

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Hank French, Pastor

FIRST



“Servants of All”

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July 2015, Newsletter

June 29, 2015



Vacation Bible School

Everest!

“Conquering Challenges
with God’s Mighty Power”

August 3-7, 2015

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

Did you know that Mount Everest is far away in Asia, and at its highest point it is 5.5 miles high—that is 2,240 stories tall! Plan to come over to Base Camp and get ready to ‘hold on’ as Trek Rockrambler and the Sherpas guide each Climbing Crew on the mountain at Vacation Bible School.

Youth and adults will explore the Bible and learn that: God has the power to provide, the power to comfort, the power to heal, the power to forgive, and the power to love us forever—*hold on!* We will start the day at Base Camp Sing and Play, then kids will have fun with *Glacier Games*, enjoy a movie at *KidVid Cinema*, have a *Bible Expedition*, make a project at the *Imagination Station*, and have a snack at *Mountaintop Treats*. Everyone is welcome to come and wrap up the day at *the Summit Celebration!*

This year’s VBS will be a joint effort of First Lutheran and First United Churches. To register, your child must be 3 years old (by September 1, 2014) through 6th grade. You may pick up a registration form at church or you can find the form on the church web-site, www.flclittlefalls.org. Registration is free; you are encouraged to register your child even if they may not attend every day. Your advance registration helps us have adequate supplies for each child.

If you are interested in helping with VBS, there are many fun ways for you to get involved. You can participate for the full week or for part of the week. Thanks to all who have volunteered to date. See the sign up board in the gathering space or talk to one of the coordinators. Check out the ‘supply board’ in the gathering space to assist with providing supplies for the week, there are many ways to be involved and all are important—thank you!

For more information about Vacation Bible School contact one of the coordinators, they are: Caitlin Skluzacek, 320-333-9450, and Amber Sobiech, 616-9626 (First Lutheran), and Diane Spillum (First United). Come and ‘hold on’ to God!

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Notes from Pastor Hank

You know the old saying—*it's good to get away, but it is also always good to come home again.* That was my and Bobbi's experience when we took a three week vacation to Cape Cod in June. We had a great time driving across our beautiful country to Massachusetts. And then we had a spectacular time on the beaches, exploring the small towns on the Cape and eating lots and lots of delicious seafood. It was like returning to my roots for me—I grew up in Massachusetts—but it was Bobbi's first time on Cape Cod. So we had a great time, and then we drove home—back to Little Falls and First Lutheran and it felt good to be back among the familiar, among friends. Thanks to all of you who prayed for a safe journey for us and a time of genuine refreshment. It is appreciated.

A lot to pray about and to help out with in July. For the week of July 6, we will have several 7th graders at the Luther Crest Bible camp. Pray for safety, for learning, for fun.

From July 11 to July 20, several of our High School kids will be participating in the ELCA Youth Gathering in Detroit. Pray for safety, for learning, for fun. May all of our youth grow in their faith as they engage in these summer activities.

On July 11, Dave Hoadley and Kathy Engbloom will be married at First Lutheran. Pray that their life together would be blessed by the God who is love.

On August 1, First Lutheran will provide a team of painters for the annual Paint-a-Thon. Pray that many turn out for this good cause in our community.

VBS is coming up from August 3 to August 7. Pray for lots of kids to participate, for lots of teachers and helpers—and if God is nudging you to be one of those teachers or helpers, give Amber a call at the church and sign up. Join the fun?

We still need folks to help with worship in July—ushers, greeters, readers, communion servers. If you will be in church on any Sunday in July, consider helping out. If you have never done anything like this before, summer time is a good time to give it a try. Sign-up sheets are in the Gathering Space. *For more information, see the article on page 3.*

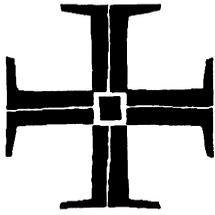
Last Sunday was the first day of summer. Be safe and enjoy it. Winter is coming!

Pastor Hank



Council Highlights

- Heard that the window replacement in the Education Wing hall was completed.
- Heard that the main entrance sidewalk will be repaired to eliminate settling.
- Heard that the Sunday, May 31 event received a positive response.
- The special offering received on Pentecost Sunday, May 24 for mortgage principal reduction is \$2,785 to date. Your offerings to this cause are still welcome.



Financial Update

Thank you to all who faithfully contribute to our shared ministry at First Lutheran Church!

Summer finds many of us traveling and vacationing. Mission and ministry continue here at First Lutheran. We appreciate your mail-in offerings when you are unable to be in worship.

Watch your mailbox for your giving statement for the first six months of 2015. Please review your statement for accuracy and contact Sue or Gloria in the church office should you have questions.

You are welcome to participate in an electronic funds transfer giving plan, Simply Giving. Simply Giving ® allows you to automate your giving. This benefits First Lutheran by ensuring regular giving throughout the year and benefits the giver with ease of use. First Lutheran covers the nominal fee per transaction. Thank you to the recent new enrollees. Please see Sue or Gloria in the church office to enroll.

Congregational Directory

A lot can happen in five years! Five years ago we printed a church directory. A quick look at that directory will reveal that it is out-of-date. Some people have entered our congregation and are missing from the directory; others are no longer with us. Our mission and ministry have evolved. All of this is a sign that it is time for a new directory in our technologically advanced age. We are looking for organized and innovative people to serve our congregation and explore options for a church directory. Interested? Need more information? Willing to sign up for this venture? Please contact Mary Pfohl at 632-4760 or the church office at 632-6667.

Welcoming others...

The first time you walked in the door at First Lutheran Church, did someone welcome you?

Did you receive a handshake and a “Good morning”? Did you enjoy a cup of coffee or a treat? Did someone give you information about worship, or help you find a seat? Did your children find a safe and welcoming place to play? Did you hear God’s Good News spoken in a living and loving way? Did you receive the Lord’s Supper along with the rest of the community?

If the answer to any of these questions is “Yes,” you are encouraged to pass that welcome on – to join the effort to welcome others to worship. And if the answer to any of these questions is “No,” then it is *even more important* that you help to welcome others in Jesus’ name.

What can you do? Through the signup system, *every worshiper at First* has the chance to greet, usher, read Scripture, set up/clean up coffee/refreshments, set up or serve Communion, or provide volunteer child care. By serving in an area where you are gifted, you can help every worshiper to feel welcome. And scheduling is easy – because you sign up for one (or more!) Sunday at a time, you can be sure that you are available for the specific dates you will serve.

Signup sheets for the coming month are always posted on the counter in the Gathering Space, and you are invited to sign up at any time. If you’re not able to come to church to sign up, you may call the church office (632-6667) or Amber Sobiech (volunteer coordinator) to sign up. If you need more information or training, please mention it when you sign up and you will be contacted.

Thank you for the welcome you provide to others in the name of Christ.

Call Committee Update

Your Call Committee continues to meet and seek discernment from the Holy Spirit as we search for a pastor for First Lutheran Church.

For each pastoral candidate we receive a Rostered Leader Profile (extensive resume). Once the Profile has been reviewed we discern whether we will proceed with reference information from the synod bishop, interview, further reference checks, and visit to the pastor's home congregation. Our discernment relies on prayer, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the tools of our congregation's needs, hopes, and mission as articulated in the Ministry Site Profile, and thoughtful discussions as a Call Committee.

At the time of this writing (mid-June), we have prayerfully considered five pastoral candidates. Our process has entailed:

- Review of the Rostered Leader Profile for each candidate,
- Interviews for three of the five with one interview scheduled for late June,
- Reference reviews for three of the five candidates, and
- Visit to the home congregation of two candidates to hear preaching and observe relationships with the congregational

members. We have reviewed one video recording a sermon and children's sermon for a third candidate.

After prayerful and thoughtful consideration, we have determined one candidate would not be a good "fit" for First Lutheran Church.

We recognize and appreciate your interest and commitment in the work you have assigned to us. Your questions and comments are welcome keeping in mind we can respond to question regarding our process but not about candidates. The members of our Call Committee are Doug Anderson, Matt Dahl, Willard Doucette, Darrell Larsen, Camilla Larson, Monica Makela, Cassie Neumann, Mary Pfohl, Will Riitters, and Liz Rydeen.

The prayers and support of the congregation are needed as we continue to discern who will receive the pastoral call to our church. We also ask for your prayers that the Spirit will touch each candidate with whom we meet.

Submitted in Christ's Peace,

Mary Pfohl
Call Committee Chairperson

Commission for Congregational Life Report

On May 31, at our Fifth Sunday Gathering, approximately 60 members responded to the invitation to "Come and See." We shared breakfast and fellowship time. During fellowship time, Jay Kiel guided us into deeper exploration of the discipleship practice of *invitation*. We shared our experiences of being invited and saw the ways which Jesus extended *invitation* to his disciples and to us. The theme of *invitation* was carried into the 10:30 worship service. The morning was a wonderful celebration.

Deepest thanks are extended to those who stepped forward to serve: Jerry and Cassie Neumann, Heidi Sassen, Lucy Dale, John Freudenrich, Ted Pfohl, Rose Surma, Annalee VanDenheuvel, Jeff and Stephanie Doty, Mike and Nancy Ratzloff, and Jay Kiel. And one additional thank you is extended to the Council who supported this new idea.

In God's peace,
The Commission for Congregational Life

**Is your passion or your hobby quilting or golf?
Here are some ways to enjoy your pastime and benefit others at the same time:**

**Luther Crest Bible Camp
Quilts for Camp Extravaganza
held at Carlos Creek Winery
Saturday, October 17**

Once again Luther Crest is partnering with Carlos Creek Winery's Fall Apple Fest event with over 5,000 participants. Apple Fest begins at 11:00 a.m. with fun events such as: pumpkin carving, pumpkin chucking with catapults and trebuchets, pie eating contest, live music, and more. Quilt viewing begins at noon in the barn. There will be silent auction, artisan crafts for sale, wine tasting, live quilt auction begins at 2:00 p.m. If you or someone you know would like to contribute a quilt or other artisan handcraft item (woodwork, pottery, etc.) please contact the church office. This event will be fun for the entire family all day long! Food and beverages will be available to purchase throughout the day. Carlos Creek Winery is located at 6693 County Rd 34 NW, Alexandria, near Luther Crest. Let's support the Bible Camp at this event!

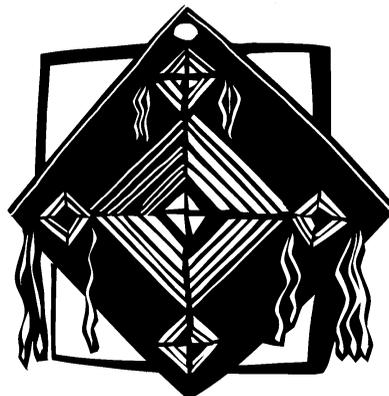
**Camp Knutson
29th Annual Quilt Auction
Saturday, August 8**

Quilt lovers—Unique quilts from throughout Minnesota including a quilt from the First's quilters will be auctioned to benefit children with heart disease, Down syndrome, severe skin diseases, autism, and HIV or AIDS. Quilt viewing begins at 10:00 a.m. the auction begins at 12 noon. The auction is sponsored by Lutheran Social Service and the LSS Paul Bunyan Regional Auxiliary.

**The Fourteenth Annual Golf Scramble
To benefit the ministry at
Luther Crest Bible Camp
Monday, August 10**

Why not get a foursome together and spend a fun day playing this "Best Ball" tournament on the course at Lake Miltona Golf Course, Alexandria. Registration begins at 11:30 a.m.; sack lunch at 12:30 p.m., "shotgun start" tee time is at 1:00 p.m. Supper will be served at Lake Miltona at 5:00 p.m. The fee of \$100.00 per person covers green fees, cart rental, and meal. You are encouraged to give a gift in support of Luther Crest at this event.

Past tournaments have made a significant impact on the camp's ministry. To register, call the church office, 632-6667.



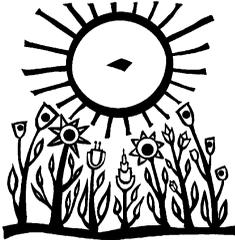
**Camp Onomia Quilt Auction
Saturday, September 19**

This auction to support Camp Onomia Bible Camp on Lake Shakopee near Onamia is Saturday, September 19. Quilt viewing begins at 11:00 a.m., auction begins at 1:00 p.m. Special camp rates are available if you wish to spend Friday night at camp. For more information or to register, call the camp at 320-532-3767.

Mission News

Morrison County Relay for Life 2015

Relay for Life is Friday, July 17, to Saturday, July 18 at Flyer Field. This annual event supports the American Cancer Society. Proceeds benefit cancer patients in the area. You can purchase and decorate a luminary bag in honor or in memory of a loved one. Several First Lutheran members are walking in the relay. Watch for luminary bags available at church.



Home Delivered Meals August 10-14

First Lutheran participates in the Home Delivered Meals program locally. Together with other groups in the community we share the delivery of meals a week at a time. Our next dates to deliver meals are Monday-Friday, August 10-14. Volunteers meet at the Buckman building at 9:45 a.m., you will pick up the meals and deliver to the assigned route. You'll be done between 11:00-11:30 a.m. This is a valuable service that assists people to remain in their homes. If you or someone you know would consider being First Lutheran's coordinator for this servant opportunity, please call the church office at 632-6667. Thank you!



Oasis/Share A Meal Community Paint A Thon Saturday, August 1

Can you spend a Saturday morning helping to paint a home for a local resident? This annual event is a great time to assist our brothers and sisters in Christ right here in our own community. Confirmation students—perhaps you and your mentor will want to use this for your service project. This is a BYOB (Bring Your Own Brush!) event. Contributions toward the cost of paint and materials are welcome, please write "Paint A Thon" in the memo line of your check. For more information, call coordinators Jerome and Karen Haaland at 632-8828, or the church office, 632-6667.

Morrison County Food Shelf

Your contributions and food donations to the Morrison County Food Shelf are encouraged and needed year round. You can bring your non-perishable food items to church. Please do not bring outdated items.

Don't forget the Food Shelf when you have excess produce from your garden. Please make arrangements directly with the Food Shelf for these items. The Food Shelf is located near Bethel Lutheran Church at 912 First Avenue SW, Little Falls. Food Shelf hours are Tuesday and Wednesday, 10:00 a.m. to noon, Thursday 6:00-8:00 p.m. For more information call 632-8304.

Music and Worship Article

written by Paula Monahan

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” James 1:17

It's impossible to be thankful and, at the same time, grumpy, cantankerous, critical or ill-tempered. That's a lesson Johnson Oatman, Jr. wanted to teach people in his song, 'Count Your Blessings.' Johnson was born in New Jersey just before the Civil War. His father had a powerful voice. That's why, as a boy, Johnson Jr. always wanted to stand beside his father in church. (Note: I can relate to that! I loved sitting beside my own dad in church and when I'd rest my head on his shoulder, his beautiful bass voice would vibrate in my head! It was wonderful.)

“In 1892, with his father's voice undoubtedly ringing in his memory, Johnson began writing hymns. He averaged 200 hymns and gospel songs a year—5000 during the course of his lifetime, including this one, 'Count Your Blessings.' It reflected Johnson's optimistic faith, and has been a lesson to many ever since.”

This was the favorite of the First Lutheran Choir for many years. We sang it more times than I can

count and never once was it sung without smiles and laughs and pure joy!

“When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings,
name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

“Are you ever burdened with a load of care,
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear.
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,
And you will be singing as the days go by.

“So amid the conflict, whether great or small,
Do not be discouraged, God is over all.
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

Chorus:

“Count your blessings name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your many blessings
see what God has done!”

Portions adapted from the book “Then Sings My Soul” by Robert J. Morgan.





**Green Fair Folk Festival
at St. Francis Campus**

Wednesday, August 5, 4:00-8:00 p.m.

This outdoor event sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls is a free family-friendly event that promotes a healthy and sustainable lifestyle. The evening will include exhibitors featuring organic foods, renewable energy, green building, recycled/green art, fashion, eco-gifts and earth friendly products plus music, food, activities for kids, and much more. The 2014 festival included over 50 exhibitors and more than 900 attendees. First Lutheran will again have a space at the fair—A few people (young and old) will make balloon animals—they're always a big hit! "Children First" preschool will sponsor a Stuffed Animal Clinic and Adoption Center. Bike or walk to the fair if you can and gather to enjoy, learn and see many local favorites and use these wonderful opportunities to enhance our care for the planet and make our world a better place for all. For more information, check the web at www.fslf.org/pages/GreenFair.

Thank you!

Thank you so much for the use of your facilities! The volunteers commented about the central location of the church in our region for our annual celebration. The Region Three Girl Scout staff and volunteers appreciate your generosity.
Sincerely,
Bonnie Reeves, Volunteer Specialist, Girl Scouts

Library Corner

Summer is a great time to read! There are several new additions to the library. Come and check out a book or video for learning and enjoyment. We appreciate your return of items when you have finished them. Thanks!

Book Club

All adult readers are welcome to read with this group. The selection for July is My Salinger Year by Joanna Rakoff. Readers, please secure your own copy of the book. The group will meet in the church library on Tuesday, July 28, at 7:00 p.m. to share and discuss the month's book. The August selection is The Love Song of Miss Queenie Hennessy by Rachel Joyce. For more information, contact Tifanii Dahl, 632-8207.

"Speaking of Being Mortal"

**Friday, September 18, 7:00 p.m.
At St Paul RiverCentre Ballroom**

World-renowned author and surgeon Dr. Atul Gawande presents a conversation that will transform the way we think about end-of-life care. Dr. Gawande was recently included in Time magazine's list of the Top 100 Most Influential Speakers. Registrations are limited and are \$35 each which includes a copy of Dr. Gawande's book Being Mortal. To register, go to www.mnhpc.org.

This event is sponsored by Minnesota Hospice and Palliative Care and CentraCare Health. For more information, contact Parish Nurse Tracy Moe.

Youth Ministry:

**Registration for
Sunday Sunday School, age 3-grade 12
Confirmation, grades 2-11
Youth Groups, grades 3-12**

Parents of children ages 3 years – 12th grade: Watch your mail this month for a mailing on Education & Youth Ministry for the coming year. Registration and health forms for kids, and list of opportunities for adults to work with youth, will be included. Please note that registration is required each year for participation in Education and Youth Activities. Additional forms will be available in the church office or on the church web-site at www.flclittlefalls.org.

Confirmation Ministries

Sixth Grade: During the week of Vacation Bible School (August 3-7), youth entering seventh grade in the fall will be studying the Lord's Prayer. Watch for a letter containing more information about this class.



Vacation Bible School Mission Project

Each year as a part of VBS week, the youth, adults and congregations are invited to participate in an outreach mission project. This year we will collect items for 'Operation Backpack.' Donations of backpacks (new or gently used), school supplies, or money for supplies are welcome and encouraged. In prior years we have given many filled backpacks to nine area schools for distribution to children in need. The summer months are a good time to purchase school supplies at reasonable prices. Your contributions to this project are appreciated. You can bring donations to the church office at any time. Thank you!

"Children First" Christian Preschool

Preschool enrollment continues for the 2015-2016 school year. There are limited openings available in all classes Please consider registering your child early. Registration forms are available in the gathering space at church or on the church website. A \$60.00 registration/activity fee is required at the time of registration. For more information, you may call Gail at 320-291-4698 or the church office at 632-6667.

Watch for "Children First" at the Green Fair Folk Festival, at St. Francis Campus grounds on Wednesday, August 5, 4:00-8:00 p.m.

Enjoy the Summer and God's Blessings!

Yours in Christ's Service,
Gail Hittesdorf, Director



Can Care Collection

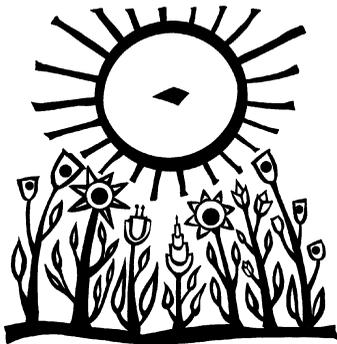
Recycling is one way to save the earth. Bring your empty cans to the church secured in a plastic bag—you can leave them next to the garage door. This on-going fundraiser provides money for youth activities.

Keep saving those aluminum cans! Thanks!

News of the Family



Raelynn Sophia Kiel, daughter of Jay and Stephanie Kiel, was baptized on June 21. May God's blessings shine on this new member of the family of God.



Summer Worship Schedule

Sunday Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.

Summer Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. continues through July and August. Stay after the 8:30 a.m. service, or come early for the 10:30 service, for coffee (leaded and unleaded!), beverages, treats and fellowship in the Gathering Space. Everyone is welcome! See you in church!

Items for the **August NEWSLETTER** are due on **July 20, 2015!**