



First Lutheran Church
Annual Meeting
Sunday, January 25, 2015

*Following the 10:30 a.m. Service
Share a fellowship meal
child care will be provided*

- Election of Council members, voting members, and other leadership positions
- Adoption of 2015 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:

*Four individuals each to a 3-year term
One individual to a 2-year term*

Lay voting members to

Heartland Conference Gathering, date to be determined
and

NE Minnesota Synod Assembly, Friday-Sunday, May 1-3, 2015
at Breezy Point Resort

*Three voting members
Three alternates*

Lay voting members to

Luther Crest Bible Camp Annual Meeting in October 2015:
three voting members

2016 Nominating Committee:

three members to be elected

Stumpf Memorial Scholarship:

One person to coordinate a group of five to select scholarship recipients

Please plan to attend this important meeting. Share in a fellowship lunch following the 10:30 a.m. service. Child care will be provided. Annual Reports will be available at the church for review before the Annual Meeting.

Pastor Hank's Article
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Notes from Pastor Hank:

A very happy and blessed New Year to you all (although we are still in the 12-day long season of Christmas)!

At the start of this New Year, the 12 days of Christmas will lead us to Epiphany, the season of light when we celebrate the light that is Jesus—that great light that has come into the world, the light that is the life of all people, the light that the darkness can neither comprehend nor overcome. The scripture calls Jesus the Light of the World; Jesus calls his followers the Light of the World:

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).

If there was ever a time when the world needs the light that we can shine in the darkness of hatred, greed, injustice, violence and unrestrained power, it is now. And the more we come to realize and experience the presence of God within us, the brighter that light will be. So my prayer for all of you in this New Year is continued growth—spiritual growth, a continual deepening of your relationship with God, an ongoing transformation of your life through the power of God's Spirit, the steady brightening of the light you bring to a world that desperately needs it.

2015 will be an important and challenging year for First Lutheran as we get ourselves ready to call and welcome a new pastor. And although I have no idea who that new pastor will be, I already feel good for him or her. He or she will become the pastor of a great church full of great people who are doing great things in the service of Jesus. In the five months I have been with you, I have come to deeply appreciate who you are and what you do and how you do it. Our new pastor will come to a

church grounded in Christ, confident in its ministries, eager for pastoral leadership to help chart our future as we seek to follow Jesus in the Way of God in this time and place. It is a good, an exciting time to be a part of First Lutheran Church.

Of course, the first step toward the future of First Lutheran is to find the right pastor to walk with us toward that future. The process will get started this month with a joint council and staff retreat on January 17th. We will gather at Bethel Lutheran Church to start the process of discerning where God wants to take us and what kind of pastoral leadership we will need to get there. If you have any insights, questions or concerns as the call process gets underway, don't hesitate to talk with me, with Stephanie Adams, president of the congregation, or with any member of the council or staff. We want this to be a congregational process and not just the process of a few and your input and feedback will be welcomed.

And that includes "snowbirds." We miss your presence each Sunday and pray that your winter in a warmer climate is going well. Even if you are not here as we begin the call process, your voice is important to the process. If you have any insights, questions or concerns about the process feel free to call (320-279-0647) or email me (hfrench@flclittlefalls.org) or call (320-632-3058) or email (snladams@msn.com) congregational president Stephanie Adams. We seriously want to hear from you. Whoever our new pastor is, he or she will be pastor to the whole congregation and everyone in the congregation deserves a voice in the process of calling that pastor.

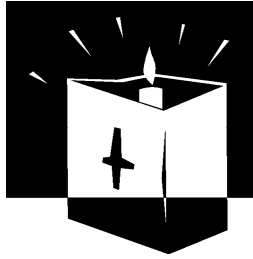
So, if you welcome the New Year next Wednesday night with a toast, be sure to raise a toast to First Lutheran. In the grace of God and in the strength of your faith and service, it is going to be a good year for this good church.

WORSHIP LIFE



Second Sunday of Christmas January 4 8:30 and 10: a.m. worship

Regular worship times continue on the Second Sunday of Christmas, January 4. 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!

Thank You

Thank you for the prayers, kind words, and concern you have expressed following the death of our mom, Mary Jane Wolters. Thank you also for the beautiful plant you gave in her memory. Your kindness has meant so much and will not be forgotten.

Janet and Steve Beseman and family



Worship Serving Opportunities Signup for 2015

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.*



Council Highlights

- Heard that a Retreat for Council and Staff is scheduled for Saturday, January 17.
- Accepted with regret the resignation of Kathy Pederson as Choir Director effective December 31.
- Approved hiring Barb Stumpf as Choir Director effective January 1.
- Heard that the Nominating Committee is searching for candidates for leadership positions for 2015.
- Planning for the congregational Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 25.

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 only on January 7 and 21. All are welcome – come when you are able, leave when you must. For more info., contact Pastor Hank.

Women's Winter Bible Study

Watch for information about a new women's study beginning Wednesdays in January. 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 Diary of Mattie Spenser by Sandra Dallas. 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 27, to share and discuss the book. For more info contact Tifanii Dahl, 632-8207.

Women's Martha Circle: "Transforming Life and Faith"

Session 5: Repent and Forgive

The Martha Circle meets Monday, January 19, 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 4, at 9:35 a.m. in the sanctuary for opening music. Thank you to Debra Yliniemi-Ahlin, Camilla Larson, and Becky Nelson for leading the songs each week.

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 – "Isaiah." The dates for this section are January 4, 11 and 18. Long before Jesus was born, people hoped for the coming of the Messiah. Jesus, the fulfillment of God's promise, was God's way of connecting hope and peace to God's people. Children hear the story of Isaiah through Storytelling/Games, Cooking and Crafts. All of God's children of any age are welcome to participate. If you would like to experience this theme as a leader, please contact Amber Sobiech in the church office or at 616-9626. Thank you to those who led the last rotation.

Thank you to all who assisted with the Christmas program, "A Christmas Story to Believe In." Whether you led the singing, helped with direction and rehearsal, had a speaking part, sang, arranged costumes, assisted with fellowship, helped in any way, and came to the program, you are all appreciated! Thank you!

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 2013, there were 3,863,133 baptized members in the ELCA. There were 9,464 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 Sept. 1, 2014, there were 17,777 leaders on the ELCA roster including 981 associates in ministry, 61 deaconesses, 192 diaconal ministers and 16,543 ordained clergy. In 2013, 24 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/>



* * * * * **Mission Life** * * * * *

**Equal Exchange
Fair Trade Products**

First Lutheran purchases coffee, tea, hot cocoa, and other Equal Exchange fair trade food items through Lutheran World Relief. We serve this coffee at all congregational fellowship times and events. Anyone is welcome to purchase from the inventory in the church office for their own use or for gifts. What a great way to support farmers around the world to make better lives for themselves and to treat the earth kindly through environmentally sound growing practices. Single-serve cups in completely recyclable packaging are now available. Thank you 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*

**Souper Bowl of Caring
Sunday, February 1**

Join with others around the nation in a simple act of caring. On Sunday, February 1, 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 hunger 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!

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 January 5-9, 2015. If you can help with this caring opportunity, please contact the church office.
- ♥ Thank you to all who provided food and/or prepared and served Share A Meal on Thursday, December 18. This ongoing food

and fellowship ministry is important to so many in the community.

- ♥ 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

Another year has passed and we think of making resolutions for the New Year. Many people resolve to lose weight, to exercise more, and to eat more healthily. All of these are good resolutions but the New Year is a wonderful time to consider our overall health and to set goals to improve our spiritual health as well. Our God is a God who restores our health. God gives us life—life in abundance, and just as God restores our health, God calls us to care for our own health and the health of our communities.

Before you make your resolutions this year you may want to ask yourself these questions. What are some ways you want to be healthy this year? What helps your body and spirit remain as healthy as possible? What good thing is God doing in your life right now?

Consider adding spiritual health to your life and increasing your overall health in these ways:

Loving God and neighbor. Surrendering to God leads us to a life of love. God is love, and when we live and serve in Christ, we experience God's love ourselves and others experience God's love through us.

Serving others. Re-orienting our attitude away from our self keeps us on the right track. Following Jesus in serving others heightens our own experience of grace.

Fellowship with other believers. Building and being part of a Christian community equips us for sharing and caring both within and beyond that community. The values of God's kingdom are different than those of the world, so we need the support and encouragement of other believers in order to truly live as Christians in our daily lives.

It is always great to have goals toward becoming more physically healthy. I run with a running group, I ski, and I love to swim. I need to exercise at least three times a week to feel good and to have energy throughout my day, and it is good for my

cardiac health. I have not always worked as much on my spiritual health. It is then that I feel unhealthy. When I include loving God, serving others, and fellowship with other believers then I begin to feel healthy as a whole.

I encourage you all in 2015 to love, serve and support one another. Shovel your neighbor's walk, call a hurting friend, visit a senior who may not get many visitors, and encourage your friends, and those who will become your friends. You may find that New Year's resolutions are quite rewarding.

O Lord, by these things people live, and in all these is the life of my spirit. O restore me to health and make me live!
Isaiah 38:16

Short-term Respite Care Volunteers

First Lutheran's Commission for Health and Parish Nurse, Tracy Moe are gathering names of those who could share a few hours of time to provide respite for family caregivers. Volunteers would be present with the family member for one or two hours so the caregiver could be away for appointments or other needs. Contact Parish Nurse, Tracy Moe or the church office to volunteer. Thank you!

Marriage Enrichment Retreat

Luther Crest Bible Camp hosts this retreat by LifeWorks on Friday-Saturday, January 23-24, 2015. Any married couple looking to spend some quality time together and learn new ways to enhance their lives together is welcome to attend this retreat. For more information, contact the church office or check out www.luthercrest.org.

"Children First" Christian Preschool

Greetings,

January is here! December was a month of Christmas preparation and celebration. The children celebrated the month with music and parades. They learned about the Nativity Story and enjoyed a Christmas movie and popcorn on pajama day. 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, and the "Tree of Giving" at the Minnesota Fishing Museum Christmas Tree Lane.

Classes resume on January 5 and 6, 2014 with themes of snow and polar animals, dinosaurs, ocean fun and beach day, and ABCs. 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 \$5,000 for classroom supplies and for support for outreach ministry to St. Otto's Care Center and Bridgeway Estates. We have raised \$1,650.00 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 2014, 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

Labels for Learning

Thank you for saving Coborn's/CashWise Food Club Points for "Children First" Christian Preschool. Check your cash register receipt for the printed points at the end of your receipt. Cut off the points section and place in the box in the gathering space or the preschool entry area. Or you can bring your entire receipt and we will cut it for you. These points help the preschool to earn dollars for supplies and other needs. Thank you!

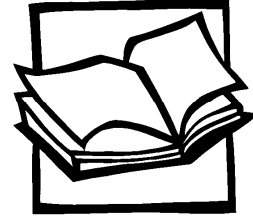


Confirmation Ministries

Fourth Grade: Four week class on Holy Baptism meets on Wednesdays, January 7 through January 28, 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 7 at 7:00 p.m. and continues through January 28. 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 7 through January 28. Pastor Hank 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



Alexander James Culbertson, son of Jeremy and Lisa Culbertson was baptized on December 7.

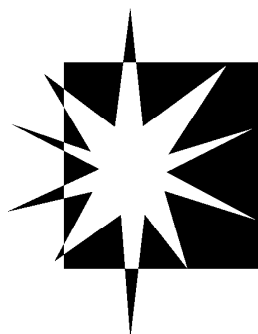
Welcome to the family of God!



Ronna Leone Flesner died on December 7, 2014. Her funeral service was held at First Lutheran on December 12. 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 2, 2015.



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, 2015!**