



First Lutheran Church
Annual Meeting
Sunday, January 27, 2013

*Following the 10:45 a.m. Service
Share a fellowship meal
child care will be provided*

- Election of Council members, voting members, and other leadership positions
- Adoption of 2013 Mission Plan
- Annual Reports

The following leadership positions will be elected at the annual meeting. If you or someone you know would like to be considered for serving please contact the Nominating Committee or the church office.

Church Council: *each to a 3-year term*
Craig Ahlin Scott Sobiech
Deb Scott Tanna Stucky

Lay voting members to Heartland conference and NE Minnesota Synod Assemblies *three voting members*
three alternates

Lay delegates to Luther Crest Bible Camp Annual Meeting on Saturday, October 12, 2013: Mark Hanson and *two delegates to be elected*

2013 Nominating Committee:
three members to be elected

Please plan to attend this important meeting. Share in a fellowship potluck lunch following the 10:45 a.m. service. Child care will be provided. Annual Reports will be available by January 13 at the church for review before the Annual Meeting.

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Pastor Dave's Article:

They shall be my people and I will be their God... *Jeremiah 32:38*

These are words of promise spoken by God a long time ago to the prophet Jeremiah to the people of Israel. But they are also spoken to us TODAY as we begin 2013. The New Year always starts off with such a bang! We watch the ball drop and celebrate. We clang pots and pans together at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve. We light fireworks off to bring in the New Year.

We make new resolutions to be better at something, do something new, or become something. The year starts off with such promise, but then what? We often get side-tracked or re-wrapped up in our daily lives and forget the promises we made, the goals we set, or the dreams we have. We get complacent. We get focused on what is right in front of us rather than what lies further ahead. We lose sight of the forest and only see the tree. We side step the tree only to walk in front of a bush full of thorns or worse we step into something...

So how do we navigate the forest and get though? How do we continue on the journey that lies ahead?

The truth is we will never be out of the forest, the wilderness. There will be snares, traps, animals

and temptations of numerous things that pull or lead us away from our designated path. And we will stray. But these words found in the book of Jeremiah are a promise that we have been given. God doesn't give empty promises and God doesn't make resolutions only to get caught up in his everyday life. God speaks and it is so. God said these words and thought of not just the people of Jeremiah's day. He thought of us, he thought of YOU! Sure it says 'They will be'... and 'I will be their' ... but it just as easily could say: "YOU will be my people and I will be YOUR God."

So, as you begin the new year, remember — you may not be able to keep your word of that new resolution you promised, but God doesn't need to make a new resolution—he made it once a long time ago and he makes the same resolution again to you this day: **YOU WILL BE MY PEOPLE AND I WILL BE YOUR GOD!**

In Christ,

Pastor David Sperstad

Worship Schedule:

Advent Four: Sunday, December 23: Worship at 8:00, 9:30 and 10:45 a.m.

Christmas Eve

Monday, December 24:

Festival Worship at 4:00, 6:00 and 10:00 p.m.

Holy Communion at all three services

First Sunday of Christmas: December 30: Two Services of worship at 8:00 and 10:00 a.m.

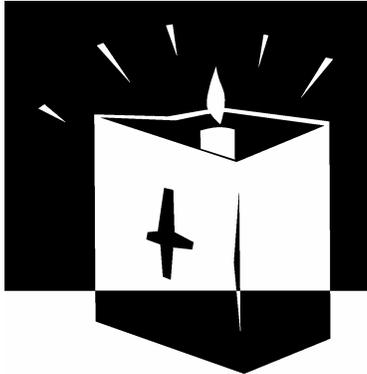
Come and Celebrate! Come, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come

WORSHIP LIFE



**First Sunday after Christmas
December 30
8:00 and 10:00 a.m. worship**

We will have two services of worship on Sunday, December 30. Thank you for making time in your holiday schedule for praise and thanks to God.



**Burning of the Greens
Epiphany Service
Sunday, January 6, 5:30 p.m.**

First Lutheran's traditional "Burning of the Greens" is Sunday, January 6. Bring a friend and/or your family and come at 5:30 p.m. We'll share supper, worship, and gather around a bonfire of our church's Christmas tree, as we celebrate Jesus Christ, the Light of the Nations. Bring your Christmas tree or a bough or branch! A freewill offering will be received to defray the costs of supper.



**Worship Serving Opportunities
Signup for 2013**

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; sign-ups for March and April will be posted in 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!

Signup sheets are posted now, so *now is the time* to sign up! Thanks for signing up to be *First...Servants of All*.



Council Highlights

- Heard that the Thanksgiving offering of \$525. was received and given in support of mission partners.
- Heard a report from the Nominating Committee of the nominations for council leadership positions for 2013. *see page one*
- Approved looking into the internship process with Luther Seminary for the future.
- Planning for the congregational Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 27 to include a potluck lunch.

Worship Space Enhancement Update



On Wednesday, December 5, the Worship Space Enhancement Team met with Brian Berg, of Zerr Berg Architects and consultants in the areas of mechanical, electrical, acoustical, and interior design. Highlights of the meeting include:

- Design features of the proposed pew chairs
- Further work on colors, pattern, and liturgical symbols for the windows
- List of potential local contractors interested in bidding on the project
- Exploration of options for interior finishes (walls, flooring, etc.) of the worship space

- Information about the mechanical systems for cooling the worship space, library, and child care space
- Update on electrical, lighting and control systems in the worship space
- Examination of acoustics and sound system in worship space and Stoltz Hall

All First Lutheran steward/members are welcome to attend meetings of the Worship Space Team. Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

Monday, December 17 at 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 8 at 4:00 p.m.

Wednesday, January 23 at 4:30 p.m.

Questions or comments about the Worship Space Enhancement project can be directed to any member of the team, they are: Stephanie Adams, Dave Buker, LaVerne Hempeck, Bob and Sonya Just, Darrell Larsen, Bruce Moller, Paula Monahan, Becky Nelson, Mary Pfohl, Nancy Ratzloff, Tammy Zwilling and Pastor David Sperstad.

Advent Craft Sale and Luncheon Thank You!

The Commission for Youth thanks everyone who participated in this successful fundraiser for Youth Ministry. Over \$2,500.00 was received from sales and donations. Thanks to everyone who donated food, crafts, baked goods and their time in support of this event. Thanks also to all who attended this event. Your generosity is an inspiration to us all!

Thank You

Thanks to all who contributed in any way to adorning the sanctuary for Advent and Christmas worship. Thank you for the gift of the beautiful Christmas tree, to those who labored to hang garland and lights, and to all who donated poinsettias. Your efforts enhance our worship and are much appreciated.

Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekends

Want to do something special for your spouse? Attend a Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend and focus on just the two of you. Engaging presentations by lay and clergy leaders will give you tools and information while conversations with your spouse in the privacy of your hotel room deepen communication and nourish the spirituality in your marriage. Spring weekends are: February 15-17 in Brooklyn Center, March 15-17 in Alexandria and April 5-7 in Duluth. For more information, contact the church office.

Adult Opportunities

Men's Bible Study Breakfast

All men of the congregation and friends are invited to a Men's Bible Study Breakfast. This study meets for breakfast on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 6:15 a.m. at the church. We meet on January 2 and 16. All are welcome – come when you are able, leave when you must. For more information, contact Pastor Dave.

Women's Winter Bible Study

Watch for information about a new women's study beginning Wednesdays in January. Sessions are at 9:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. For more info, contact the church office, 632-6667.

Book Club

All adult readers are welcome to read with this group. The next selection is The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society by Mary Ann Shaffer. Readers, please secure your own copy of this book. The group will meet in the church library on Monday, January 28, to share and discuss the book. The February selection is The God Hater: A Novel, by Bill Myer. For more info contact Tifanii Dahl, 632-8207.

Cornerstones (Seniors age 55 and better) Potluck Lunch

Wednesday, January 16, 11:30 a.m.

We gather for potluck lunch on Wednesday, January 16 at 11:30 a.m. at church. Please bring a dish of your choosing to share—there's always plenty to go around! Bring a friend and come for food, and fellowship!

Women's Martha Circle: "Gathered by God:"

Mark 6:30-31

Session 5: Getting Away

The Martha Circle meets Monday, January 21, at 10:00 a.m. at the church. Marlene Williams is the hostess and gives the reading.

Sunday School News

Welcome back! Sunday School resumes on Sunday, January 6, at 10:30 a.m.

Preschool/PreKindergarten children continue a traditional classroom style with the Christmas and Epiphany story and stories of Jesus life.

Kindergarten-Fifth Grade begin a new rotation on Stewardship "Time and Money". The dates for this section are January 6, 13 and 20. Children rotate through Storytelling/Games, Cooking and Art learning that as children of God, we are called to practice good stewardship by giving generously of the God-given gifts of our talents, our time and our money.

Some of the objectives of this rotation are:

- there are many ways for us to use our talents, time, and money to serve God.
- all that we have comes as a gift from God.
- stewardship is an important part of living as a follower of Jesus.
- stewardship means being a good manager of all God gives us.
- as God's stewards, we are to take care of the gifts God gives us and use them to serve others.
- talents are the skills and abilities that we have to offer in service to God.
- giving gifts of time and talents is worth as much as giving gifts of money and possessions.

Children learn best by what we model. Parents, grandparents and congregational stewards, please consider modeling your gifts of time and talents by signing up on the Sunday School education board to lead a rotation such as storytelling/games, cooking or art. If you have questions or would like assistance, contact Gail.

6th Grade-12th Grade meet with Ray Stumpf in the Youth Room for a morning of learning about God's Word, enjoying fellowship and food ☺

A Look at Our Ministry Together in the NE MN Synod of the ELCA

The ELCA is organized into geographic areas called synods. The word 'synod' comes from two Greek words, 'syn' (together) and 'hodos' (a way) meaning 'a way together' or 'walking together.'

'Together' is an important idea for understanding Christianity and the Church. In Christ, Christians are joined together in a common fellowship. God has intended us to function at our best in relationship to each other.

Some things can't be done alone, but must be done together. Practically speaking, this requires organization. The Northeastern Minnesota Synod includes 13 counties in the northeast corner of the state. It represents: over 72,500 baptized members, 144 congregations, 250 rostered leaders, and over 1,500 elected lay leaders. To lead and oversee its ministry together, our synod elects a bishop, provides an office staff, elects a synod council and other volunteer leaders, and organizes task forces, much as a congregation does. Much of our synod's work falls in two areas: support and development of pastors and lay leaders for their congregational ministry, and extending and coordinating ministry beyond the local setting.

Congregations base their budgets on regular giving by members. Each congregation decides annually what amount will be passed on to the synod as 'mission support.'



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**
God's work. Our hands.

Here are some examples of what we do together as a synod:

ELCA National and Global Ministries:

- + Support 240 missionaries in 46 countries – in 2012, 118 adults answered God's call to serve as missionaries!
- + 120 companion synod relationships (such as India, Russia, and Honduras in our synod)
- + 28 ELCA colleges and universities
- + in 2008, supported 49 new congregations and 33 under development
- + One out of 50 Americans are served by Lutheran Social Services of America (LSS).
- + World Hunger Appeal
- + Lutheran World Relief

NE MN Synod Ministry Partners:

- + Luther Seminary
- + Lutheran Campus Ministry
- + Minnesota Council of Churches
- + Twin Ports Ministry to Seafarers
- + CHARIS

Our synod staff organizes and supports many events and activities that our congregation participates in:

- + Learning and Sharing Day
- + Middle School Youth Gatherings
- + Synod Journey to the National Youth Gathering – off to Detroit in 2015
- + School of Lay Ministry
- + Fall Theological Conference
- + Mission trips

These are just a few of the ways we are in ministry together in our synod and beyond. If you have any questions about our ministry together as a part of the ELCA, please call the church office.

"Children First" Christian Preschool

Greetings,

January is here! December was a month of Christmas preparation and celebration. The children celebrated the month learning about the Nativity Story and the birth of Jesus. Our field trips this month were especially fulfilling. Noah's Animals class participated in a Nativity Pageant complete with costumes during the trip to St. Otto's Care Center. Jesus' Gems classes made Christmas projects and sang Christmas songs with the residents. Handshakes and hugs were plentiful!

Classes resume on January 7 and 8, 2013 with themes of snow fun, snowmen, polar animals and beach day.

"Children First" Christian Preschool continues to welcome new preschoolers. Currently enrolled children are also welcome to add the Friday Friends class to make a three-day school week. Children may enroll at anytime during the school

year pending space availability. Please contact Gail Hittesdorf, Preschool staff, or First Lutheran Church office for more information.

Thank you to our teaching staff, Jessica Gustafson, Sarah Olson, Chrise Gesme and Anna Walker for their hard work and dedication to "Children First" children and families. These teachers and aides have been wonderful! Please thank them and pray for their continued commitment to the ministry and mission of "Children First" Christian Preschool.

Thank you to all who have blessed "Children First" Christian Preschool in 2012, with financial giving, giving of time and talents, and including the school in your prayers. God's Blessings!

Happy New Year!

Yours in Christ's Service,
Gail Hittesdorf, Director

O Eternal God, the beginning and end, you who sustain all things, understand all things, who existed before all things, and who is without end, be with us, remain among us; strengthen our intentions, sanctify our souls and eradicate in us all that is evil. Enable us to make a good sacrifice and pour out your abundant blessings, and so enable us to enter into the holy of holies wherein dwells your presence.

Ethiopian liturgy



Confirmation Ministries

Fourth Grade: Four week class on Holy Baptism meets on Wednesdays, January 9 through January 30, at 7:00 p.m. Families should have received a letter about this class. Students will make a keepsake baptismal banner as a part of this class. A parent, grandparent or guardian is encouraged to help with this project. Thank you to Lynn Duxbury for teaching this class.

Seventh Grade: Ten Commandments class begins Wednesday, January 9 at 7:00 p.m. and continues through January 30. Parents, please attend the first session. Bring your Bible, Luther's Small Catechism and your great attitude! Thanks to Monica Makela and Sue Sperstad for teaching this class.



Can Care Collection

Save a can – Save the earth –
Save our youth budget!

Place your empty aluminum cans in a securely tied bag next to the church garage. Keep those cans coming! Thank you!

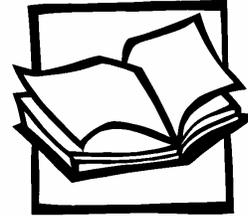
Save the Earth

Did you know that each American produces 4.6 pounds of waste per day, the most in the industrialized world? That in the U.S. 80 percent of products are used once then thrown away? Thank you for your efforts to reduce, re-use, and recycle around your home, our church building, and in the community. Paper, cardboard and aluminum cans used at church can be recycled at church. Your help with recycling glass, paper, cardboard, plastic, aluminum or tin cans is very much appreciated. Thank you for your care for creation!



Eighth Grade: Old Testament class meets Wednesdays, January 9 through January 30. Pastor Dave will teach this class. A Study Bible is used in this class.

Ninth and Tenth Grade Retreats: This year's Ninth Grade and Tenth Grade retreat will be a combined retreat on Relationships. The retreat is scheduled at Luther Crest Bible Camp on Friday-Sunday, February 8-10, 2013.



Rachel Kurtz in Concert

Sunday, January 20; 6:30 p.m.
Lutheran Church of the Cross, Nisswa

Admission is FREE! But donations for the New Pathways Shelter (IHN), which provides housing assistance for those in need of shelter, or the Lakes Area Food Shelf are celebrated and appreciated! Coffee and treats available for purchase, with proceeds going to IHN. For more information go to: <http://rachelkurtz.com/> or call the church at 218.963.2564.

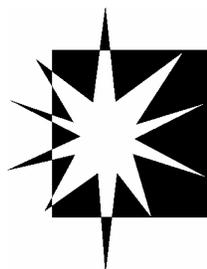
News of the Family

Funerals

Elinor Stroschein died December 12. Her funeral service was held December 17 at First Lutheran. May God grant peace and comfort to her family and friends.

Annual Report Deadline

Deadline for reports to appear in the Annual report is January 7, 2013. Annual Reports will be available for review on January 13, 2013.



Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons!

2 Corinthians 5:17 from The Message

Items for the **February NEWSLETTER** are due on **January 18, 2013!**

2012 Giving

The last date for offerings received to be credited for the year 2012 is Monday, December 31, 2012. Thank you for your faithful giving throughout the year.