



December 2011

December 14, 2011

## *Advent and Christmas Worship*

**Advent One:** Sunday, November 27:  
Worship at 8:00, 9:30 and 10:45 a.m.

### **Wednesday Advent Worship:**

Wednesdays, November 30, December 7, 14, and 21  
at 7:00 p.m.

Holden Evening Prayer

**Advent Two:** Sunday, December 4:  
Worship at 8:00, 9:30 and 10:45 a.m.,  
*Sunday Education at 10:30 a.m.*

**Advent Three:** Sunday, December 11:  
Worship at 8:00, 9:30 and 10:45 a.m.,  
*Sunday Education at 10:30 a.m.*

**Advent Four:** Sunday, December 18:  
Worship at 8:00, 9:30 and 10:45 a.m.,  
*Sunday Education at 10:30 a.m.*

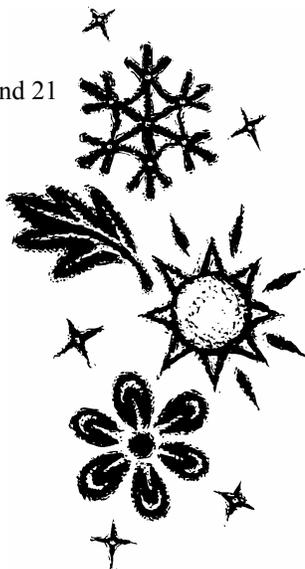
## *Christmas Eve*

**Saturday, December 24:**  
**Festival Worship at 4:00, 6:00 and 10:00 p.m.**  
Holy Communion at all three services

**Christmas Day, Sunday, December 25:**  
Worship at 9:30 a.m. – one service

*Come and Celebrate!*

*Come, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come*



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## Pastor's Article

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People often ask me how is the church doing... financially? Of course, I have to respond honestly— we could be better off and yet, we could be much worse. Thanks to the many people who contribute to First Lutheran and all who work to keep First financially responsible, I can say we are doing “OK”.

I also have people ask if we could publish our weekly offerings and weekly expenses in the bulletins, or have an area in the newsletter devoted to “how we are doing” financially. Sources I read state that this doesn't do anything positive for the life of the congregation and certainly doesn't grow anyone as a contributing steward. As a church and as individuals, how we deal with our finances is a natural part of our life as faithful Christians. I can speak for us as a church that through careful management and an ever so watchful eye on spending we have been able to endure the recent economic downturn and its impact on our bottom line. During the good times we were able to put some aside for such a time as this. While those funds have not been depleted they have been tapped into.

In this past year we added two staff members that had been reduced or only dreamed about in the past. We have added a part-time Pastor who is a great asset to the entire life of the congregation, and we added a full-time Youth and Family Minister that was first talked about some 20 years ago. Through these added staff and an existing dedicated staff, and in spite of the rougher economic times around the world, we have been able to maintain a level of contributions that have enabled us to maintain with the added staff.

Contributions for November and December in 2010 were \$61,000. If we simply maintain that amount we will end the year about where we anticipated and we will be able to fulfill the commitments we gave to our ministry partners; Northeastern Minnesota Synod, Luther Crest Bible Camp, Morrison County Food Shelf, Lutheran

Social Services, Habitat for Humanity, Hands of Hope, Food for Kidz, and Morrison County Chaplaincy to name a few.

However, with Christmas Day falling on a Sunday this year, and with one service on that day, there will only be opportunity for a regular Sunday offering three times rather than four. Please keep this in mind each week as you prayerfully consider your church offering – not to me, not to the staff, but to the ministry that God has instituted in and through this place. He has called us to be First... Servants of All.

If you have any questions or desire more information, please speak with me. The 2011 Mission Plan is available for your review and the proposed 2012 Mission Plan will be available at the annual meeting in January.

See you in church,

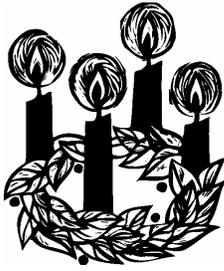
Pastor Dave Sperstad

[dsperstad@flclittlefalls.org](mailto:dsperstad@flclittlefalls.org)

### **2011 Giving**

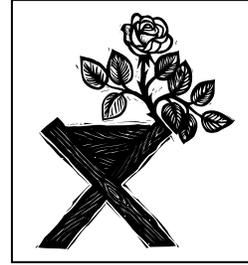
The last date for offerings received to be credited for the year 2011 is Friday, December 30, 2011. Thank you for your faithful giving throughout the year.





**Wishing you and yours  
a Blessed Christmas Season!**

First Lutheran Church Staff Ministry Team



**Christmas Poinsettias**

Your donations of holiday poinsettias to decorate our sanctuary for Christmas are welcome. You may donate in honor/memory of a loved one. The church office will order poinsettias for delivery for Christmas. The cost per 6" plant is \$12.00. Submit your request to Susan in the church office by Friday, December 9.



**GoodShop.com**

You can make every gift count this holiday season. You can find coupons for more than 1,600 top stores and a percentage of virtually every sale will be donated to First Lutheran Church. Just go to GoodShop.com and designate "First Lutheran Church – Little Falls" as the cause you support and then click over to your favorite store and shop! Or you can add the toolbar to your browser at <http://www.goodsearch.com/toolbar> and your purchases will automatically earn a donation for the church even if you forget to go to GoodShop first. Thank you for supporting First Lutheran through your online shopping! Spread the word.

**Thank You**

Thank you to the Vic and Bonnie Bieniek family for the gift of a beautiful Christmas tree for the church sanctuary.



### **Council Highlights**

- Heard that the Pastor Parish Relations Team will coordinate the pie fellowship following the Thanksgiving Eve service on Wednesday, November 23.
- Heard that over 200 photos of the congregation have been taken for the pictorial directory.
- “Listen” for information about “Noisy Offering” Sundays.
- Heard that opportunities are available for serving Meals on Wheels in the community.
- Heard about the Pizza Ranch Tip Night on Monday, December 19. First’s youth will receive a percentage of the receipts from diners at Pizza Ranch on this evening. Bring the Sunday bulletin for a discount!
- Heard that openings are available in the preschool for 4 and 5 year olds.
- Approved holding one service of worship on Sunday, December 25, at 9:30 a.m.



### **Pastor Parish Relations Committee**

Members of the congregation are selected by the leadership team of First Lutheran to serve on the Pastor Parish Relations Committee. This committee serves the congregation and the pastor as a ‘sounding board,’ and has a communications role between the congregation and its pastor/s. Members are: Merlin Bruns, Tifanii Dahl, Doug Dahlberg, Stephanie Doty, and Ted Pfohl. If you have feedback about our ministry together, please contact one of the committee members.

### **Silent Steward**

*Give thanks for “Silent Stewards”*

Fall is often a time to discuss stewardship, especially in the church. It’s also a time of thanksgiving, and a time when we give special thanks to the good stewards among us. There are many people in our midst who walk in the footsteps of Jesus as “silent” stewards of the gospel.

One of the stewards at First Lutheran who does this incredibly is well is Jeff Bigalke. Jeff rarely misses worship and exhibits a tremendous sense of hospitality on Sunday mornings with a warm hello and a how-are-you for everyone who crosses his path. He assists with all the confirmation classes that Pastor Dave leads and he’s a dedicated member of the Men’s Breakfast Bible Study, Via De Cristo group and keeps all of his many friends and the entire church family in prayer. You’ll also find him on the Nominating Committee, welcoming new stewards and currently serving on the Youth Commission after many years on the Worship Commission.

Jeff extends his commitment to youth beyond First Lutheran: he’s been a manager for the Little Falls Flyer basketball team for 32 years, providing encouragement to the athletes with his gentle presence on the bench. He’s a regular at many other sporting events as well, always with a goal to support the kids. He has longevity with Lion’s Club, having been a member for 34 years. Jeff also works at Coborn’s where he enjoys greeting all the people he knows and even those he doesn’t know. Thank you, Jeff, for all you do for your First Lutheran family and throughout the Little Falls community. You are a true example of living out your faith every day!

(Know of a silent steward that others should know about? Let Pastor Tony or the church office know of them, and we will include them in future profiles.)

## Adult Opportunities

### Men's Bible Study Breakfast

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

### Adult Book Club Wednesday, December 28

The book for December is The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven, a true story by Kevin and Alex Malarkey. Readers will secure their own copy to read and we will meet together in the church library on Wednesday, December 28 at 6:30 p.m. to discuss the book. For more information, contact Tifanii Dahl at 632-8207.



### Office Volunteer Appreciation Event

This year, have you helped to fold newsletters or bulletins? Have you been part of a team to put together bulk mailings? Have you answered telephones and helped with projects as an Office Hospitality volunteer? If you have used your gifts to serve in the First Lutheran Church office during this past year, **you are invited:**

### Volunteer Appreciation Reception Thursday, December 15, 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Please come for fellowship, treats, and our thanks to you for your service to God. Your ministry is vital to the mission of First Lutheran. We look forward to seeing you there!

### Women's Circle: "To Follow and Serve: The Gospel of Mark"

Beyond the Boundaries Amos 3:3

### Martha Circle

The Martha Circle meets Monday, December 12 at 11:30 a.m. for potluck lunch. Ann Pederson will provide dessert.

### Cornerstones (Seniors age 55 and better) Potluck Lunch

Tuesday, December 20, 11:30 a.m.

We gather for potluck lunch on Tuesday, December 20 at 11:30 a.m. at church. Please bring a dish of your choosing to share—there's always plenty to go around! Bring a friend and come for food, and fellowship!

### Library Corner

Give yourself the gift of time to read this Advent. It won't cost you anything to sit in a comfy chair, turn on a reading light and wrap yourself in a quilt with a good story. The church library has many devotionals that can help you journey through the Advent season. Here are three new titles that might interest you: "Home Another Way," "Dark Clouds Silver Linings," and "Falling in Love with the Bible."

## Ways that First Folks are “First...Servants of All”

### **Angel Tree Gift Giving**

You are invited to share your gifts with families and children in our community who are living at or below the federally recognized poverty level. Take a tag from the Angel Tree located in the Gathering Space. Return your unwrapped gifts with their tag to the church by Sunday, December 11. Thank you for your continued participation in the Angel Tree project! Your generosity helps many around us to celebrate this holiday season with thanks and praise. For more information, contact Annalee VanDenheuvel at 320-573-1935.



### **Thanksgiving Offerings**

Thank you to all for your generous contributions to the Thanksgiving offering. Over \$700.00 in gifts will be shared in support of our mission partners – ELCA World Hunger and Habitat for Humanity. On Sunday morning, November 27, many hands worked in Stoltz Hall to help package nutritious meals for the hungry around the world through Food for Kidz. Stewards from First Lutheran and friends from the community packed 46 boxes of meals—that is over 10,000 meals! Well done! Thank you for your generosity as you give thanks to God for his many blessings by sharing with others.

### **Thank You!**

Thank you to all who gave of their time, talents and resources to support this year’s Community Thanksgiving Meal. In the true spirit of thankfulness many of you planned, prepared and served the meal, and shared in fellowship with others from the community. Thank you!

### **Project Bookshelf**

The Little Falls Friends of the Library are coordinating this project to provide new books to area children this Christmas. Your donation of books can be dropped off in the box in the Gathering Space. Books for children of all ages are requested. Books will be distributed to families through the Community Gift Giving program.

### **Making a Joyful Noise! For the Morrison County Food Shelf**

**Blessed are the Noisemakers!** This Advent season, “noisemaking” volunteers from various churches are stationed at cash collection boxes at Coborn’s in Little Falls to raise funds for the Morrison County Food Shelf. Shoppers are encouraged to place cash in the collection boxes, to benefit those for whom the holidays are less than joyful. Keep an eye out for the “noisemakers,” and please help us make a joyful noise by giving your time and treasures generously for those less fortunate. First Lutheran’s time to “make noise” is Thursday, December 8, 3:00-7:00 p.m. For more information, contact Sue Gustner in the church office, 632-6667.

### **Benefit Dinner and Live Auction For Wes and Wendy Richmond family Saturday, December 3**

#### **At Bethany Lutheran Church, Cushing**

The Richmonds are former members of First Lutheran who now reside near Fishtrap Lake and attend Bethany Lutheran Church in Cushing. Wes is diagnosed with metastatic melanoma and is undergoing treatment. The benefit is Saturday, December 3, 4:00-6:30 p.m. at Bethany. Dinner will be served from 4:00-6:30 p.m. A live auction will begin at 6:30 p.m. Donations for the auction are welcome; please contact Bob or Linda Mueller at 632-2654 to make arrangements. If you are unable to attend the benefit but wish to donate, call Judy Nelson at 218-689-1040.

## "Children First" Christian Preschool Update

Greetings from "Children First" Christian Preschool!

Wow! December is here! November closed with thanks being given for many gifts. The Preschoolers learned about pumpkins, put out fires while learning about community helpers, they made turkey centerpieces out of potatoes and toilet paper for their Thanksgiving table.

"Children First" is thankful to all who give of their time, talents, financial support and prayers. Thank you to everyone who assisted with our 2012 "God's World" Calendar Fundraiser. We raised over \$900.00. Thank you to all who assisted with our Santa Parade Float "His Presence Warms our Hearts" and our "Tree of Giving" at the Fishing Museum Christmas Tree Auction.

"Children First" Christian Preschool accepts registration of preschoolers the entire year pending class openings. We are excited about the Friday Friends Class and the opportunity to create a 3 day

preschool week. Please encourage families who have children ages 33 months through Pre-kindergarten to stop by for a visit. All are welcome to experience the fun, the educational activities and the spiritual growth in God's love.

"Children First" Christian Preschool Advisory Team and Staff would like to thank everyone for their contributions of time, talents and monetary giving this past year. Especially thank YOU for keeping the children and families of "Children First" in your prayers.

God's Blessing to all for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Yours in Christ's Service,

Gail Hittesdorf, Director

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## Confirmation Ministries

**Fourth Grade:** Four-week class on Holy Baptism begins Wednesday, January 4, 2012, at 7:00 p.m.

**Seventh Grade:** Ten Commandments class begins Wednesday, January 4 through January 25, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. Linda Weiss will teach this class.

**Eighth Grade:** Old Testament class begins Wednesday, January 4, 2012, at 7:00 p.m. Pastor Dave will teach this class.

**Tenth Grade:** Tenth grade confirmands and their mentors have begun their faith journey. Thank you to the adults who have agreed to mentor a tenth grade student. Pray that both student and mentor will grow in relationship with Jesus and with each other during their time together.

**Ninth and Tenth Grade Retreats:** Mark your calendars – Ninth Grade and Tenth Grade retreat on Relationships is scheduled at Luther Crest Bible Camp on Saturday-Sunday, January 21-22, 2012. Watch for a letter about this retreat!





**Advent Craft Sale  
Saturday, December 3  
9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

Come and enjoy the start of the Advent season at the annual Advent Craft Sale and Luncheon.

Handcrafts and bake sale items will be available to purchase. There will be a delicious soup luncheon, and lots of treats and gift items! Proceeds from this year's sale will support youth ministry programming at First Lutheran.

Your support of this great FUNdraiser is appreciated.

**Sunday Morning Education Ministry**

Thank you to everyone who participated and led stations for "Building the Tabernacle" rotation. We hope you were able to check out the tabernacle that we built in Stoltz Hall.

A new rotation theme, "In the Manger" begins Sunday, December 4. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, where Mary laid him in a manger. His humble birth reminds us that the Messiah began life as a helpless baby, just as we do. Children will prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus as they explore the meaning of "God with us," hear that Jesus is the Messiah and talk about what that means; discover the significance of the Messiah's coming, not as a king or warrior, but as a baby born in a humble place and be able to locate the story of Jesus' birth in the Book of Luke. Sign up on the gathering space board to share your faith by leading a station!

Come for Sunday School and Morning Education at 10:30 a.m. Preschool and Pre-kindergarten meets in the Moses Classroom in the education wing. TREK Rotation (K-5) meets in Stoltz Hall. Grades 6-12 meets in the Youth Room.



**Sunday School Christmas Program  
"A Traditional Christmas"  
Sunday, December 18, 4:00 p.m.**

All children are invited to participate in this year's Christmas program. We will experience an old-fashioned Christmas with traditional Christmas songs. Many helping hands are important in order to make the program shine. With the spirit of Christmas in your heart, consider how you can share your gifts to assist with the program.

Program scripts are located on the table in the gathering space, each family has received a music CD to learn the songs. If you did not receive a CD and would like one, or for more information, please call Rachel Kerr, 715-222-9807, or Amber Sobiech, 616-9626, or the church office, 632-6667.

Rehearsal times are as follows:

Wednesday, December 7, 6:00-6:45 p.m.

Grades 1 and 2

Wednesday, December 14, 6:00-6:45 p.m.

Grades 3, 4, and 5

Saturday, December 17, 9:00-11:30 a.m.

Grades 1-5, readers, ushers, helpers

Saturday, December 17, 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Preschool-Kindergarten

**Looking Ahead:**



**Gospel Gang  
(Grades 3-5)  
Snow Tubing at Camp Ripley Bennet Hill  
Sunday, February 12, 2012  
1:00 – 4:30 p.m.**

**Summer 2012 Mission Trip:**

**Wild and Crazy Saints  
Sunday, June 24-Friday, June 29, 2012**

Prepare your hearts to serve and plan on spending a week on a life-changing mission trip. We will attend ServeCAMP at Camp Onomia on Lake Shakopee near Onamia. During the week we will enjoy God's great creation at camp and also have the opportunity to serve local people in and around the camp community. Early bird cost for the week is \$198.00 if you register before March 11; after that date, \$248.00. For more information, or to register, contact Youth and Family Minister, Jay Kiel.

**Can Care Collection**

Keep saving those aluminum cans!  
Save a can – Save the earth –  
Save our youth budget! Keep those cans coming!

Please place your securely tied bag by  
the church shed door. Thank you!

**Winter Youth Retreats:  
“I-Pod, I-Phone, I-Follow”  
at Luther Crest Bible Camp**

*...You must be Holy because I,  
the Lord your God, am Holy. Leviticus 19:2*

**SOCIAL NETWORKING**– Everywhere we look, today we see youth texting on their cell phones, connecting with “friends” on Facebook and building relationships through playing global networked online games. *What does God tell us about this?* How does popular culture shape how we see God working in our lives? How does popular culture determine our actions and decisions as Christians?

*How many “friends” would Jesus have on Facebook? What if we were socially networking with our Creator, our Savior and the Holy Spirit?* Come join us for a weekend of fun winter outdoor games and activities, arts and crafts, crazy counselors, meaningful worships, bible diving, and a better understanding of how God is working in our lives every day!

**Grades 3-6  
Friday-Sunday, January 20-22, 2012**

Retreat cost is \$75.00, you pay \$50.00, First pays \$25.00! What a deal! Registration deadline: Sunday, January 8, 2012.

**Grades 7-9  
Friday-Saturday, February 17-18, 2012**

Retreat cost is \$60.00, you pay \$30.00, First pays \$30.00! What a deal! Registration deadline: Sunday, February 5, 2012.

## News of the Family

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Hayden Gene Woodford, son of Gene and Kristen Woodford, was baptized on November 6.

Zander Douglas DeSchane, son of Dan and Cami DeSchane, was baptized on November 13.

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Wayne M. Kronbeck died on November 16. His funeral service was held on November 21. May God grant peace and comfort to his family and friends.

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**Sunshine Chairperson** is Mary Larson. Please call 632-8203 if you know of someone who is ill, hospitalized, etc., so that she may send them a card.

Items for the **January NEWSLETTER** are due on **December 20, 2011!**



**Church Office is closed on Monday, December 26. Office hours for December 27-30 are 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon.**

**Annual Meeting—Sunday, January 29, 2012**  
*Following the 10:45 a.m. service*