelf

**Blessed are the Noisemakers!** This Advent season, “noisemaking” volunteers from various churches are stationed at cash collection boxes at Coborn’s in Little Falls to raise funds for the Morrison County Food Shelf. Shoppers are encouraged to place cash in the collection boxes, to benefit those for whom the holidays are less than joyful. Keep an eye out for the “noisemakers,” and please help us make a joyful noise by giving your time and treasures generously for those less fortunate. Watch for First Lutheran’s time to “make noise.” For more information or to volunteer, contact Sue Gustner in the church office, 632-6667.

### Ruby's Pantry Food Distribution

**Monday, December 23  
Bethel Lutheran Church**

Oasis Central Minnesota coordinates Ruby’s Pantry Food Distribution in Little Falls. Ruby’s Pantry is a community outreach of Home and Away Ministries a non-profit organization that provides surplus food to anyone interested, there is no income qualification. Recipients are asked to bring their own box and a cash donation of \$15.00. Food is distributed at Bethel Lutheran Church, 901 Broadway Ave. West on Monday, December 23 from 4:30-6:00 p.m. (Normal schedule is the fourth Monday of each month.)

For more information or to volunteer to assist with food distribution, call Oasis Central Minnesota, at 632-9140.

### Can Care Collection

Keep saving those aluminum cans!

Save a can – Save the earth –

Save our youth budget! Keep those cans coming!

Please place your securely tied bag by the church shed door. Thank you!

## Mission Sunday, December 1

### Kids Against Hunger and Operation Christmas Child

On this Sunday following Thanksgiving, we will take some time to remember the many blessings we have. We will have several opportunities to share those blessings with others. Together we will package nutritious food into meals for families around the world who are in need. These meals are distributed by Kids Against Hunger to many areas all over the globe. People of all ages are welcome and able to package food. We will show you how!

This year we will also package shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child. This is a ministry of Samaritan's Purse. You are asked to bring supplies for the boxes and empty shoeboxes for packing. You may enjoy shopping with your child (or someone else's child!) for the basic items needed by children around the world.

Suggestions include:

- Washcloth, small bar of soap
- Hard candy or lollipops, mints
- Mini coloring books, crayons, markers
- children's jewelry
- Small stuffed animals
- Socks or hats for ages 5-9
- Sunglasses, small pad of paper
- Combs, Hair clips
- Small toys, jump ropes, flashlights
- Christmas wrapping paper

**Note** these items cannot be shipped: liquids such as shampoo, or lotion, chocolate, food items, vitamins or medication, war toys, used or damaged items, breakable items

Thank you for sharing God's love with children throughout the world.

### Confirmation Ministries

**Fourth Grade:** Four-week class on Holy Baptism begins Wednesday, January 8 and meets each week thru January 29, 2014, at 7:00 p.m.

**Seventh Grade:** Ten Commandments class meets Wednesdays, January 8 through 29 at 7:00 p.m.

**Eighth Grade:** Old Testament class begins Wednesday, January 8, 2014, at 7:00 p.m. Pastor Dave will teach this class. Bring your Bible!

**Tenth Grade:** Tenth grade confirmands and their mentors have begun their faith journey. Thank you to the adults who have agreed to mentor a tenth grade student. Pray that both student and mentor will grow in relationship with Jesus and with each other during their time together.



## **"Children First" Christian Preschool Update**

Greetings from "Children First" Christian Preschool!

In November we learned about healthy foods and ate healthy snacks. We gave thanks for family, friends, teachers, pets and more. In December we will learn about Christmas traditions.

"Children First" celebrates with a Christmas Program "True Meaning of Christmas" on Saturday, December 14, at 3:00 p.m. All are welcome. Families are asked to bring two dozen cookies as we share fellowship and treats after the program. We look forward to sharing the gift of Jesus with everyone.

"Children First" Christian Preschool accepts registration of preschoolers the entire year pending class openings. We have openings for currently enrolled children in the Friday Friends Class which creates a 3 day preschool week. Please encourage families who have children ages 33 months through Pre-kindergarten to stop by for a visit. All are welcome to experience the fun, the educational activities and the spiritual growth in God's love.

2014 "God's Creation" wall calendars are available for purchase at \$10.00 each. We have a limited quantity available. These make great gifts. You can purchase one in the church office or you may contact Gail.

Thank you to all who volunteered time and talent to decorate the Christmas tree at the Fishing Museum "Christmas Tree Lane" event. We hope our tree decorated with food items brought holiday cheer to someone in need. Thanks also to all involved in the community "Santa Parade" float.

"Children First" has celebrated many milestones such as moving from the Youth Room into a Preschool classroom, expanding into a second classroom, offering additional "Friday Friends" class to create a three-day week, and taking community field trip activities and monthly trips to St. Otto's Care Center and Bridgeway Estates. As we continue on a path of growth and community

service, we want to maintain our monthly visits to St. Otto's and Bridgeway. These visits provide the children and residents with the opportunity to socialize, interact, and develop relationships. The attendance by the residents has doubled and tripled since our first visits. The cost for providing supplies has increased as well. We are asking for your help in continuing this ministry through your prayers and monetary support. We give a special thanks to Andy's Charter for their bussing donation and St. Otto's and Bridgeway residents for the warm welcome we receive on each of our visits!

The 2013-14 Gifting Campaign is underway. This campaign offers families and friends an opportunity to support the preschool through prayer and monetary giving. If you are interested in contributing, please contact Gail Hittesdorf or the First Lutheran Church office. Thank you.

"Jesus' Gems" (4 yrs-PreKindergarten) class will be the main characters in the St. Otto's Christmas Pageant on Thursday, December 12 at 10:00 a.m. at St. Otto's Chapel. We will entertain the residents with Christmas songs. Noah's Animals (33 Months-3 Years old) will attend the pageant as a first-time field trip experience. Everyone is welcome!

Reminder to families and friends that "Children First" has a break for Christmas and New Year's holidays. Our last class is Friday, December 20 classes resume Monday, January 6, 2014. As Preschool staff, we thank you for the opportunity to take time off with our families and to prepare for the balance of the 2013-14 preschool year.

Especially thank YOU for keeping the children and families of "Children First" in your prayers.

God's Blessing to all for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Yours in Christ's Service,

Gail Hittesdorf, Director



**Advent Craft Sale  
Saturday, December 7  
9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

Come and enjoy the start of the Advent season at the annual Advent Craft Sale and Luncheon.

Handcrafts and bake sale items will be available to purchase. There will be a delicious soup luncheon, and lots of treats and gift items! Proceeds from this year's sale will support youth ministry programming at First Lutheran.

Your support of this great FUNdraiser is appreciated.

**Sunday Morning Education Ministry**

Thank you to everyone who participated and led stations for the last rotation, Creation. It was exciting to see the activities, food and art projects.

A new rotation theme, "The Gift of Jesus" continues Sundays, December 8, 15, and 22. Through games, music, storytelling, cooking and art children will learn that Christmas is about God's great gift to us in Jesus and how we can share Sign up on the gathering space board to share your faith by leading a station!

Come for Sunday School and Morning Education at 10:30 a.m. Preschool and Pre-kindergarten meets in the Moses Classroom in the education wing. TREK Rotation (K-5) meets in Stoltz Hall. Grades 6-12 meets in the Youth Room.

We are all children of God, please feel free to visit and participate with the Sunday School children.

Memory verse: "But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people." *Luke 2:10*



**Sunday School Christmas Program  
"Journey to Bethlehem"  
Sunday, December 15, 3:00 p.m.**

Marty and Ramona get lost on the way to the Bethlehem Star Search. Will they get there in time for Ramona to become the Star of Bethlehem? Could the curious Onestar box help them find their way?

Sunday School Christmas Program "Bethlehem Bound" will be held Sunday, December 15, beginning at 3:00 p.m. Families, guests and friends of all ages are invited to attend. Through crafts, songs and the characters of Marty and Ramona along with Onestar Box, we will all learn the true meaning of Christmas.

No rehearsals are required for Sunday School leaders or children. Volunteers are needed prior to program day to organize costumes and to prepare/organize craft projects. Volunteers will be needed the day of the program to assemble craft project with kids and briefly prepare children for the program. If you can assist with this fun afternoon or for more information, contact Amber Sobiech, 616-9626, Becky Nelson, 749-2336, or Gail Hittesdorf, 632-2218.

**Looking Ahead:**



**Gospel Gang  
(Grades 3-5)  
Snow Tubing at Camp Ripley Bennet Hill  
Sunday, February 9, 2014  
1:00 – 4:30 p.m.**

## News of the Family

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Ray Stumpf died on November 3. His funeral service was held at First Lutheran on November 7. May God grant peace and comfort to his family and friends.

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Received as new steward/members in November were, Angela Hoheisel and Jeremy Sanoski.

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Items for the **January NEWSLETTER** are due on **December 20, 2013!**



**Church Office is closed on Wednesday, December 25. Office hours for December 26, 27, 30, 31 are 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon.**

**Annual Meeting—Sunday, January 26, 2014**  
*Following the 10:45 a.m. service*