

Lent 2012

**begins on Ash Wednesday, February 22
at First Lutheran Church**

Soup Supper served at 5:30 p.m.

7:00 p.m. Worship with Holy Communion and Imposition of Ashes

With ash and soot we begin this Lenten season with confession; we begin with Psalm 51. Today this ancient prayer placed on our lips becomes new again: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.” As we confess our unfaithfulness to God, our lackluster love for our neighbors, our neglect of suffering and injustice in the world, we ask God to wash us, to purge us, to create in us clean hearts.

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For this year’s Wednesday mid-week worship services, beginning on Wednesday, February 29 through Wednesday, March 28, we gather together with the congregations of First United Church, and the Episcopal Church of Our Savior, and their pastors. We will worship using the Holden Evening Prayer service **at First United Church, 1000 First Street SE**. Come to First United before worship and share fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ over a simple bowl of soup and slice of bread from 5:30-6:45 p.m., worship is at 7:00 p.m. The congregations will share providing the soup and serving the meal each week. Watch for more information about these serving opportunities and plan to include Wednesday fellowship and worship as an important part of your Lenten discipline.

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Pastor's Article

...let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. 1 John 3:18

Love, love, love that's what it's all about – it is February and Hallmark® tells us to show the love to our loved ones by buying one of their cards.

It is easy to find Bible verses about love: “*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am no more than a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal,*” and it feels good to memorize them and to even recite them once in a while. “*God is love and whoever lives in love lives in God.*” The Bible is full of verses about love, but words of love are easy. Acts of love are hard. They require that we give up something. We must give up something, something of ourselves. Look again at the example of Love from the Bible verse many of us have memorized, John 3:16 “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son...*” God gave up His son. Do you know this one from 1 John 3:16? “*We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.*” Thank goodness there are those brave men and women who are willing to put their lives on the line for us through their service or vocation.

1 John is sort of a love letter in the Bible (I encourage you to read it today.) 1 Corinthians 13 is known as the Love Chapter of the Bible. (How many weddings have you attended when this was one of the readings? I'd bet quite a few!) The Bible talks a lot about love. However, nowhere in the entire Bible are we told to feel “in love” with or towards someone. Instead, we are always told to “act” lovingly towards others; “*Love your neighbor as yourself*” or “*Love as I first loved you.*” Jesus suggested to us—no, He told us—to “*love our enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.*” He knew the change would come not in our enemies but in us. Our actions change the way we feel.

John tells us that to love is to know God... to not love, is to not know God. You and I are serious about our relationship with God—so let's strengthen our commitment to treating people lovingly on a consistent basis. Consider it your

“default setting.” Let's go out of our way to give of ourselves and share what God has given with others. That gift is His grace, mercy and love. John reminds us that God first loved us so that we can love others. Just as Abraham was blessed to be a blessing for others, God HAS blessed you. You can be a blessing for others... Love them!

...let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. 1 John 3:18

Love, love, love, that's what it's all about.
'Cause God loves us, we love each other,
mother, father, sister, brother.
Everyone sing and shout,
'cause that's what its all about!

See you in church,

Pastor Dave Sperstad

When to Contact the Church Office: 320-632-6667

email: firstserv@fclittlefalls.org

-  When you or a family member is hospitalized or will be hospitalized.
-  When there is a birth or death in the family.
-  When there is a crisis.
-  When you change your address or telephone number.
-  When new neighbors move in near you and they are looking for a church home.
-  When you have good news to share.
-  When you have a suggestion to make or a concern to share, you can contact a council member or a member of the Pastor Parish Relations Team.

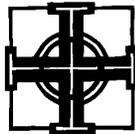
Pastors and lay visitors are available to call on you and walk with you in sadness and joy.

† Silent Steward †

Ray Stumpf

Ray Stumpf spent 22 years in the Navy, first as a medical corpsman, and then as an underwater construction diver. Upon his retirement from the military, (his wife, Barb, a nurse, talked him out of a career in nursing) he went back to school as part of the Troops to Teachers program for a master's degree in education, returned to Little Falls, his hometown, to teach at Little Falls Community Middle School as an industrial tech teacher. He also coached softball and soccer for a number of years.

Growing up in Little Falls, his home church was First United, but when he and his family returned to Little Falls, they chose First Lutheran and now call it home. Ray is a blessing to the congregation by his passion for working with youth, especially those in their middle school years. He's been a dedicated Sunday school teacher and confirmation mentor and served as chaperone on a summer youth mission trip. A few years ago, Ray started playing the guitar and now helps to lead worship by playing in the Praise Band.



New Steward/Member Group

First Lutheran Church New Steward Group begins this month. We have set aside two times for this group to meet; we ask that stewards attend one of these sessions. The group will meet on Wednesday evening; February 8 at 6:30 p.m. or Sunday evening, February 12 at 6:30 p.m. New members will be received in worship on Sunday, February 19. First's council and commission members will host a fellowship reception between worship services on that day.

Ray shared his talent in woodworking to construct the wood ark that hangs in the church gathering space. When a child is baptized, their name and baptismal date are inscribed on an animal cut-out and hung on the ark. Each child receives their animal as a gift when they begin Sunday School at age three. Ray and Barb took on the project in loving memory of their infant son, Noah. Ray and daughters, Naomi and Joy, completed the wall painting of the sea and rainbow behind the ark as Joy's confirmation project.

You may see students and adults wearing purple and black (Flyer colors!) bracelets that read: Kicking Cancer: Mr. Stumpf. Ray received a cancer diagnosis following a routine colonoscopy two years ago. We thank Ray for his faithful witness as he lives with and is treated for this disease and as he continues to serve among us each day. Isaiah 44, verse 8 says: *"Do not fear, or be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? You are my witnesses! Is there any god besides me? There is no other rock; I know not one."* Thank you, Ray, for standing firmly on the rock and being a witness to God's never-ending grace.

These sessions are meant to help joining members to find their place in the mission of the congregation, get to know others in the congregation, and discuss the foundations of the faith we share. Current member stewards are encouraged to attend and make a new friend.

If God is calling you to stewardship at First Lutheran, these sessions are for you. Come and walk alongside your sisters and brothers in Christ in mission to the world. For more information, or to sign up for the group, please call the church office at 632-6667.

Council Highlights

- ✦ Council expressed thanks to outgoing members Michelle Dahlberg, Lola Faufau, and Nancy Ratzloff, and thanks to Les Hittesdorf, who has accepted another term on the council.
- ✦ Thank you to the donor for the gift of new carpeting in the youth room. It looks great!
- ✦ Heard that the Worship Space Enhancement Team continues to meet and plan.
- ✦ Approved the 2012 Mission Plan for presentation at the 2012 Annual Meeting.

Thank You!

Dear First Lutheran Church,

Thank you so much for your recent donation. We greatly appreciate your support for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and general crime.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Och, Executive Director, Hands of Hope

To all at First Lutheran,

The Lutefisk and Meatball Dinner would not be possible without your help – thanks. We will use some of the proceeds for seminary support for one of our members and for youth activities. Thanks again!

Jerry Lochner
Bethel Lutheran Church Congregation

Library News

The library team hopes you have time to browse the library. Little by little changes are taking place. New and donated books are now on display for checkout. Come on in to find a good read. If you have had a book checked out for more than a month and are finished reading, please return it so that others may read.

Thank you!

Adult Opportunities

Women's Bible Study

"The Greatest Story: Jesus!"
Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m. or 6:30 p.m.

This study by Rev. Allen R. Hilton and Dr. Mark Allan Powell assists you in encountering the Jesus of the four Gospels and how his story connects to our stories. We are participating in Jesus' life through storytelling, visual sand-art presentations, worship songs and events that touch our imagination and spirit. There is room for you!

Women's Martha Circle:

"To Follow and To Serve:"

The Gospel of Mark

Session 6: Tough Questions

The Martha Circle meets Monday, February 20, at 11:30 a.m. at the church. Diane Grosso is hostess.

Men's Bible Study Breakfast

All men of the congregation and friends are invited to a Men's Bible Breakfast study. The study meets on the first and third Wednesday of each month 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.

Sewing Help Wanted

First Lutheran's quilting group is recruiting sewers to assist with sewing baby quilts. We have 4" fabric blocks cut out. Would you be willing to arrange the blocks and sew them together? This is a project that can be done in your home, or you can work here at church with the group each Thursday morning at 9:00 a.m. The group has sewing machines in excellent condition for use at church. Quilts made here are given as donations to nonprofit groups or individuals. For more information or to volunteer, please call Marlys Plante, 632-8055, or Marlene Williams, 632-4290. Thank you!

Mini Annual Report
First Lutheran Church

The Annual Meeting of First Lutheran Church was held on Sunday, January 29, 2012. Thanks to all who made this meeting a priority! This “mini-report” is provided to help inform you of the important decisions made at this year’s Annual Meeting and to give highlights from the Annual Report. The complete Annual Report is available in the church office.

A few of the many ways that First Lutheran’s commissions and you were servants during the past year:

Serving together in mission:

- ✚ Participated in food packing events
- ✚ Support of local agencies: Morrison County Food Shelf, Hands of Hope, Habitat for Humanity, Morrison County Chaplaincy
- ✚ Filled over 100 backpacks for children

Serving together in worship and praise:

- ✚ Celebrated 120 years of mission and ministry with a concert and worship
- ✚ Added a part-time pastor to ministry team, Pr. Tony Oltmann
- ✚ Studying enhancements to worship space

Serving together in faith formation:

- ✚ Added a first-ever Youth and Family Minister to ministry team, Jay Kiel
- ✚ Held Vacation Bible School cooperatively with local congregations
- ✚ Sponsored mission trips for middle school and high school youth
- ✚ Supported youth attending Bible Camp

Serving together thru our building and grounds:

- ✚ Converted office space for new staff
- ✚ Updates include, fresh paint in the sanctuary, window replacement, water pump replacement

Statistical Reports

Baptized Membership (January 1, 2012)	1,081	Baptisms	11
Confirmed Membership (January 1, 2012)	773	Affirmation of Baptism/Confirmation	7
New Members Received	43	Marriages	4
Transferred Out	18	Funerals	10
		Average Worship Attendance	2011 – 223

Summary Notes from Congregational Annual Meeting

Not Official Minutes

Michelle Dahlberg, Council President, declared a Quorum and called the meeting to order.

Elected to the Church Council were: Larry Engel, Jim Gehant, Les Hittesdorf, and Lora McChesney, each to a 3-year term.

Debra Yliniemi-Ahlin, Gloria Kofoed, and Doug Luepke were elected as the congregational representatives for the Nominating Committee.

The Heartland Conference Gathering is Sunday, February 19 at Light of the Cross Lutheran Church in Garrison. Voting members are Ted and Mary Pfohl, and Ruth Jeremiason-Jensen. Alternates are Ty Ganglehoff, and Carl and Liz Rydeen. The Synod Assembly will be held April 27-29, 2012, at Grand Rapids. Voting members are Craig Ahlin,

and Ted and Mary Pfohl. Alternates are Debra Yliniemi-Ahlin, Gail Hittesdorf, and Paula Monahan.

The Luther Crest Bible Camp annual meeting is October 13, 2012. Voting members are Mark Hanson, Jay Kiel, and Monica Makela.

The 2012 Mission Plan was approved as presented.

Following the Annual Meeting the Council met to elect officers; they are: President – Craig Ahlin, Vice-President – Stephanie Adams, Treasurer – Matt Dahl, Secretary – Mark Hanson.

Excerpts from the Treasurer’s Report

Thank you for your faithful support throughout the year! It was an exciting year with additions to staff and lots of activity in the building, and a celebration of 120 years of mission and ministry.

In 2011, offerings came very close to what was projected on the 2011 Mission Plan – we planned for receipts of \$301,500, actual receipts were \$299,959. This amount is an increase of \$26,346 over 2010, or nearly 10% increase. Thank you! Expenses were substantially less than expected, although we ended the year with a deficit of \$8,632. These amounts are exclusive of “Children First” Christian Preschool.

Mission Plan 2012: The Mission Plan proposal for 2012 projects giving of \$316,500. Expenses are projected at \$360,520. These amounts are exclusive of the preschool.

Thank you for your additional gifts, both in-kind for various ministries and projects around our church home, and those received from special offerings for the following missions and projects:

Start-up congregation – River of Hope in Hutchinson, from Lutefisk dinner	\$ 600.00
Souper Bowl of Caring:	
Morrison County Food Shelf	207.00
Gideons International	249.00
Lenten Soup Suppers/Easter Breakfast/Change 4 Change/	
Coin Folders/donations:	
Kids Against Hunger	944.00
Morrison County Food Shelf	960.00
Angel Tree Gift Giving – In-kind gifts	
Pentecost Offering for Mortgage	
Principal Reduction	3,814.00
Total	\$6,774.00

Thank you for the privilege of serving as treasurer at First Lutheran Church this past year.

God’s blessing,
Matt Dahl

2011 Income and Expense Report and 2012 Proposed Mission Plan

MISSION LIFE

Souper Bowl of Caring

First Lutheran will participate in the “Souper Bowl of Caring” on February 5. This Sunday, 128 million people all over the world will tune in to the Super Bowl football game. There will be parties with abundant food, friendship and fellowship. At the same time, there will be people worrying about staying warm, finding shelter and a warm meal. Please join young people at First Lutheran and around the U.S., as they demonstrate God’s love by loving their neighbors through the “Souper Bowl of Caring.” It’s a simple, yet significant act of caring for others.

This Sunday, young people with soup kettles will stand by the church doors after worship. All worshippers are invited to drop \$1 or more in the soup pot as they leave worship. Funds raised will go directly to help hungry people in our area.

Last year, 15,835 groups of young people across the country raised over \$9,000,000 in the “Souper Bowl of Caring.” Thank you for helping to fight hunger through this special offering!

Lakes Area Second Half Enrichment Series

**Sunday, February 26, 2:00-3:30 p.m.
First Lutheran Church, Brainerd**

This series for people ages 50+ continues on Sunday, February 26. Rev. John Nunes, President and CEO of Lutheran World Relief, a global hunger and poverty relief organization, is a sought-after dynamic speaker.

The event is designed for all people in the second half of life as together we seek out meaning for our faith, relationships, and life purpose. Music will be provided by Windfall, a Brainerd choral ensemble, and hors d’oeuvres are also included. Tickets are \$10.00 and can be purchased by calling 218-829-9552, or online at www.flcbrainerd.com (click on ‘Enrichment Series’) or at First Lutheran in Brainerd.



World Day of Prayer Friday, March 2 “Let Justice Prevail”

World Day of Prayer is a worldwide movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer each year. Women in more than 170 countries celebrate a day which brings together races, cultures, and traditions in understanding and action. Through this day, we affirm that prayer and action are inseparable and both have immeasurable influence in the world.

This year, First Lutheran will host the World Day of Prayer service in Little Falls on Friday, March 2, at 1:00 p.m. All men and women in the community are welcome.

This year’s service is prepared by the women of Malaysia with the theme “Let Justice Prevail.” Malaysia is a diverse nation with about 7% of the population being Christian. Malaysia is covered by about 70% rainforest and is also full of modern cities, historic cities, colonial resorts, rice paddies, and rubber and oil palm estates.

The women of Malaysia remind us that in the midst of diversity, it takes courage, compassion and active engagement for justice to prevail. They say, “We are continuously learning to tolerate, understand and accept one another.” Therefore, they begin the worship service with “Selamat datang”—“Peace and welcome.”

If you would like to be a part of this service, please contact Susan Gustner in the church office.

"Children First" Christian Preschool Update

It is hard to believe that January has come and gone so quickly. We thank God for snow which came just in time to have snow fun and talk about snowmen. Other themes were transportation and Beach Day! February Preschool themes include opposites, Polar animals, friendship and our five senses. We are expecting a visit from a polar animal. Can you guess which one it will be?

Watch for dates and information about the annual Preschool Fish Fry and Silent Auction, a Pancake Breakfast, and Spring Flower Bulb/ Flower Sale. If you have items you would like to donate for the Silent Auction please contact me or a staff member.

2012/2013 school year registration for currently enrolled families and First Lutheran Church members begins Monday, March 12. Community registration begins April 9. Registration forms will be sent home with current preschoolers, and will

Confirmation Ministries

Second Grade: Looking ahead—class for students and parents, "Welcome Table" Holy Communion instruction, will take place on Sunday afternoons during Lent, March 18 and 25. A letter will be mailed to families. Students who wish to receive communion as a class can plan to do this on Maundy Thursday, April 5.

Seventh Grade: Class on the Ten Commandments ended on January 25. Thank you to Linda Weiss for teaching this class. The seventh grade class on the Apostles' Creed is scheduled at Luther Crest Bible Camp during the week of June 18-22. Please turn in your Camp registration form and deposit to the church office.

Eighth Grade: Class on the Old Testament ended January 25. Watch for a letter with information about a trip to Temple Israel for a Seder Meal on Sunday, March 18.

Tenth Grade: Two-session class on Means of Grace meets Sundays, April 15 and 22. Mark your calendars.

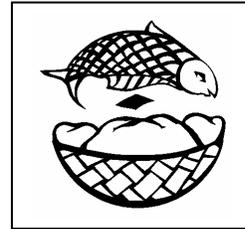
be available on March 12 on the information table in the church gathering space. Two "Come and See Days" are scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, April 16 and 17, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. for anyone interested.

"Children First" Christian Preschool continues to partner with families to build and strengthen the academic, physical, social, emotional and spiritual growth of children. Thank you to all who have given their support and continue to do so in many ways. You are appreciated!

Yours in Christ's Service,

Gail Hittesdorf, Director

"Teach a child how he should live, and he will remember it all his life" Proverbs 22:6



Sunday School News

The new TREK rotation for kids in kindergarten through grade five "Breakfast on the Beach!" begins Sunday, February 5. Wear your beach attire and come and learn to recognize Jesus in familiar places and activities such as eating, walking and talking. All are welcome to experience the presence of Jesus in their everyday lives and to find the love and hope of Christ in the faces and actions of others. Parent handouts for "Breakfast on the Beach" are available on the table in the gathering space. The handouts are helpful if you are unable to attend each Sunday and would like to continue learning during the week, or would like to learn or refresh yourself.

News of the Family

Baptism

Jace Kenneth Santala, son of Amanda and Jeremy Santala, was baptized on January 11.

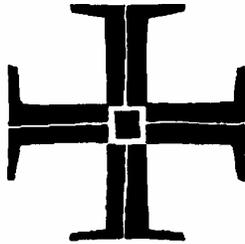
Funeral

Jeanne M. Foster died January 1. Her funeral service was held January 6 at First Lutheran. May God grant peace and comfort to her family and friends.

Can Care Collection

Save a can – Save the earth
Save our youth budget!
Keep those cans coming!

Items for the **March NEWSLETTER** are due on **February 20, 2012!**



Reminder:

This newsletter and archived issues are available online at www.flittlefalls.org. You can find the church event calendar there, as well as photos and information. Check it out! You can also ‘friend’ us on FaceBook for some interactive social networking and current information. Search for us as ‘1st Lutheran Church Little Falls MN.’