

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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“Servants of All”

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May, 2012, Newsletter

June 12, 2012

World Malaria Day 2012



ELCA Malaria Campaign
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Help Launch Work in Liberia

Malaria is a preventable and treatable disease and is a leading cause of death in Africa, claiming the life of a child every 60 seconds. Malaria accounts for well over 800,000 deaths every year. In Liberia, malaria accounts for 30 percent of all deaths seen in hospitals.

Since the launch of the ELCA Malaria Campaign last year, Lutheran churches in Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe are working to control this disease – distributing mosquito nets and medicine as well as educating communities on prevention. However, we don't yet have the funds to launch this work in Liberia.

Our sisters and brothers in Liberia are ready. They have a large network of Lutheran hospitals, clinics and community leaders that are doing the best they can to serve hundreds of thousands of people. They know what it takes to prevent and treat malaria. But they need our support. The time is now.

World Malaria Day is observed April 25, 2012. The ELCA is using the week of April 25-May 1 to raise \$200,000 – enough to expand the anti-malaria campaign to include Liberia.

On Sunday, April 29, First Lutheran will join with other ELCA congregations across the country to observe World Malaria Day and to receive an offering for this important work. Your prayers, your leadership and your generous donations are needed to continue this good work – God's work – and help our sisters and brothers in Liberia.

You can use the enclosed special envelope to make your donation at church, or you may send directly to the ELCA. Checks made out to First Lutheran Church should have "Malaria" written in the memo line. Thank you for your support of this important global ministry. God's work. Our hands.

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Pastor Tony's Article

A few months ago I had a denominational meeting in Willmar. The meeting was not something I was looking forward to and the drive was even less exciting. To help pass the time I decided to listen to an audio book. I became hooked on audio books when I worked as a hospice chaplain; it was a great way to keep me engaged. Normally, I would listen to fiction books (Neil Gaiman and Christopher Moore were among my favorites) but on my way to the meeting I choose to listen to a more "educational" book: *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith*, by Rob Bell. The book came out a few years ago just before I entered seminary. I had heard a few friends say it was a good book; one I should read. I never did read the book.

Listening to *Velvet Elvis* consumed my attention and helped the time fly; it was a great book. If you have not read it, I would highly recommend getting a copy. In fact, I am picking up a copy so I can I read the book since I only listened to an audio version.

The book is a great read, one that challenges the reader to take a close look at their faith. One of the most central images in book is the image of a trampoline; more specifically the springs on a trampoline. The idea is that our faith, our beliefs, our doctrine, should be like springs. Springs flex, stretch, twist, bend, and are anything but static or one size.

Bell compares a faith where doctrine is like springs in a trampoline (flexible) and faith with doctrine acting more like bricks. Bricks are static, uniform, unyielding, consistent, and are anything but flexible. One of the problems with "brick-ianity" (his term) is that brick can be used to build walls; walls that determine what "I" believe and what "others" must believe to be on the "correct" side of the wall. Another problem is that if one brick needs to be removed, because of false doctrine, the wall is unstable and soon falls. Bricks don't allow for changes in faith or belief; they are static. Springs, on the other hand, can flex and bend. A few springs in a trampoline can even be

removed and examined if necessary; not something that can be done too easily with bricks.

There are some short comings to this analogy, but the core of it remains intact and that is: we don't all have to believe the same thing in order to belong. This is important. It is important to have different opinions, beliefs, or convictions.

At a commission meeting a few months ago, a vote was being taken on pedestrian motion, however it was clear that not everyone felt the same way about the issue. When the vote was taken everyone was in favor of the motion...everyone but one. There was one person who was not in favor of the motion. After the lone objector said "nay," they added something along the lines of "as if it even matters." I was quick to add that "it did matter" and it was important to share all views even when it looked like they might not be all that influential.

Differences in opinions are important especially in a congregation. When congregations have uniform beliefs and views, things can get stagnant and strict; taken to the extreme this can breed an environment where people have to believe a certain way or they are excluded. In churches where differences in beliefs or opinions are welcomed, or even encouraged, people are encouraged to grow. Growth happens when we have conversations about diverging beliefs and we have to support our convictions with sound thinking and we might have to rethink our position. As a result our beliefs either become more refined or change as we might have to rethink our beliefs.

Churches that allow for differing views are healthier places to worship; like First Lutheran Church. I thank God that we have a healthy church where we can have different opinions, beliefs, and convictions; a place where we are all encouraged to grow.

Pastor Tony Oltmann
toltmann@flclittlefalls.org

Council Highlights

- Celebrated the positive feedback from Holy Week and Easter worship and the awesome attendance at worship and events!
- Council respectfully accepted the resignation of Stephanie Kiel as preschool teacher's aide, and of April Kiffmeyer as child care attendant.
- Heard that the offering received from Lenten soup suppers was given to the Morrison County Food Shelf. Thank you for your support of this mission to our neighbors.
- Heard from the Commission for Worship and Congregational Life that the pictorial directories are received and available at church.
- Selected Saturday, May 5 as the date for Roadside Cleanup. Meet at church at 8:00 a.m. for breakfast and travel together to Hwy. 238 to clean our section of the roadway.
- Heard that spring church clean-up is scheduled for Monday, May 7, beginning at 3:30 p.m. *See article on back page.*



Pentecost Sunday Celebration Offering Sunday, May 27

On Pentecost Sunday, June 11, 2000, First Lutheran celebrated the dedication of our "Building to Serve" project. In February of 2001 we closed on a twenty-year mortgage with a principal of \$475,000 and interest rate of 7.25%. After the congregation authorized a re-financing in 2010, our mortgage balance is now approximately \$129,998 with an interest rate of 5.25%. The payoff date for the mortgage is January 2026. Each Pentecost Sunday has been set aside as an opportunity to reduce the principal on our mortgage. The reasoning behind this is simple: we pay down our loan more quickly, pay thousands of dollars less in interest and free up dollars for mission. It's simply a matter of good stewardship. An envelope is available on the greeters' table for this cause. Please give as you are able on Pentecost Sunday, May 27. Thank you for your faithful giving!

Financial Update

Thrivent Choice® is a program that allows Thrivent members to direct charitable giving to the organization of their choosing. Thank you to Thrivent members who designate their Choice dollars to First Lutheran and/or to "Children First" Christian Preschool. These dollars are appreciated!

You are welcome to participate in an electronic funds transfer giving plan, Simply Giving. Automated giving makes giving easy for you and helps the congregation plan by knowing when regular gifts will be received. See Sue or Gloria in the church office to enroll.

Thank you for your faithful support throughout the year!

Ride a Bike to Church Day Sunday, June 3

“In the beginning God
created the heavens and the earth.”
Genesis 1.1

National Bike to Church Day grew out of an effort to encourage members to practice ways to take care of God’s creation, such as bicycling to church. This is an act of stewardship. But, there is so much more to it—it brings us closer to God, closer to our friends, closer to those who don’t believe—and it is an opportunity to encourage fitness. This year we will ride our bikes on two more Sundays (July 29 and August 5) in support of Pastor Dave Sperstad. Pastor Dave plans to bike back to Little Falls after attending the 2012 ELCA National Youth Gathering in New Orleans with the 19 youth from First Lutheran. As Pastor pedals north from New Orleans, we will show our support by biking to worship! This is a ‘warm-up’ to the east/west pedal that Pastor is planning for the summer of 2013. So put some air in your bike tires and get ready to ride!



Here are several things that we can accomplish by biking to church:

- ☺ we can have fellowship with others.
- ☺ we can conserve resources and be wise stewards of creation.
- ☺ we refrain from putting materials into the environment which are harmful.
- ☺ we are keeping our bodies fit.
- ☺ gather your family and friends and ride a bike to church on Sunday, June 3! And/or any Sunday that you are able.

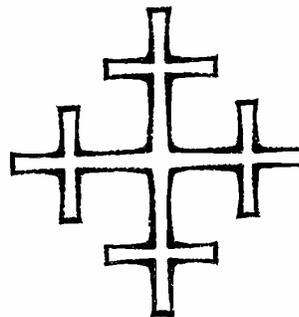
Easter Thanksgivings

Thank you to all the many people who made our Lent, Holy Week and Easter celebrations so meaningful and wonderful:

- † Communion ministers and visitation ministers
- † Musicians: instrumentalists, cantors, praise team, vocalists, and choir
- † Scripture readers
- † Greeters and Ushers and Hospitality ministers
- † Housecleaners, maintenance helpers, and custodian
- † Art teams, banner makers, drape makers and handlers
- † Ministry team and Worship Commission
- † Bakers, soup makers, and breakfast preparers
- † Sacristans and altar guild
- † Child care providers
- † Teachers and educators

- † Plant and flower providers
- † Foot-washers
- † Bulletin folders and office helpers

You are the body of Christ in the world—thanks be to God!



Adult Opportunities

May Martha Circle

**“To Follow and To Serve:
The Gospel of Mark”**

Session 9: Go and Tell

Mark 16:6

The Martha Circle will meet Monday, May 21.
Sylvia Thomasson is the hostess.

Adult Studies and Events

Men’s Bible Study Breakfast

All are welcome to come for breakfast and Bible study! We meet the first and third Wednesday of each month at 6:15 a.m. Come when you can, leave when you must! Pastor Dave leads this study. Contact him for more information.

Cornerstones Potluck (Seniors age 55 and better)

If you enjoy a good meal and fellowship, bring a friend and a food item to share and come for potluck lunch on Tuesday, May 15, at 11:30 a.m. We gather in Stoltz Hall for food, conversation and fun.

Monday Night Study Mondays through May 14, 6:30 p.m.

We gather to read and study the New Testament book of James. James writes in simple, homespun fashion, not about how to become a Christian, but rather how to act like one. Pastor Dave leads this study, come and bring a friend!

Praise Team Jam Session at Camp Onomia Friday-Saturday, May 4-5

First Lutheran praise team members and anyone interested are welcome to this overnight at Camp Onomia. Trinity Lutheran Church in Milaca has invited us to meet at Camp Onomia for a jam session and to do some cleanup around the camp. Bring the family and your instruments for a fun time. For more information, contact Craig Ahlin at 632-3951.

Women’s Bible Study meets Wednesdays thru May

Sessions on “The Greatest Story – Jesus” continue Wednesdays through May. You may choose either the 9:30 a.m. or 6:30 p.m. study group. Watch for more information about upcoming summer studies. Come for lively discussion and bring a friend!

“First...Servants of All” Worship Serving Opportunities

Each Sunday, many worshipers come to worship at First. Your servant hands are an integral part of providing hospitality to all who enter here. You are asked 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. Choose a time that fits your schedule. Sign-ups are now available for May and June; sign-ups for future months will be posted at church at a later date. Training for each serving ministry is available—please ask! For more information, contact the church office, 632-6667.

Library Corner

Beginning Sunday, May 6, we will have a ‘Library Spring Cleaning Book Give Away.’ Stop at the table in the gathering space to recycle a book and have an interesting read.

Newly donated books are available to check out in a basket in the library. Thank you to all donors!

The Library Team appreciates the return of materials that have been checked out for an extended period. Thank you!

**Lutheran Social Service Rummage Sale
Wednesday-Friday, May 9-11**

The spring Lutheran Social Service (LSS) rummage sale co-sponsored by Bethel and First Lutheran Church women will be held at Bethel Lutheran, at 901 West Broadway, on:

Wednesday, May 9, 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 10, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Friday, May 11, 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

☞ Dollar Bag Sale Day

Proceeds from the sale are used to benefit residents at the Lutheran Social Services group homes in this area. Set up days are Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday morning, clean up begins at noon on Friday. Volunteers are much appreciated, there is lots of ‘stuff’ to organize – come when you can! The sale is a wonderful recycling opportunity for good, usable, clean clothing, books, linens, small appliances, toys, etc. Clean grocery bags, paper or plastic, are also needed. Please, no televisions, computers or computer parts. Sale items can be brought to Bethel in the morning, beginning Monday, April 30, or on the set-up days. For more information, contact Karen Haaland, at 632-8828.

Who is Your Neighbor? Opportunities

First Lutheran provides worship and Holy Communion twice each month at the local care centers. Residents appreciate sharing in song and worship. If you or someone you know has a heart for this ministry to residents, there are many ways that you can be involved. The Lutheran Care Center has opportunities such as: Thursday morning hymn sing/Bible study helpers, assist residents to Wednesday or Sunday chapel services, pet visitors, Saturday afternoon card players, pianists or organists, and more. For more information, contact Donna Hegstrom, 632-3441, Donna serves as First Lutheran’s representative on the Lutheran Care Center Volunteer Board. Thanks, Donna!



**Annual Community Paint-A-Thon
Oasis/Share A Meal
Saturday, August 4**

The Paint-A-Thon committee is recruiting teams to paint a home in Morrison County on August 4. Over the past 17 years, over 160 homeowners have benefited from this program. It takes 10-12 people, 4-5 hours each, to make a big difference in someone’s life!

First Lutheran will again sponsor a painting team. Jerome and Karen Haaland have volunteered once again to coordinate the team. Would you be willing to be a painter? Contact the church office to sign up. Thank you for making a difference in the community we share!



**Lutheran Care Center
Bake, Plant and Craft Sale
Thursday, May 24
8:00 a.m. to noon**

Come to the sale; all proceeds benefit the residents of the Lutheran Care Center. Your donation of plants, craft items or baked goods are welcome. There will also be silent auction items to bid on. For more information, contact Donna Hegstrom, 632-3441.

Coborn's BBQ Cookout Fundraiser
Friday, May 18, 11:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.
Saturday, May 19, 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Stop by Coborn's Cookout stand for a bite to eat and support First Lutheran youth programs at the same time. 50% of the proceeds from the cookout go to benefit youth ministry here. Thanks, Coborn's! And thank you for your support!



Roadside Cleanup
Saturday, May 5 at 8:00 a.m.

As a part of our stewardship of creation, First Lutheran is responsible for the cleanup of two miles of Highway 238, just south of the intersection with Highway 27. The church council invites you to assist with cleaning our portion of Hwy. 238. Meet at church at 8:00 a.m., we'll have breakfast and then we'll ride together to Hwy. 238 (or you can meet us there – mile markers 32/34). Dress appropriately for the work and the weather and bring work gloves. For safety purposes, MN Dot specifies that volunteers be at least 12 years old. All workers will wear reflective safety vests. For more information, contact the church office, at 632-6667.

How is Support to the ELCA used?

60 new congregations were approved, 50 percent of them in multicultural communities. Support to 240 missionaries in 50 countries, including 50 young adults. Mission projects in over 90 countries. 8 seminaries. 26 ELCA colleges and universities. 43 scholarships awarded to young international leaders. Over 180 campus ministries. 1,530 Lutheran early childhood education centers ("Children First" Christian Preschool is one!) And in many more ways. God's work. Our Hands.

Sunday School News

Sunday School is offered each week at 10:30 a.m. through Sunday, May 20. In May TREK (Grades K-5) use a rotation entitled "The Empty Tomb." If you or someone you know could get into a character acting role for our opening time on Sundays, May 6 and 13, please contact Gil Hittesdorf. This is a short-term commitment from about 10:30-10:45 a.m. Thanks! Families are encouraged to use the lesson handouts available from the sign-up board at home. You can also attend Sunday School with your child and get in on the fun! We will end the Sunday School year with a celebration on Sunday, May 20, 10:39-11:30 a.m. Thank you to all who have shared Christ's love with the kids at Sunday School. Watch for special summer activities!

The Commission for Education is seeking adults to become a part of the Sunday School experience for fall 2012-spring 2013. Please prayerfully consider how you might share and develop relationships with all God's children at First Lutheran!

Little Falls Dam Festival
Friday-Saturday, June 15-16

Watch for First's youth at the Little Falls Dam Festival this summer. We will have a booth in Maple Island Park selling Schwan's ice cream treats. See you there!

"Children First" Christian Preschool Update

Greetings from the "Children First" Christian Preschool!

We learned about Easter, butterflies, bugs/insects and weather in April. May brings spring, flowers, farm animals and a celebration of being God's children. We would like some volunteers to be part of May classroom fun. If you would like to be involved, let us know. Children look forward to sharing and learning with others.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the spring flower sale. The flower bulbs are scheduled to arrive prior to Mother's Day and will be sent home with your child. First Lutheran congregation members who placed an order will be called when the bulbs arrive.

Wear your farming clothes – jeans, plaids, bandanas, hats! Come to the Family Farmyard Fun/Program on Wednesday, May 16 beginning at 5:00 p.m. Come see some farm animals, play farm games, sit on farm equipment, take a family photo! We'll have a picnic meal at 6:00 p.m. and a program at 6:30 p.m. All are welcome!

"Children First" Christian Preschool is enrolling for Fall 2012. Registration forms and brochures with class information are located on the table in the Gathering Space along with the Enrollment

form, Immunization Record, Healthcare Summary and Questionnaire. The yellow registration form and a \$50.00 non-refundable registration/activity fee holds your place. The balance of the forms are due prior to the first day of preschool. Please call if you have any questions.

Watch for "Children First" involvement in these community summer activities: Little Falls Dam Festival Parade on June 16; Coborn's Brat Stand on July 25 and 26; Green Fair Folk Festival on August 1; Preschool Open House at the end of August; Arts and Crafts Festival Booth on September 9 and 10. If you can assist with any of these activities, call Gail at 632-6667, or cell 320-291-4698.

Thank you to all who have contributed in any way during this year. Thank you to Andy's Charter for supporting "Children First" with discounted bussing cost and to an unnamed individual for contributing the balance of the cost. Thank you to all who have kept the children and families in your prayers this past school year.

Yours in Christ's Service

Gail Hittesdorf, Director

Preschool Summer Day Camp

First Lutheran Church is offering two sessions of preschool summer camp for 3, 4, and 5-year-olds who have not yet experienced Kindergarten.

Session 1: Monday-Friday, July 16-20
3-year-olds

Session 2: Monday-Friday, July 23-27
4-5-year-olds

Sessions will meet from 9:00-11:30 a.m. at First Lutheran. Children will read, sing, dance, play music and games, do arts and crafts, and have outdoor fun. Children will experience the love of Jesus through Bible stories and songs. Your child will enhance their social, emotional, physical and

educational skills in preparation for preschool and kindergarten. Cost is \$25.00 per week. Registration forms are available at church or on the First website at www.flclittlefalls.org. Registration deadline is Friday, July 1. For more information, contact Gail Hittesdorf, at 632-2218, or the church office.



Reminder:

Benefit for Scott Luing is Friday, April 27, 4:00-8:00 p.m. at the Falls Ballroom. Scott is owner/operator of 1st Class Auto Glass. He has been unable to work following diagnosis of malignant brain tumors. A spaghetti dinner will be served. You can bid on items at a silent auction and purchase bake sale items. A 2-mile Phun Run will be held at 6:00 p.m. Donations may be sent to Scott Luing Benefit, c/o Morrison County Pheasants Forever, PO Box 123, Little Falls, MN 56345. Thank you to all who have volunteered to assist with the benefit. Thank you for keeping Scott, Lisa and family in your prayers.

Items for the **June NEWSLETTER** are due on **May 18, 2012!**



**Spring Clean up Day
Monday, May 7**

The spring clean-up day at church is Monday, May 7. Come at 3:30 p.m. (or when you can). We will wash the exterior windows and take care of other clean-up needs. Bring rakes, gloves and a willing attitude to make our church home sparkle. This is a wonderful service project for mentors and mentees. Keep in mind the old saying: "Many hands make light work." See you at church!