

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

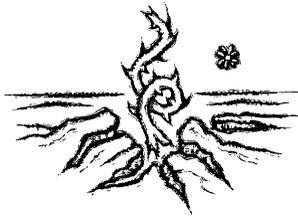
Hank French, Pastor



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February 2016, Newsletter

February 9, 2016



Lent 2016

**begins on Ash Wednesday, February 10
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.

As we prepare to be immersed in our Lenten theme, “The Things That Make for Peace,” we pray in the words attributed to Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

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Notes from Pastor Hank

Christmas hardly seems over and here we are, a week away from Ash Wednesday (February 10) and the beginning of Lent. Lent comes early this year, and Easter, which usually is celebrated in April, falls on the last Sunday in March. Falling on the 27th of March, it is quite conceivable that snow could be falling on Easter this year, given that March is known as the snowiest month of the year in Minnesota!

Be that as it may, Lent is one of the most profound seasons of the church year. It is a time for deep reflection and meditation upon the “passion” of Christ. Normally, when we speak of the “passion of Christ,” we are speaking of his suffering and death for love of the world God loves—for love of us. But the word “passion” can mean more than suffering. Passion can be what drives us, what we are intensely committed to, what stirs our emotions and moves us to act. For example, I could easily say that Bobbi has a passion for music. Throughout her life, it is what has driven her, what she has been intensely committed to, what stirs her emotions and moves her to practice and perform.

Jesus’ 1st passion was a passion for justice and love; it drove him, he was absolutely committed to it; it clearly stirred his emotions and moved him to action—action that led to *his second passion*, the suffering of his terrible death. Had Jesus not been passionate about justice and love, nobody would have wanted him dead; he would have been left alone, an anonymous carpenter. But because he stood *for* justice and love, those who stand *against* justice and love were out to get him, and get him they did—at least they thought they did.

This Lent and Easter Season, reflect on these two truths: (1) the crucifixion is a sign of how far love will go for the sake of the beloved; (2) the resurrection is a sign that, when love goes that far, it wins.

This year, during our Wednesday night Lenten Services, we will focus on Jesus’ 1st passion, and our theme will be *The Things That Make for Peace*. If you would like to prepare for worship

ahead of time, here is a list of Scripture readings and sermon titles for Wednesday nights in Lent:

Ash Wednesday, February 10: Luke 19:41-44
“If only you knew the things that make for peace”

2nd Wed. in Lent, February 17: Isaiah 26:3, 48:17
The things that make for peace with God

3rd Wed. in Lent, February 24: Matthew 6:25-33
Peace with and within yourself

4th Wed. in Lent, March 2: Romans 12:9-18,
21—13:8-10
Being at peace with your neighbors

5th Wed. in Lent, March 9: Luke 19:41-44 and
Matthew 5:43-48
The things that make for peace with your enemies

6th Wed. in Lent, March 16: Isaiah 11:6-9
Being at peace with the planet

Holy Thursday, March 24 (Not sure what I am going to do on Holy Thursday yet. Stay tuned!)

Good Friday, March 25: Isaiah 53:1-9, 12
You can run from such love, but you can’t hide.

“All are welcome” to gather each Wednesday beginning February 10 at 5:30 for what is always a delicious soup supper, to be enjoyed along with good conversation with good people at the dinner table. Worship will follow at 7:00 o’clock. Our liturgy will be Holden Evening Prayer whose meditative music will provide the setting for our exploration of *The Things That Make for Peace*. See you there, and bring a friend or neighbor—all are truly welcome.

Peace,
Pastor Hank

Council Highlights

- ✦ Council and staff will participate in a leadership retreat on Saturday, February 27.
- ✦ A letter was mailed to all families of confirmation students who will be affected by the schedule change. Pastor Hank was available to answer questions at a meeting on Sunday evening, January 24.
- ✦ Council expressed thanks to outgoing members Craig Ahlin, Deb Scott, and Scott Sobiech for their service.

Call Committee Report

The Call Committee reviewed three pastoral candidates and decided to conduct a second interview with one candidate. Following this second interview which included the pastor's spouse, the Call Committee has unanimously and enthusiastically selected this candidate as candidate of choice. The pastor has agreed to continue with the process with us. More information about the candidate will be provided following a few further process steps, such as completion of a background check, and agreement on a compensation package. The congregation will have an opportunity to meet the candidate and a congregational meeting will be scheduled to vote on the call. Thank you for continuing to keep the pastoral candidate, the call committee, and the congregation in your prayers as this exciting process continues!



LENT

Devotions for Lent 2016

bearing fruit

As a part of your Lenten journey, we have available a small daily devotional book, bearing fruit. For each of the days of Lent, this small book contains a colorful photo, scripture text, quote to ponder, and daily reflection. You may pick up a copy in the church office. Please let us know if you would like to receive a copy in the mail.

Lenten Offering

As a part of our Lenten discipline all are encouraged to consider ways that we can share the love of Christ with others. As we live during anxious times, pray about how we each might share what God has provided. Thank you for your generosity as you serve as Jesus' hands and feet in this part of the kingdom.

Baskets of Promise for Lutheran World Relief

This Lent we will again 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 50 (or more!) Personal Care Kits during Lent. Here is the collection schedule so that you can watch for these items:

February 14	Bars of soap, 4-5 ounce, any brand in original wrapping
February 21	Bath towels, lightweight, 52"X27" max, dark color is best
February 28	Toothbrushes, adult size, in original packaging
March 6	Combs
March 13	Nail clippers, metal, attached file optional
March 20	Bars of soap, as above

Worship and Music

written by Paula Monahan

“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” *1 Thessalonians 5:18*

I write this in honor of my dad, Dr. Ray Lindeman, who has taught me about being grateful. If you ask my dad how he is, he always answers, “grateful,” and always with a smile. My dad is a retired physician and is 91 1/2 years young. I am grateful to my Heavenly Father for giving me my wonderful, loving earthly father!

An old English preacher once said, “A grateful mind is a great mind,” and the Bible agrees. There are 138 passages of Scripture on the subject of thanksgiving. One of the few hymns devoted to giving thanks is “Now Thank We All Our God.” German Christians sing this hymn like American believers sing the “Doxology.” It’s loved on both sides of the Atlantic and around the world.

It was written by Martin Rinkart (1586-1649), a Lutheran pastor in the little village of Eilenberg, Saxony. The Thirty Years War was raging through Germany and floods of refugees streamed into the walled city of Eilenberg. It was the most desperate of times; inside the walls was nothing but plague, famine and fear. There was extreme strain on the pastors, who expended all their strength in preaching the gospel, caring for the sick and burying the dead. The pastors themselves perished until only Martin Rinkart was left. Some days he conducted as many as 50 funerals.

Martin Rinkart left the safety of the city walls to negotiate with the enemy, and he did it with such courage and faith that there was soon a conclusion of hostilities and the period of suffering ended. He knew there is no healing without thanksgiving and composed this hymn for the survivors of Eilenberg:

“Now thank we all our God,
With heart and hands and voices.
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom this world rejoices.
Who, from our mothers’ arms,
Hath blessed us on our way,
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.”

Adapted from “Then Sings My Soul” by Robert J Morgan

Adult Opportunities

Women’s Bible Study

“God’s Story, Your Story: When His Becomes Yours”

All are welcome to this six-session study. Author Max Lucado will give you fresh perspective on how your daily life relates to God’s grand story. We will meet Wednesdays, at 6:30 p.m. The following sessions will continue on Wednesday, February 10 at 5:30 p.m. (come for soup supper, study, and Lenten worship) For more information, contact the church office. There is room for you!

Women’s Martha Circle:

The Martha Circle meets Monday, February 8, at 10:00 a.m. at the church.

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—February 3 and 17—at 7:00 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 Hank.

Adult Bible Study

Thursdays at 11:30 a.m.

Bring a friend and your Bible and come for spirit-filled discussion around the lectionary texts for the coming Sunday. This is a good opportunity for in-depth conversation and learning about the assigned texts and an added dimension to weekly worship. Pastor Hank leads this study at 11:30 a.m. We meet for about an hour. See you there!

Book Club

The February selection is The Traveler’s Gift by Andy Andrews. The group meets Tuesday, February 23 at 7:00 p.m. in the church library. For more information, call Tifanii Dahl, 632-8207.

Devotionals

We have daily devotional books available in the church office for you to purchase. These books keep you grounded in God’s Word each day. Daily Text are \$6.00 each.

Mini Annual Report First Lutheran Church

The Annual Meeting of First Lutheran Church was held on Sunday, January 31, 2016. 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 gathering space.

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

Serving together in mission:

- ✠ Provided in-kind giving through personal care kits, school backpacks, and Christmas gifts
- ✠ Support of local agencies: Morrison County Food Shelf, Hands of Hope, Habitat for Humanity, Morrison County Chaplaincy, Thanksgiving meal
- ✠ Increased financial support to the wider church through the ELCA

Serving together in worship and praise:

- ✠ Vibrant worship using a variety of services and weekly holy communion
- ✠ Midweek worship during Lent and Advent

Serving together in faith formation:

- ✠ Supported “Children First” Christian Preschool in their 15th year of operation
- ✠ Held Vacation Bible School cooperatively with local congregations
- ✠ Sponsored mission trip for middle school youth and National ELCA Gathering for high school youth in Detroit
- ✠ Dedicated Sunday School hour

Serving together thru our building and grounds:

- ✠ Provided meeting space to over 25 non-profit community organizations
- ✠ Maintaining the building and grounds with needed replacements/upgrades

Statistical Reports

Baptized Membership (January 1, 2016)	1,004	Baptisms	22
Confirmed Membership (January 1, 2016)	728	Affirmation of Baptism/Confirmation	9
New Members Received	43	Marriages	6
Transferred Out	33	Funerals	14
Average Worship Attendance	2015 – 225		

Summary Notes from Congregational Annual Meeting

Not Official Minutes

President Mark Hanson, declared a Quorum and called the meeting to order.

Elected to the Church Council were: Dave Buker, Katie Riitters, Sue Salvog, and Marlene Williams each to a 3-year term, and Doug Dahlberg, and Les Hittesdorf, each to a 1-year term.

Craig Ahlin, Michelle Dahlberg and Ted Pfohl were elected as the congregational representatives for the Nominating Committee.

The Heartland Conference Gathering is Sunday, February 14 at Camp Onomia, Onamia; the NE MN Synod Assembly is April 29-May 1, 2016 at Breezy Point. Voting members/alternates are: Cindi Habas, Les Hittesdorf, Ruth Jeremiason-Jensen, Jay Kiel, and Jay and Lynn Lowry.

The Luther Crest Bible Camp annual meeting is October 8, 2016. Voting members are Jeff Bigalke, and Brian and Caitlin Skluzacek.

Debra Yliniemi-Ahlin was elected as First Lutheran’s representative for the “His Hands and Feet” Stumpf Memorial Scholarship Committee.

Bylaw language changes were approved.

Call Committee chair Mary Pfohl gave an update on the call process and shared that the call committee has made a unanimous choice of a pastoral candidate.

The 2016 Mission Plan was approved as presented.

The new Council met briefly, officers were elected, they are: President, Cindi Habas, Vice-President, Les Hittesdorf, Secretary, Dave Buker, Treasurer, Peter Eckstrom.

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 2015 Mission Plan, receipts toward operations were \$352,818, Thank you! Operating expenses were \$375,391. We ended the year with a deficit of \$22,573. These amounts are exclusive of "Children First" Christian Preschool.

We are in the third year of the "Building on Blessings" campaign for the worship space project. The original mortgage principal of \$569,303 has been reduced to \$507,454 during the year. The ELCA Mission Investment Fund mortgage has an interest rate of 3.875% adjustable after 5 years. Monthly payments are \$2,966.

The Mission Plan proposal for 2016 projects giving of \$396,200. Expenses are projected at \$391,062. 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 \$3,244 received from special offerings which included these missions and projects and many more:

Morrison County Food Shelf	425.00
Boys and Girls Club of Morrison County	425.00
Gideons International	432.81
LSS Center for Changing Lives	315.00

You provided supplies for 100+ personal care kits during Lent. Vacation Bible School children filled 75 backpacks with school supplies for schools. You gave dollars and in-kind gifts to over 100 area families in need through the Angel Tree. Thank you for the countless unseen support for brothers and sisters around the world. You are a blessing!

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

God's blessings, Craig Ahlin

2015 Income and Expense Report and 2016 Proposed Mission Plan

	2015 Mission Plan	2015 Actual	Plan Variance	2016 Mission Plan
Total Giving	382,150	352,818	29,332	396,200
Preschool	40,225	33,735	6,490	40,225
Total Income	422,375	386,553	35,822	436,425
Expenses				
Pastoral Ministry	77,096	75,429	1,667	78,495
Lay Staff	169,307	164,067	5,240	170,108
Administrative Expense	20,850	23,028	(2,178)	22,300
Worship and Cong. Life	4,050	3,586	464	4,850
Congregational Life	3,400	4,663	(1,263)	5,900
Facilities and Property	36,200	35,580	620	37,679
Debt Service	35,590	35,590	-	35,590
Health	500	735	(235)	600
Education	9,800	7,111	2,689	9,800
Youth	5,010	4,349	661	5,010
Mission and Stewardship	20,930	21,253	(323)	20,730
Total Expense before Preschool	382,733	375,391	7,342	391,062
Preschool	40,222	33,116	7,106	40,222
Total Expense	422,955	408,507	14,448	431,284
 Deficit/Surplus	(580)	(21,954)	21,374	5,141

Sign and Symptoms of a Stroke

A stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of your brain is interrupted or severely reduced, depriving brain tissue of oxygen and nutrients. Within minutes, brain cells begin to die. A stroke is a medical emergency. Prompt treatment is crucial. Early action can minimize brain damage and potential complications. The good news is that strokes can be treated and prevented, and many fewer Americans die of stroke now than even 15 years ago.

Watch for these signs and symptoms if you think you or someone else may be having a stroke. Note when the signs and symptoms begin, because the length of time they have been present may guide your treatment decisions:

- **Trouble with speaking and understanding.** You may experience confusion. You may slur your words or have difficulty understanding speech.
- **Paralysis or numbness of the face, arm or leg.** You may develop sudden numbness, weakness or paralysis in your face, arm or leg, especially on one side of your body. Try to raise both your arms over your head at the same time. If one arm begins to fall, you may be having a stroke. Similarly, one side of your mouth may droop when you try to smile.
- **Trouble with seeing in one or both eyes.** You may suddenly have blurred or blackened vision in one or both eyes, or you may see double.
- **Headache.** A sudden, severe headache, which may be accompanied by vomiting, dizziness or altered consciousness, may indicate you're having a stroke.
- **Trouble with walking.** You may stumble or experience sudden dizziness, loss of balance or loss of coordination.

When to see a doctor:

Seek immediate medical attention if you notice any signs or symptoms of a stroke, even if they seem to fluctuate or disappear.

Think “FAST” and do the following:

- **Face.** Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- **Arms.** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward? Or is one arm unable to raise up?
- **Speech.** Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is his or her speech slurred or strange?
- **Time.** If you observe any of these signs, call 911 immediately.

Call 911 or your local emergency number right away. Don't wait to see if symptoms go away. Every minute counts. The longer a stroke goes untreated, the greater the potential for brain damage and disability.

Adapted and reprinted from Mayoclinic.org



Library Corner

Thank you to the First Lutheran authors, Pastor Hank French, Rusty Gwost, Laura Hansen and Mark Moe, who shared their time and writing talent with us! Their books and many other great reads are available in the church library for you to check out.

Happy Reading!

"Children First" Christian Preschool Update

We are one month into a new year with only four months left of Preschool. Wow, does time fly quickly! January classroom themes included: Snow and Polar Animals, A,B,C's, Ocean Fun/Beach Day and Dinosaurs. Please check out the dinosaur artwork hanging in the education wing hallways and entry way. February fun is planned with Dental Health, Valentine's/Friends, America, and "I Love to Read" weeks. We are looking for volunteers to come to the classrooms and read to the preschoolers the last week of February. Contact teachers, Anna Walker or Jessica Gustafson, if you are interested in volunteering your time and talents!

Thank you to everyone contributing to the 2015-16 Gifting Campaign. We have received \$1,440.00 in donations. This campaign is our main source of fundraising. Contributions support our outreach ministry partnership with Bridgeway and St. Otto's Care Centers. We use the contributions to pay for bussing along with shared classroom materials and art supplies. The residents look forward each month to our arrival and enjoy the relationship-building and time they spend with the preschoolers. Thank you to the Little Falls Exchange Club for a generous gift of \$750 and to the Martha Circle for their gift of \$150. Thrivent Action Team ® opportunities have also provided "Children First" with \$500 this year. If you are a Thrivent member who would like to support the preschool with Action Team funds, please contact me for more information.

"Children First" Christian Preschool continues to collect Campbell's points located on various branded products. A list of these products is available in the First Lutheran gathering space on the welcome counter and in the Preschool area. We are also collecting Coborn's/Cashwise points located at the bottom of your grocery receipt when you purchase Food Club brand and other Coborn's branded products. These items may be dropped off

in the red collection box in the gathering space, or in the church office.

Planning for the 2016-17 Preschool year is underway. Registration for current Preschool families and First Lutheran Church members will begin in late February. Community-wide registration begins mid-March. Visitors and questions are always welcome. Please contact me or the church office for more information.

Each new day brings the gift of life and learning from God who created us. Each new day brings smiles and laughter from the youngest in our midst. Thank you Preschool families for sharing your children with us. Our hope is that the gifts we share with them will be a lifetime of learning and God's love. Blessings!

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



First Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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News of the Family



Paisley Ann Larsen, daughter of Eric and Beth
Larsen was baptized on January 24.

Welcome to the family of God!



Worship Schedule

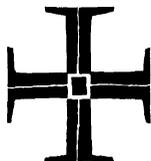
8:30 a.m. Traditional Worship using a
variety of liturgical settings.

10:30 a.m. Contemporary Worship led by
a Praise Band

Holy Communion at all Sunday services.

Midweek Lenten Worship: Wednesdays,
February 10-March 16 at 7:00 p.m.

Lenten Soup Supper served at 5:30 p.m.



Items for the **March NEWSLETTER** are
due on **February 19, 2016!**