



First Lutheran Church
Annual Meeting
Sunday, January 26, 2014

*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 2014 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*
Stephanie Adams Merlin Bruns
Mark Hanson
and one additional 3-year term
1-year term
John Haas

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 in October 2014: *three delegates to be elected*

2014 Nominating Committee:
three members to be elected

Please plan to attend this important meeting. Share in a fellowship lunch following the 10:45 a.m. service. Child care will be provided. Annual Reports will be available by January 12 at the church for review before the Annual Meeting.

Pastor Dave's Article
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As I write this it isn't even Christmas yet! I am reading about the Angel of the Lord speaking to Joseph through dreams. So many times in scripture God spoke to people through dreams.

Remember the dreams you used to have about Christmas? Was it visions of sugar plums dancing in your head? I am not sure what sugar plums dancing look like? Maybe it was the perfect gift you hoped to receive. Or perhaps, the perfect gift you purchased and you dreamed of seeing the receiver open it and being over-joyed!

Perhaps you are like others who make a resolution at the beginning of each year. A resolution is sort of like a dream. I dream of being 20 pounds lighter. I dream of riding my bike to Alaska. I dream there will be no more snow falling and the sun will shine everyday! What are your dreams?

I have dreams for First Lutheran too! I dream that we all continue to hear the Word of God speak to us, call us, and gather us into the one true faith. I pray that we all grow closer together and closer to Christ. I pray that each of our relationships with Him deepen and widen.

Your church council has dreams too. We do our best to listen to God speak to us at each meeting as we are united together. Then we plan and carry out some of these dreams. We trust the Holy Spirit is leading us.

At our most recent meeting, we continued discussion about some important topics. One ongoing topic is the State of Minnesota law allowing for same-gender marriage. We have prayerfully discussed this for the past five months.

We came to this conclusion:

“Acknowledging that there may be differences of opinion within the council and congregation, we support our pastor's decisions regarding marriage ceremonies.” M.S.P. unanimously 12/10/2013

Yes, some might find these words vague. Honestly, it was intended to be that way. Was there ever a question about for whom the pastor would perform a marriage ceremony prior to this?

You trusted your pastor in the past to make these decisions. So the council affirmed that you would trust your pastor with future decisions she/he may make regarding weddings officiated by First Lutheran Church. The reality is that nothing changes. As your current pastor, I will continue to prayerfully discern any and all marriage requests that come to me. I simply ask you to prayerfully consider and respect all decisions made in the future in this regard. If you have questions or comments about this particular issue, please talk with me, a current council member, or one of the Pastor Parish Committee members.

The other vision discussed by council at the last meeting was the opportunity for additional ministry that will be presented at our annual meeting—adding a Parish Nurse position to the ministry staff at First Lutheran. I believe and dream that we would ALL benefit from this added ministry. I do not think this would take away from our existing ministry opportunities. I believe they would only be enhanced by it. What would a parish nurse do? Work along side each of us as a holistic health advocate for our lives.

Parish nursing is a partner in ministry designed for health promotion, disease prevention ministry based on the care of the whole person. There are seven key functions of the Parish Nurse. These functions are as integrator, the mixing of, faith and health, through the ministry of health educator, personal health counselor, referral agent, trainer of volunteers (Health Ministry associates), developer of support groups and health advocate all through the lens of faith.

What are your dreams for First Lutheran? Please share those with any council member and/or me in the months ahead as we continue to vision and dream of First Lutheran in 2025... and how we will look as we are “*First... Servants of All...*”

See you in my dreams and in church too!

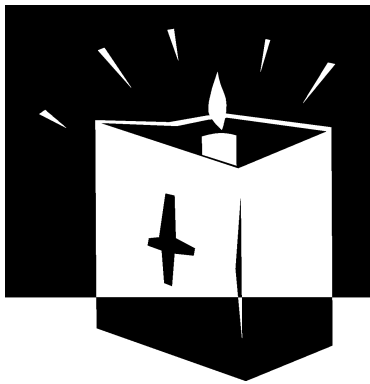
Pastor David Sperstad

WORSHIP LIFE



Second Sunday after Christmas January 5 8:00, 9:30, and 10:45 a.m. worship

Regular worship times resume on the Second Sunday after Christmas, January 5. We welcomed more than 800 people to Christmas worship over the past week! Thank you to all who had any part in making Christmas worship a special celebration and Thank you for making time in your holiday schedule for praise and thanks to God.



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!



Worship Serving Opportunities Signup for 2014

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 \$658. was received and shared with mission partners, Lutheran Disaster Response for Pacific Typhoon relief and Food for Kidz.
- Approved Jane Haas and Lori Ronning to serve on the Pastor Parish Relations Committee.
- Approved a gift in support of David Hoadley's March medical mission trip to Guatemala with HELPS, Inc.
- Planning for the congregational Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 26.

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. Due to New Year's Day falling on the first Wednesday, we meet only on January 15. All are welcome – come when you are able, leave when you must. For more info., 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 Room by Emma Donoghue. Readers, please secure your own copy of this book. The group will meet in the church library at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 28, to share and discuss the book. For more info contact Tifanii Dahl, 632-8207.

Women's Martha Circle:

“In Good Company:

Stories of Biblical Women”

Session 5: Abigail, a Calm Strategist

The Martha Circle meets Monday, January 20, 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 5, at 10:30 a.m.

Preschool/PreKindergarten children meet in their classrooms along with teachers and helpers. Please remember to take your child to the restroom before class and sign in to the information book when you bring your child. Thank you!

Kindergarten-Fifth Grade begin a new rotation – “Jesus is Baptized.” Baptism is a gift from God, given to us in love. The dates for this section are January 5, 12 and 19. Children hear the story of Jesus' Baptism through Storytelling/Games, Cooking and Art learning that we find our place in the family of God through Baptism. All of God's children of any age are welcome to participate. The next rotation is “Calling the Disciples.”

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 together in the Youth Room, then Grades 6-8, and Grades 9-12 meet separately for activities and lessons.



ELCA Facts – Who Are We?

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with about 4 million members in nearly 10,000 congregations across the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

We are the church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace. For us, as the ELCA, this faith comes through the good news of Jesus Christ and gives us the freedom and the courage to wonder, discover and boldly participate in what God is up to in the world.

We are a church that is always being made new, and at the same time, is deeply rooted in Scripture, Lutheran theology and Lutheran confessions. We are also rooted in the vibrant, diverse communities and rich histories of our congregations. It's through these roots that the Holy Spirit guides and nourishes us so that we can be a church that is both resilient and always new.

As of 2012, there were 3,950,924 baptized members in the ELCA. There were 9,533 congregations organized in 65 synods in nine geographic regions.

The ELCA is a diverse church body, becoming more so every day. This church is committed to growing in diversity and strengthening its global, ecumenical and interfaith relationships around the world.

ELCA congregations are led by gifted men and women who have been called by God to serve their community. The ELCA calls both women and men to serve as pastors and lay rostered leaders. Here are some facts about ELCA leaders:

As of Oct. 22, 2012, there were 18,010 leaders on the ELCA roster including 998 associates in ministry, 64 deaconesses, 175 diaconal ministers and 16,773 ordained clergy. In 2012, 23 percent of clergy on the ELCA roster were women. In the

ELCA's eight seminaries, the numbers of women and men preparing for ministry are about equal. About 86 percent of ordained women and 83 percent of ordained men are actively serving in congregations.

The ELCA offers opportunities for Lutheran education at every level and considers education as an important part of our calling. We offer quality education at every level through our institutions. In addition to the eight ELCA seminaries and two seminary extension centers, there are 26 colleges and universities, 50 or more lifelong learning programs, 14 high schools, 296 elementary schools, 1,573 early childhood programs, 145 camp and retreat centers serving 450,000 annually.

The ELCA is committed to making the world a more just and peaceful place to live. Through programs, ministries and partnerships ELCA congregations, synods and the churchwide organization work every day to address inequities in political, economic and social systems and to end conflict and violence all over the world. We are a church that believes God is calling us into the world – together. This is Christ's church. There is a place for you here.

See more at: <http://www.elca.org/>



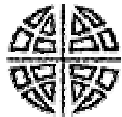
A Look at Our Ministry Together in the NE MN Synod of the ELCA

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, 138 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)
- ✦ 26 ELCA colleges and universities
- ✦ in 2008, supported 49 new congregations and 33 under development
- ✦ 14 high schools, 296 elementary schools, and 1573 early childhood programs ("Children First" Christian preschool is one!)
- ✦ 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:

- ✦ 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.

~~*~*~*~* **Mission Life** *~*~*~*~*~*

HELPS, Intl. Medical Mission

Dear Fellow Servants,

In March of 2014, I will travel to Guatemala on a medical mission trip with HELPS, Intl. The group will provide medical care to the Guatemalan people. I am asking for your support through prayer and through financial donations. Checks made payable to HELPS, Intl are tax deductible and will receive a written receipt. Donations can be dropped off in the church office. Thank you to the congregation for the gift of support from the 2013 Mission Plan and to those who have already given a donation.

Dave Hoadley, 632-2758

**Souper Bowl of Caring
Sunday, February 2**

Join with others around the nation in a simple act of caring. On Sunday, February 2, youth will hold large soup pots in the Gathering Space and ask worshippers for one-dollar (or greater!) donations to be sent to a local charity. In 2011, 15,835 groups of young people including those at First Lutheran, donated over \$9 million to local charities! Thanks for your support!

*Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another
with whatever gift each of you has received. 1 Peter 4:10*

Thank you!

- ♥ First Lutheran Church participated in ‘Making a Joyful Noise’ fundraiser at Coborn’s for the Morrison County Foodshelf in December. Dollars raised support hungry in the community. Thank you to those who ‘made noise’ at Coborn’s, to Ron Hinnenkamp for coordinating the project, and to all who supported this effort through your donations!
- ♥ First Lutheran helps to deliver Meals on Wheels in the community on a rotating schedule with other churches and civic groups. Thank you to those who assisted their neighbors in the community who are homebound by delivering meals during the week of Thanksgiving. First’s next week to deliver is February 3-7, 2014. If you can help with this caring opportunity, please contact the church office.
- ♥ Morrison County Salvation Army chapter provided red kettle bell ringers throughout the days of December. Funds raised stay in the community to assist those in need during the coming year. If you took a shift to ring the bell, thank you!
- ♥ Thank you to all who use their time, talents and treasure to serve one another in ways both small and large. The smallest, quiet act of kindness may make the biggest difference in the life of another. Thank you for all you do daily in the love of our Lord.
- ♥ Thank you for your continued support of the Angel Tree Project. Because of your caring and commitment, over 100 Morrison County families will know the true peace of Christ this holiday season. Thank you for making the difference in the life of a child.
Sincerely, Annalee VanDenheuvel

"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 and Christmas family traditions. Our field trips this month were especially fulfilling. Preschoolers participated in a Nativity Pageant complete with costumes and speaking parts during the trip to St. Otto's Care Center. Classes made Christmas projects and sang Christmas songs with the residents of St. Otto's and Bridgeway Estates. Handshakes and hugs were plentiful!

Thank you to all who assisted with the Little Falls community Santa Parade float, "His Presence Warms Our Hearts," and the "Tree of Giving" at the Minnesota Fishing Museum Christmas Tree Lane.

Classes resume on January 6 and 7, 2014 with themes of snow and polar animals, dinosaurs, ocean fun and beach day, germs and our bodies. Please be sure to send boots, snow pants and mittens with your child. The preschoolers go outside on every possible nice day!

"Children First" Christian Preschool continues to welcome new preschoolers pending class

openings. 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. Families with children ages 33 months-PreKindergarten are encouraged to stop by to visit the classroom. Please contact Gail Hittesdorf, Preschool staff, or First Lutheran Church office for more information.

Thank you to all who have participated in the "Gifting Campaign" to date. We have a goal of raising \$4,000 for classroom supplies and for support for outreach ministry to St. Otto's Care Center and Bridgeway Estates. We have raised \$1,008.50 toward the goal. Gifting Campaign forms are available on the gathering space table or see Gail for more information.

Thank you to all who have blessed "Children First" Christian Preschool in 2013, with financial giving, giving of time and talents, tuition support, and including the school in your prayers. We appreciate you! God's Blessings!

Happy New Year!

Yours in Christ's Service,
Gail Hittesdorf, Director

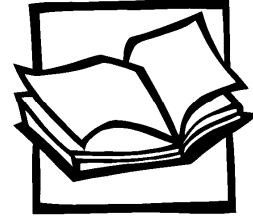


Confirmation Ministries

Fourth Grade: Four week class on Holy Baptism meets on Wednesdays, January 8 through January 29, 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.

Seventh Grade: Ten Commandments class begins Wednesday, January 8 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!

Eighth Grade: Old Testament class meets Wednesdays, January 8 through January 29. Pastor Dave will teach this class. A Study Bible is used in 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!



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

News of the Family



Kohn John Anderson, son of Todd and Lyndsey Anderson, was baptized on December 29.

Sydney Jane Sittko, daughter of Austin and Lindsey (Anderson) Sittko, was baptized on December 29.

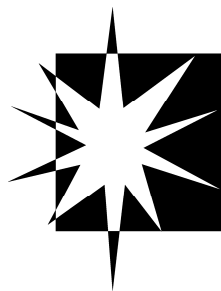
Welcome to the family of God!



Beatrice M. Nelson died on December 22, 2013. Her funeral service was held at First Lutheran on December 27. 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 6, 2014. Annual Reports will be available for review on January 12, 2014.



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 20, 2014!**