

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Jake Dyrhaug, Pastor

FIRST

“Servants of All”

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February 2017, Newsletter

January 30, 2017

**The Church Year:
Transfiguration Sunday – February 26**



Advent and Epiphany seasons share in common images of light. During the season of Advent, we lit candles as we prepared for the birth of Christ. On Epiphany, January 6, a star led the magi to the Christ Child. The Sundays “after Epiphany”, beginning with the Baptism of Jesus, January 8, culminate with Transfiguration Sunday, another celebration of light.

This year, Transfiguration Sunday falls on February 26. Our worship services on Transfiguration Sunday will be filled with images of light. We will sing songs about light – the light of Jesus, His light within us, and the light we bring to the world.

The Transfiguration of Jesus is an event recorded in the New Testament. Jesus and three of the Apostles, Peter, James and John, go to a mountain to pray. While on the mountain, Jesus begins to shine with bright rays of light. The prophets Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus and speak with Him. God’s voice in the sky, then says, “This is my Son, listen to Him.” We heard similar words at the Baptism of Jesus, “This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am Well Pleased.” At the Transfiguration, God makes the point – Jesus is the Light of the World.

Transfiguration Sunday is also the last Sunday that we sing “alleluia” during our worship services until Easter Sunday. The omission of alleluia during Lent goes back at least to the fifth century in the western church. The hymn “Alleluia, Song of Gladness” (*ELW 318*) contains a translation of an 11th century Latin text that compares an alleluia-less Lent to the exile of the Israelites in Babylon. The text then anticipates the joy of Easter when glad alleluias will return in all their heavenly splendor. Along with a sung farewell to alleluia, some of you may remember the year that the children of the congregation physically “buried” the alleluias on Transfiguration Sunday. We then brought out the “alleluias” again on Easter Sunday, a meaningful and delightful celebration.

Soak up the light—sing alleluia—because Transfiguration Sunday is closely followed by Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent.

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“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

So here we are. The election has been over for some time, and it’s official now as the inauguration of a new president has taken place in our great country. As a pastor I have never really spoken in church a lot about politics, partly because folks are seldom on the same page on that one and the main thing in church is spreading the gospel and encouraging each other to live it out. I hope, of course, that everyone gives good thought to how our nation can best thrive and also take care of the poor and protect the vulnerable, not just in America but in the rest of God’s world. Those things are just things any Christian should want to see happen.

But also, as they taught us at seminary (pastor school), Lutherans have traditionally emphasized that there are two “Kingdoms”—the Kingdom of God/Heaven and the kingdom of this world with the different aspects of order that keep this place going, including leaders in positions of authority in government. But when it comes to who should be in those positions, we leave it up largely to the conscience of the individual believer to decide who they feel will govern best. This year was unlike any I remember when it came to the presidential election—nastier and more polarized and sometimes almost more like a bad talk show. People are having a harder time speaking civilly to friends and families, and there’s a lot of hurt experienced over all this. I guess America’s been through times before when it’s been like that, and we’ve done alright. I don’t claim to have all the answers on how things should be run in a country. But I do hope people in churches stay active in the political process, and we have the great freedom to do that here. I hope, above all, that people in churches pray. We’re supposed to be good at that.

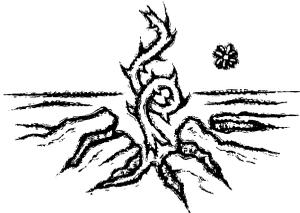
However we navigate the coming months and years, still seeking some unity, I think we need to pray. Regardless of whether our candidate won or lost or if we agree or not with policy decisions that will be made, let’s start with prayer. Even if we don’t like “the other guys”, whoever they are, we need to pray. The rest of the world needs us to pray, too, because we have such a huge effect on everybody. As Stephani and I get ready to travel to the Holy Land this month, thanks to a friend who offered to help get us there, and thanks to First Lutheran and continuing education, I’m especially mindful of how the events of this year affect the whole world. And I think of the prophet, Micah first speaking in that place about justice, humility and mercy. I really liked the way Pastor Mike Housholder of Lutheran Church of Hope in West Des Moines had put it on a Facebook post...

“In the days leading up to the Inauguration, I find myself praying even more for President Obama, soon-to-be President Trump ... and our nation. As I do, this is the Bible verse that keeps coming to mind—“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” —Micah 6:8—and I’m reminded how essential it is for us to pray for our nation’s leaders ... and how important it is for them to do the same.”

We’re not all going to agree on everything. But may we seek to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God as we pray as God’s people, that God would guide us. Let’s stay anchored there.

In Christ,

Pastor Jake Dyrhaug



Lent 2017

**begins on Ash Wednesday, March 1
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 the 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

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.

*Adapted from Evangelical Lutheran Worship, pg. 87,
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Devotions for Lent 2017

free indeed

As a part of your Lenten journey, we have available a small daily devotional book, free indeed. For each of the days of Lent, this small book contains a colorful photo, scripture text, quote to ponder, and daily reflection based on Luther's Small Catechism. 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 lots more!) Personal Care Kits during Lent. Here is the collection schedule so that you can watch for these items:

March 1	Bars of soap, 4-5 ounce, any brand in original wrapping
March 8	Bath towels, lightweight, 52"X27" max, dark color is best
March 15	Toothbrushes, adult size, in original packaging
March 22	Combs
March 29	Nail clippers, metal, attached file optional
April 5	Bars of soap, as above

Adult Opportunities

Council Highlights

- ✦ Council and staff will participate in a leadership retreat on Saturday, February 11.
- ✦ Council expressed thanks to outgoing members Stephanie Adams, Doug Dahlberg, Lucy Dale, Mark Hanson, and Les Hittesdorf for their service.

Worship Serving Opportunities Signup for 2017

Each Sunday, many worshipers come to worship at First Lutheran. Your servant hands are an integral part of providing hospitality to all who enter here. Stop at the table in the Gathering Space to offer your gifts in service to Christ's body at First Lutheran. Serving areas are greeters, ushers, scripture readers, communion ministry, child care, coffee hospitality. You can sign up for a time that fits your schedule. Sign up now for January and February. You can also sign up for the serving areas that interest you. You will be called as needed. Training for each serving ministry is available—please ask in the church office!

We will devote space in the newsletter in the coming months with information about the various serving ministries. You may want to try something new!

Signup sheets are posted now. Thanks for being *First...Servants of All*.

Scripture Readers

The formal reading of scripture is one of the oldest and most important functions in public worship, a central act in the Service from the time of ancient Israel to the present. As a reader, you exercise a public ministry of the church, and are a true servant of God and God's people as God's word is heard through you.

Scripture readers receive the assigned texts prior to Sunday in order to practice and become familiar with the readings. If you would like to serve as a reader, please contact the church office.

Tuesday Morning Women's Bible Study

This study meets Tuesdays, at 9:00 a.m. using an audio dramatic reading of the Bible. We begin with study of the gospel of Matthew. We will consider what it means to be a disciple of Christ and how to be a disciple to others. Matthew draws on his background as a tax collector to help you with practical ways of discipleship in daily living. Naomi Engel leads this study. Come when you are able and bring a friend!

Women's Bible Study

"Breaking Free from Fear"

This study by Kay Arthur begins on Wednesday, February 1 at 6:30 p.m. Study books will be available for this group for \$8.00 each. Stephanie Adams facilitates this group. Come and bring a friend.

Women's Martha Circle:

The Martha Circle meets Monday, February 13, at 9:30 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 1 and 15—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 Jake.

Book Club

The February selection is 1984 by George Orwell. The group meets Tuesday, February 28 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 29, 2017. 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, Habitat for Humanity, Oasis Central Minnesota
- ✚ 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 16th year of operation
- ✚ Held Vacation Bible School cooperatively with local congregations
- ✚ Sponsored mission trips for middle school youth and high school youth
- ✚ 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, 2017)	1,042	Baptisms	16
Confirmed Membership (January 1, 2017)	750	Affirmation of Baptism/Confirmation	8
New Members Received	37	Marriages	0
Transferred Out	7	Funerals	8
Average Worship Attendance	2016 – 224		

Summary Notes from Congregational Annual Meeting

Not Official Minutes

President Cindi Habas, declared a Quorum and called the meeting to order.

Elected to the Church Council were: Dale Gohl, Jerry Neumann, Bob O’Neill, Kerry Olson and Jennifer Schott each to a 3-year term.

Mavis Buker, Mary Larson and Tom Riitters were elected as the congregational representatives for the Nominating Committee.

The Heartland Conference Gathering is Sunday, February 12 at Camp Onomia, Onamia; the NE MN Synod Assembly is April 28-30, 2017 at Cragun’s Resort. Voting members are: Ruth Jeremiason-Jensen and Robert Johnson, alternates are Daniel Ditmanson and Karla Jensen.

The Luther Crest Bible Camp annual meeting is October 7, 2017. Voting members are Jeff Bigalke, and Les and Gail Hittesdorf.

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

The 2017 Mission Plan was approved as presented.

The new Council met briefly, officers were elected, they are: President, David Buker, Vice-President, Robert Johnson, Secretary, Sue Salvog, 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 2016 Mission Plan, receipts toward operations were \$344,530, Thank you! Operating expenses were \$386,189. We ended the year with a deficit of \$41,659. These amounts are exclusive of "Children First" Christian Preschool.

The "Building on Blessings" three-year campaign for the worship space project ended in May. The original mortgage principal of \$569,303 has been reduced to \$492,627. 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 2017 projects expenses at \$428,038. With a stewardship campaign in the spring we expect to meet this amount with congregational giving. 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 \$2,840 received from special offerings which included these missions and projects and many more:

Oasis Central Minnesota	500.00
Flyer Pride backpack food program	1,050.00
Gideons International	261.00
Common Hope – Christmas gifts	125.00

You provided supplies for 60+ personal care kits during Lent. Vacation Bible School children filled over 50 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, Peter Eckstrom, Treasurer

2016 Income and Expense Report and 2017 Proposed Mission Plan

	2016 Mission Plan	2016 Actual	Plan Variance	2017 Mission Plan
Total Giving	418,293	344,530	73,763	428,038
Preschool	25,590	10,455	15,135	25,590
Total Income	443,883	354,985	88,898	453,628
Expenses				
Pastoral Ministry	107,052	105,257	1,795	116,457
Lay Staff	168,782	152,874	15,908	166,407
Administrative Expense	22,300	20,610	1,690	22,551
Worship and Music	4,850	5,995	(1,145)	4,850
Congregational Life	5,900	3,720	2,180	4,920
Facilities and Property	37,679	38,590	(911)	42,573
Debt Service	35,590	35,590	-	35,590
Health	600	139	461	600
Education	9,800	4,088	5,712	10,300
Youth	5,010	1,733	3,277	5,010
Mission and Stewardship	20,730	17,527	3,203	18,780
Total Expense before Preschool	418,293	386,123	32,170	428,038
Preschool	25,590	10,450	15,140	25,590
Total Expense	443,883	396,573	47,310	453,628
Deficit/Surplus	0	(41,588)	41,588	0

It is one month into the new year and maybe your resolutions have begun to fail you or you have lost ambition for them. Many people begin the year hoping to exercise and eat better. I usually can meet my exercise routine goals but fail often on the healthy eating. I recently came across the recommendations from the American Heart Association regarding exercise.

For Overall Cardiovascular Health:

- At least **30 minutes of moderate-intensity** aerobic activity at least **5 days per week for a total of 150.**

OR

- At least **25 minutes of vigorous** aerobic activity at least **3 days per week for a total of 75 minutes**; or a combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity

AND

- **Moderate to high-intensity muscle strengthening activity at least 2 days per week** for additional health benefits.

For Lowering Blood Pressure and Cholesterol:

- An average **40 minutes of moderate- to vigorous intensity** aerobic activity **3 or 4 times per week.**

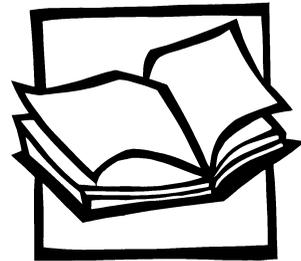
Americans are very good at multitasking as we seem to pack our schedules full of activities. My mother often told me she prays while she drives or when she walks on the treadmill. I find myself in prayer when I am quiet, alone and outside. I ask myself why I don't put my exercise routine and my prayer time together?

Rev. Roger Joslin is the author of *Running the Spiritual Path* and an Episcopal priest at All Saints' Church, Bentonville, Arkansas. He writes,

“As with meditation, prayerful running is more about listening than talking. You are allowing God's voice to speak to you rather than telling God what you want. You have to find ways to

listen. With a running meditation, you cannot shut out the physical environment. Initially I tried to shut those things out. I realized how foolish I was to do this – all of the surroundings on my run brought me into presence with God.

With a sitting meditation, you are always fighting distraction. When running, I can use distractions to remind me of my pursuit of God's presence – a flower, a smell or a shift in light reconnects me with the present. If we can find ways to keep ourselves in the present, we will experience the Divine. As we strive to move toward a sense of God's presence during a run, the more we will be able to do it in our lives.”



Library Corner

We have the following new books in the library for you to checkout:

Adult Fiction: [Go Set a Watchman](#),
by Harper Lee

Biography: [I Am Malala](#), by Malala Yousafzai

Inspiration: [Ray-isms](#), by Ray Stumpf

Theology: [Lutheranism 101](#), Scot Kinnaman

[Martin Luther: Treasures of the Reformation](#)

Devotions: [40 Day Journal with Parker Palmer](#)

[40 Day Journal with Maya Angelou](#)

[Quiet Moments with God](#)

"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/1,2,3's, and Dinosaurs. Please check out the artwork hanging in the education wing hallways and entry way. February fun is planned with Dental Health, Valentine's/Friends, Beach Day/Ocean, and "I Love to Read" weeks. We are looking for volunteers to come to the classrooms and read to the preschoolers. Contact teachers, Chrissi Gesme or Jessica Gustafson, if you are interested in volunteering your time and talents!

Thank you to everyone contributing to the 2016-17 Gifting Campaign. This campaign is our main source of fundraising. Contributions support our outreach ministry partnership with Bridgeway. 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 \$1,000. Thrivent Action Team® opportunities have also provided "Children First" with funds 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. Campbell's is slowly phasing out the points program. 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.

Planning for the 2017-18 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.

Families can also register and begin attending throughout the year as space is available. Registration forms are located on the gathering space counter or by calling the church office.

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



News of the Family



Reagan Grace Sittko, daughter of Lindsey and Austin Sittko was baptized on January 1.

Onnaleigha Jo Boody, daughter of Jackie Panek and Samuel Boody was baptized on January 15.

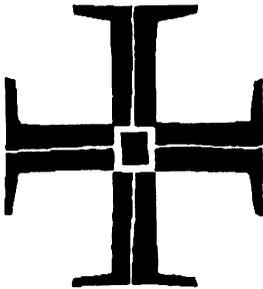
Welcome to the family of God!



Worship Schedule

- 8:30 a.m. Traditional Worship using a variety of liturgical settings.
- 9:35 a.m. Sunday School
- 10:30 a.m. Contemporary Worship led by a Praise Band

Holy Communion at all Sunday services.



Items for the **March NEWSLETTER** are due on **February 20, 2017!**