

Lent 2013

**begins on Ash Wednesday, February 13
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 20 through Wednesday, March 20, we gather together with the congregations of First United Church, and the Episcopal Church of Our Saviour, and their pastors. We will worship using the Holden Evening Prayer service **here at First Lutheran Church**. Come 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

Valentine's Day is around the corner and thoughts of Love are in the air... typically I might write of love, in fact the Beatles' song "All you need is Love" is playing on my Ipod as I type this article... Yet, what is Love truly about other than the depth of being in relationship? Love comes in all shapes and sizes but it's all about the relationship. We were created to be in relationship with one another. We were not created to be alone...

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." Genesis 2:18

The Bible begins with two accounts, two stories of creation, which are told in Genesis. In the first account of creation after God has spoken creation into existence, God evaluates his work by saying it is good. On the last day of creation, of this first story, God's assessment of creation is elevated to being "very good." In the second account of creation we are told of the personal creation of man, formed out of the dust of the earth, brought to life by the breath of God and placed in the beauty of God's garden in Eden. This newly created creature, man, is given a task, to till and care for the garden, in this he becomes the first farmer.

As we read this the second account of creation, by all outward appearances, things seem great, or as God evaluated in the first story, "very good." After all it's a beautiful garden, water, trees, plants, and a caretaker to watch over God's creation. Yet, God observes that not everything is in place yet. God's assessment is that something is missing. Verse 18 God says "It is not good that the man should be alone..." In God's assessment of creation, the course is set of creating and valuing relationships. Next, God has all sorts of animals created, and the lone man is given the task of naming them, but none of these are suitable helpers or partners for the man. So out of the man, God creates a partner, a woman. "At last," the man exclaims, "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh."

To me it seems clear, that God has created us to be in relationship with his entire creation and with other people who also are God's creation. God's assessment that it is "not good to be alone" recognizes for us the importance of our inner need to be with others. While yes, I'll be the first to admit sometimes it is good to be alone, like on a bike. Truth is... it really isn't good that we should be alone. We need the companionship of a spouse or close friends and our families. We are God's creation and as God's creation, we are social creatures who find meaning and understanding in our relationships. As hard as we might sometimes try, we cannot live in isolation. God has created us in a way that causes us to depend upon the presence and the giftedness of the other. I happen to believe that we need others in our lives, not just for the purpose of survival, but so that we might just get a glimpse of the face of God. Each of us was and is created in the image of God.

God has created us to be relational beings and we are created in the image of God. God is in relationship with himself, in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and wants to be in relationship with you! Each of us has been created in a unique and special way so that through the relationships with others we might reflect God's image. We are created in the image of God, so that in relationship with others, God's image might be reflected back to us. It is not good for us to be alone. God gives us one another as partners, helpers and as images of God's wonderful and amazing grace.

In God's Image,

Pastor David Sperstad

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

email: firstserv@flclittlefalls.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.

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

Lenten Soup Suppers

Are you wondering how you can be a part of the Lenten Soup Suppers? You can get involved in this fellowship opportunity in the following ways.

- ✦ Come for a bowl of soup before worship each Wednesday in Lent. Soup is served from 5:30-6:45 p.m. here at **First Lutheran**. Sit at tables with others from First Lutheran, First United, and Episcopal Church of Our Saviour and enjoy a warm meal and conversation.
- ✦ Help to serve the meal by setting tables, making coffee, heating soup and buttering bread from 4:30-7:00 p.m.
- ✦ Provide saltine crackers, bread, milk and/or peanut butter.
- ✦ Prepare two gallons of soup for Wednesdays, February 13, and 20, or March 20.

You can volunteer by contacting the "Soup Steward," Linda Weiss at 632-1733, or the church office. Thank you!

Council Highlights

- ✦ Council expressed thanks to outgoing members Matt Dahl, Bill Leisenheimer, and Liz Rydeen and thanks to Craig Ahlin, who has accepted another term on the council.
- ✦ Heard that 128 children received Christmas gifts from the Angel Tree Gift Giving Project.
- ✦ Heard that the Worship Space Enhancement Team continues to meet and plan.
- ✦ Approved the 2013 Mission Plan for presentation at the 2013 Annual Meeting.



New Steward/Member Group

First Lutheran Church New Steward Group begins next 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 Sunday evening, March 17 at 6:30 p.m. or Monday evening, March 18 at 6:30 p.m. New members will be received in worship on Palm Sunday, March 24. First's council and commission members will host a fellowship reception between worship services on that day.

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.

Adult Opportunities

Thank You!

Dear First Lutheran Church,

Thank you so much for your recent donation. Thank you for being an advocate with us in supporting victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and general crime. We appreciate your dedication to serving our community and are privileged to receive your financial support.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Och, Executive Director, Hands of Hope

To all at First Lutheran,

A big thank you for all your help with the Lutefisk Supper in December. Special thank you to Wayne Liljegren and Karen Haaland for their efforts to make the meal a success. Thanks again!

Jerry Lochner
Bethel Lutheran Church Congregation

Dear Friends at First Lutheran Church,

Thank you for your donation to Habitat for Humanity of Morrison County. Your financial support directly impacts the lives of homeowner families. It's through your support that we are able to help more families realize their dream of owning their own home. You are a faith community who puts their faith into action!

Sincerely,
Kathy Kahlhamer, Habitat for Humanity

Library News

New and donated books are on display by the Library. Please take a look inside and outside the Library. You are sure to find something to inspire you on these cold winter days.

Ash Wednesday is February 13. Watch for a display in the Library of books and devotionals to accompany you on your Lenten Journey.

Women's Bible Study

"24 Hours that Changed the World"
Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m. or 5:30 p.m.
Begins February 6

This video study by Adam Hamilton will take us to the Holy Land and the sites where events of the last day of Jesus' life took place. The evening study will meet at 5:30 p.m. in order to conclude in time for Lenten worship at 7:00 p.m. There is room for you!

Women's Martha Circle:

"Gathered by God:"

Session 6: Koinonia Calling

The Martha Circle meets Monday, February 18, at 10:00 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.

Lutheran Men in Mission Retreat

Friday-Saturday, March 1-2

at Lutheran Church of the Cross, Nisswa

"The Scandalous Celebration of Salvation-Studies from Luke's Gospel"

All men are welcome to attend this annual retreat sponsored by the Northeastern Minnesota Synod. Dr. Rick Carlson, professor of New Testament at Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary is the keynote speaker. There will be opportunities for interesting breakout sessions and of course, great food! Registration for first-time attenders is \$35.00, sustainers \$40.00. Please contact Pastor Dave if you are interested in attending.

Mini Annual Report
First Lutheran Church

The Annual Meeting of First Lutheran Church was held on Sunday, January 27, 2013. 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
- ✚ Increased financial support to the wider church through the ELCA

Serving together in worship and praise:

- ✚ Affirmative vote to proceed with worship space enhancements
- ✚ Many worshippers involved in worship serving ministries

Serving together in faith formation:

- ✚ Supported 24 youth and adults attending the ELCA National Youth Gathering in New Orleans
- ✚ Held Vacation Bible School cooperatively with local congregations
- ✚ Sponsored mission trips for middle school and high school youth
- ✚ Regular weekly youth group meeting times

Serving together thru our building and grounds:

- ✚ New carpeting installed in Youth Room
- ✚ Maintenance and striping of parking lot

Statistical Reports

Baptized Membership (January 1, 2013)	1,112	Baptisms	10
Confirmed Membership (January 1, 2013)	798	Affirmation of Baptism/Confirmation	15
New Members Received	45	Marriages	4
Transferred Out	8	Funerals	10
		Average Worship Attendance	2012 – 228

Summary Notes from Congregational Annual Meeting

Not Official Minutes

Craig Ahlin, Council President, declared a Quorum and called the meeting to order.

Elected to the Church Council were: Craig Ahlin, Deb Scott, Scott Sobiech, and Tanna Stucky, each to a 3-year term.

Debra Yliniemi-Ahlin, Darrell Larsen, Doug Luepke, and Jim Weiss were elected as the congregational representatives for the Nominating Committee.

The Heartland Conference Gathering is Sunday, March 17 at Camp Onomia in Onamia. Voting members are Craig Ahlin, Ruth Jeremiason-Jensen, and Ray Stumpf. Alternates are Stephanie Doty and Debra Yliniemi-Ahlin. The Synod Assembly will be held May 3-5, 2013, at Grand

Rapids. Voting members are Craig Ahlin, Les Hittesdorf, and Ruth Jeremiason-Jensen. Alternates are Debra Yliniemi-Ahlin, and Stephanie Doty.

The Luther Crest Bible Camp annual meeting is October 12, 2013. Voting members are Jeff Bigalke, Mark Hanson, and Jay Kiel.

The 2013 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 – Scott Sobiech, Secretary – Mark Hanson.

Excerpts from the Treasurer's Report

Thank you for your faithful support throughout the year! It was another exciting year in ministry with lots of activity in the building, and planning for future years of mission.

On the 2012 Mission Plan, we planned for receipts of \$316,500, actual receipts were \$330,890. Thank you! Expenses were \$29,023 less than expected. We ended the year with a shortfall of \$607. These amounts are exclusive of "Children First" Christian Preschool.

The Mission Plan proposal for 2013 projects giving of \$355,000. Expenses are projected at \$355,472. These amounts are exclusive of the preschool.

Thank you for your many 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:

Morrison County Food Shelf	135.00
ELCA Malaria Campaign	307.00
Gideons International	230.00
World Day of Prayer offering	40.00
Lenten Soup Suppers/Easter Breakfast/Change 4 Change/Ride for Rice/Coin Folders/donations:	
Food for Kidz	2344.00
Food for the Poor individual direct gifts	
Angel Tree Gift Giving – In-kind gifts	
Pentecost Offering for Mortgage	
Principal Reduction	5,239.00
Total	\$8,295.00

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

God's blessing,
Matt Dahl

2012 Income and Expense Report and 2013 Proposed Mission Plan

MISSION LIFE

Souper Bowl of Caring

First Lutheran participates in the “Souper Bowl of Caring” on February 3. 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.

Young people with soup kettles will stand by the church doors after worship. Worshipers are invited to drop \$1 or more in the soup pot. 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 \$9,900,000 in the “Souper Bowl of Caring.” Thank you for helping to fight hunger through this special offering!

Baskets of Promise for Lutheran World Relief

This Lent we will participate in Lutheran World Relief’s Baskets of Promise appeal. Each week, we’ll collect a different item that we will use to assemble Personal Care Kits that give people around the world tools to stay healthy in life’s most challenging situations. Our goal is to assemble 150 (or more!) Personal Care Kits during Lent. Here is the collection schedule:

February 17	Bars of soap, 4-5 ounce, any brand in original wrapping
February 24	Bath towels, lightweight, 52”X27” max, dark color is best
March 3	Toothbrushes, adult size, in original packaging
March 10	Combs
March 17	Nail clippers, metal, attached file optional
March 24	Bars of soap, as above



World Day of Prayer

Friday, March 1, 1:00 p.m.

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me”

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 the Franciscan Sisters will host the World Day of Prayer service in Little Falls on Friday, March 1. All men and women in the community are welcome.

This year’s service is prepared by the women of France with the theme “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” The French World Day of Prayer committee looks for a Christian response to struggles concerning immigration and for ways to welcome “the stranger.” The women who prepared this service reach into Jesus’ identification with “the least of these” in Matthew 25 and draw on customs of hospitality found in Leviticus. Through visual interpretation and personal stories, participants begin to put themselves in the shoes of “the stranger,” remembering their own feelings of being on the outside—and the blessings of welcoming.

World Day of Prayer services begin at sunrise in the Pacific and follow the sun across the globe on this day of celebration. Bring a friend or two and come for worship.

"Children First" Christian Preschool Update

It is hard to believe that January has come and gone so quickly. We thank God for the opportunity to share His love with each of the children and their families through our various themes. "God created no two alike" – when looking at the snow flakes and snowmen displayed in the Gallery hallway you will see evidence of that. We had fun this month with polar animals, beach days, and opposites. February themes include dental health, friendship, our five senses and "I love to read!" We welcome volunteers into the classroom to assist with projects, read stories, share your special talents or to spend time developing relationships. If you wish to volunteer, please contact Gail, Jessica Gustafson or Sarah Olson.

The Preschool Advisory Team and staff are planning for fall enrollment. Registration begins with current preschool families and First Lutheran Church member families in March. Community-wide registration begins April 1. There is recent interest in a Monday/Wednesday Noah's Animal's Class (33 months through 3 years of age). This class could begin as early as March 2013. If you are interested in enrolling for this class, please contact Gail as soon as possible. We will need six registered Preschoolers to begin this class. Registration forms are available on the website, on the church gathering space table, or call Gail or the church office at 632-6667.

Visitors are welcome during preschool class time. Please call to schedule a time so that we can

prepare project materials for visiting children to actively participate.

"Children First" continues to raise funds through on-going fundraisers. We participate in the Labels for Education Program sponsored by Campbell's. Please continue to save the points from: Campbells, Pepperidge Farm, Bic, Prego, V8, People, Goldfish, Emerald, Danimals, PopSecret, Glad and Post products. When you purchase Food Club, TopCare or Full Circle products at Coborn's or Cashwise, please save the points receipts attached to your cash register receipt. "Chico" reusable, washable tote bags in various colors are available for purchase in the church office or by contacting Preschool staff. The bags are \$5.00 each. You can recycle your empty printer ink cartridges in collection boxes located in the Preschool area and First Lutheran gathering space.

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



News of the Family

Baptism

Clara June Holig, daughter of Tricia and John Holig, was baptized on January 13.

Hudsyn Caroline Gwost, daughter of Shannon and Joelle Gwost, was baptized on January 27.

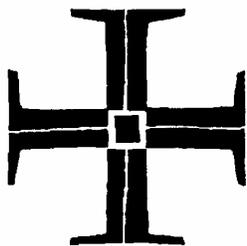
Funeral

Joyce Kronbeck died December 28. Her funeral service was held January 2 at Shelley Funeral Chapel. 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, 2013!**



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.'