

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

David J. Sperstad, Pastor
Anthony D. Oltmann, Pastor

FIRST

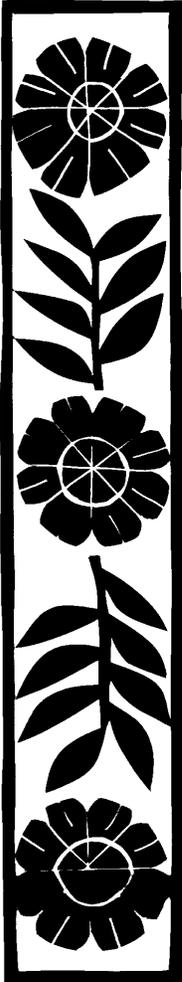


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“Servants of All”

April 2011, Newsletter

April 1, 2011



**Holy Week and Easter Worship
and Activities**

April 17—Palm Sunday

Hosanna!

8:00 a.m. Holy Communion

9:30 a.m. Contemporary Worship
and Holy Communion

10:45 a.m. Holy Communion

April 21—Maundy Thursday

The service of Christ: footwashing and meal

7:00 p.m. – Holy Communion with
footwashing and second grade students
receive communion

April 22—Good Friday

The passion and death of Christ according to John

1:00 p.m. – Good Friday Worship

7:00 p.m. – Tenebrae Service

April 23—Saturday

9:30-11:30 a.m. – Easter Eggstravaganza
special event for kids age 3 thru second grade
see page 9 for more information

April 24—The Resurrection of our Lord

The resurrection of Jesus is announced

7:00 a.m. – Sunrise Holy Communion

8:00-9:30 a.m. – Easter Breakfast

10:00 a.m. – Holy Communion

Pastor Dave’s Article
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**Welcome, Pastor
Tony Oltmann!**
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Christian Preschool**
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Pastor Dave's Article

*"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ".
1 Corinthians 15:55-57*

This is a time of year when things are coming to life all around us. The birds are singing, grass is beginning to grow, flowers are blooming, and winter months have given us a greater appreciation for the coming of spring. What a deep appreciation we can have for the life of Christ when we pause during Lent and reflect on the darkness of His death.

Death could not hold Him in the grave as he arose victorious on the third day morning! Jesus was, is, and will be alive for all of eternity and for that we are forever grateful because as He lives, we too have everlasting life through Him. *"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died."*

1 Corinthians 15:20

As we prepare to celebrate Easter Sunday services, I encourage you to invite all of your family and friends to Easter worship.

Christ's resurrection is a major reason to gather and celebrate. Easter comes but once a year, but His resurrection affects us each and every day of our lives and on into eternity. Because of His death and resurrection, we serve a living God who served us first and send us out to serve.

When we hear good news we want to share it. It wouldn't be right to keep it to ourselves, right? So let's spread the good news of Jesus Christ's resurrection and start inviting our friends and family to celebrate Christ's resurrection with us on Easter Sunday, April 24.

There are many people who have no idea that Easter is anything other than candies, baskets, bunnies and colored eggs. As a part of the *Priesthood of All Believers* we can all do our part

to let others know and to sing together *"Christ the Lord is risen Today! ALLELUIA!"* Certainly Easter and the life it gives us is something that we can celebrate and invite others to come along side us and do the same.

Easter services are at 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. with a WONDERFUL breakfast served between services. Please come and bring others with you to celebrate this holy day and the risen Christ. It is going to be a Grand and Glorious day!

See you in Church,

Pastor Dave



Council Highlights

- Approved a contract with Rev. Anthony 'Tony' Oltmann to serve as part-time pastor at First Lutheran Church effective on April 1, 2011. Pastor Tony will be officially received on Sunday, April 10.
- Approved a gift of \$100 to the ILCH (Lutheran Church in Honduras) given in honor of Kathe Peterson, for her many years of ministry on the staff of the NE MN Synod.
- Approved the proposed 2011/2012 budget for "Children First" Christian Preschool. The plan provides for additional morning class and staff.

“First Moving Forward”

First Lutheran Church council is pleased to announce that Rev. Anthony ‘Tony’ Oltmann has accepted the invitation to serve alongside us as pastor.

Pastor Tony is ordained in the Presbyterian Church and will serve at First Lutheran under the “full communion” agreement of the ELCA. Full communion is when two churches develop a relationship based on a common confessing of the Christian faith and a mutual recognition of baptism and sharing of the Lord’s Supper. The ELCA shares full communion relationships* with six churches including the Presbyterian Church.

Pastor Tony and his wife, Kristin, reside in Brainerd. He will serve on a part-time basis beginning this month. We will officially receive

him as pastor on Sunday, April 10. We look forward to becoming acquainted with Pastor Tony and to being in ministry together.

We give thanks to God for calling faithful leaders among His people! We move forward together as “First...Servants of All.”

*For more information about full communion relationships visit: <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Ecumenical-and-Inter-religious-Relations/Full-Communion-Partners.aspx>

Welcome, Pastor Tony!

“Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.” New Living Translation

The passage from Isaiah 41:10, is a passage my wife has had taped to the mirror for over a year. She found the passage when reading one of the many newsletters we receive. The newsletter arrived the day we got word that I was not going to be offered a job we were hoping for. A few months prior I lost my position as a nursing home chaplain. At 29 I found myself unemployed, with a mortgage, a car payment, and newly married. Needless to say it was a difficult time for us.

Since graduating from seminary in 2007, I have felt God has continued to prepare me. While I do not think I will ever be done being prepared, I feel that in part I have been prepared for First Lutheran Church in Little Falls: Little Falls is struggling with unemployment; in October 2009 I was let go from my job due to budget cuts. I was a member of a church where the senior pastor left and started his own church across town. I have spent the first four years of my ministry doing nursing home chaplaincy and hospice chaplaincy; pastoral care is a big part of my job description. More than being prepared, I feel called to First Lutheran. I have

enjoyed getting to know the people on the task force and Pastor Dave...especially when he pays for meals at the Black and White. Free meals aside, I am looking forward to working alongside Pastor Dave and learning from his experience.

The passage from Isaiah has taken on new light in the past few weeks since I accepted the position with First Lutheran. *“Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.”* The passage provides some guidance as we begin our journey.

I am really looking forward to being a part of the mission and ministry at First Lutheran in Little Falls! I can’t wait to meet you all. Thank you for the wonderful opportunity to be a part of this vibrant community!

In Christ,
Pastor Tony Oltmann



Eco-Palms for Palm Sunday Worship

One small way that First Lutheran practices stewardship is through the purchase of Eco-Palms. Traditional harvesting of palms in Mexico and Guatemala has contributed to destruction of the forest and harm to the indigenous communities. Eco-Palms are harvested in a way that preserves the trees and also gives the workers a fair wage. May God bless the hands that do this work.

Easter Flowers

Share in the Spirit of Easter by sharing your Easter flowers (for example: lilies, tulips, etc.) with your First Lutheran family. The flowers may be given in remembrance of a loved one or in celebration of a special event or person. Flowers may be dropped off in the Library on Holy Saturday. Please label your flowers. If you would like a remembrance noted in the bulletin regarding your flowers, please call the church office by Monday, April 18.



Easter Breakfast

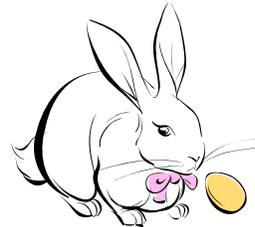
Come and enjoy the fellowship of Easter Breakfast on Sunday, April 24, from 8:00-9:30 a.m. A free-will offering will be received for youth programming at First Lutheran. We are serving a hot breakfast of pancakes, sausage, fruit, muffins, juice, milk and coffee. Thanks for your support! For more information or to offer your assistance, contact coordinators, Carl and Liz Rydeen, 632-5597, or Les Hittesdorf, 632-2218.

Lenten Worship and Soup Suppers

This year during Lent we gather together with the congregation of First United Church and Pastor Damen Heitmann to share fellowship over a bowl of soup and to worship together with Holden Evening Prayer. Thanks to all who have come together as the body of Christ to share in this Lenten worship.

Thank you also to all who share in the fellowship of Lenten soup suppers. Whether you provide soup or food items, work in the kitchen, or come to share a simple meal, all is appreciated. Thanks to this year's coordinator, Linda Weiss. The freewill offering received at each supper supports mission causes at both congregations.

If you have feedback about this shared worship and fellowship time, please contact Pastor Dave Sperstad. Thank you!



Easter Eggstravaganza Scramble! Saturday, April 23, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Kids! age 3 through second grade, please come with an adult for this **free** event here at First Lutheran. Experience the Easter story through sight, sound, taste, touch and smell as families work together to complete the Easter Story Challenge. We'll have games, crafts, lunch, an Easter egg hunt, and hear the Easter story from a special guest. Don't miss this *eggciting* time!

2011 NE MN Synod Assembly
“The Word Working in the World”
April 29-May 1

Learning and Sharing Day
Saturday, April 30
10:00 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.
Cragun’s Conference Center, Brainerd

First Lutheran Church voting members and Pastor Dave will attend the Northeast Minnesota Synod Assembly Friday-Sunday, April 29-May 1. All are welcome to attend the Learning and Sharing Day on Saturday. This year’s focus will be on “The Word Working in the World.”

You will enjoy hearing keynote speaker, Rev. John Nunes, who serves as president of Lutheran World Relief and is a highly regarded pastor, theologian, speaker and community organizer.

You will see the Word at work in the world throughout the weekend event. Workshop outposts will be led by leaders from our Companion Synods in Russia and Honduras. Music from around the world will be provided by Tom Witt and Mary Preus from Bread for the Journey. Congregations and partners in ministry will be on hand to provide hands-on, interactive opportunities for you to experience how their ministry furthers the work of the Word in the world.

First’s quilters are donating a quilt to the silent auction. Available again this year is The Marketplace, a Silent Auction of new items and services, if you have an item or service to donate, please contact the church office. All proceeds from both auctions will benefit ELCA World Hunger Appeal.

Those wishing to attend the Saturday event only please register in the church office; First Lutheran will cover the cost of registration. Registration includes lunch and materials. Don’t miss this opportunity close to home where you will see God’s Word at work in our synod and around the world.

Lutheran Disaster Response: Japan

The ELCA is working together with the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church through its long-established relationship, to assist with providing food and shelter to people in need following the massive earthquake and tsunami that struck northern Japan on March 11. The ELCA has 22 missionaries living and serving in Japan. 100% of your gift to this disaster fund goes directly towards needs in Japan. There are several ways to make contributions, you may make your check to First Lutheran and notate Pacific Earthquake in the memo line, you can make credit card gifts by calling 1-800-638-3522, or you can contribute through the ELCA website at <http://www.ELCA.org/japanearthquake>. Thank you for your faithful response to this great need!

Fair Trade

Thank you for your ongoing support of the fair trade products in use at First (coffee) and purchased for your own home use (coffee, tea, chocolate, cocoa, nuts, cranberries). Products available for purchase in the church office provide needed income to those who labor to produce them. Thank you!

Thank you!

Thanks to all who attended the Mission Sunday food packing event. Together we packaged over 7,500 meals for Food for Kidz to be distributed to starving children around the world. Your servant hands make a difference! Thank you.

Oasis/Share A Meal

First Lutheran Church has provided the meal site to O/SAM as part of our mission for 14 years. Commissions take turns hosting one meal per quarter with the help of congregation members. First has also sponsored a Paint A Thon team for many years. If you would like to get involved in this valuable, ongoing community ministry please contact the church office at 632-6667.

**41st Anniversary
Earth Day:
Caring for Creation
Friday, April 22, 2011**



Earth Day, officially April 22, is celebrated globally by thousands of communities as a collective expression of our hopes and dreams for a better world. The “Green Generation” campaign began in 2009 and culminates on the 41st anniversary of Earth Day, April 22, 2011.

In all the stories of Jesus feeding a hungry crowd of 5000, God’s abundance is demonstrated when just a small quantity of food becomes a feast shared by many. Again and again, our faith teaches us that God’s abundance is given for all to share, yet in our stewardship of creation we often fail to consider how our use of resources will affect other people in our world and the generations who will come after us.

Earth Day is a day to reflect on how we all can be effective stewards of God’s creation and what role we as individuals and as a spiritual group can play in addressing this worldwide problem.

A Billion Acts of Green ® is the 2011 promotion, you can pledge one way that you will act to steward creation. **Here are a few ways you can make a difference:**

- *Don’t drink bottled water!* Fill a re-usable container with tap water. Americans use a half-billion plastic bottles each week.
- *Plant a tree!* Trees increase levels of oxygen in the air and filter out some of the pollutants.
- *Bring your own bag!* Use a cloth bag or reuse a bag when shopping. Local stores have re-usable bags available for about \$1.00.
- *Read to a child!* Help educate future care givers of the earth.
Read an environmentally focused book such as [The Lorax](#).
- *Speak to your elected leaders!* Call, visit, write, or e-mail your leaders and let them know you’re concerned about stewardship of creation.

- *Start a compost pile!* Composting organic wastes reduces the amount of garbage produced by your household by as much as a third.
- *Don’t drive!* Walk, bike, run, skate, or carpool. First Lutheran will host “Ride a Bike to Church” day on Sunday, June 5.
- *Get a recycling bin!* Reduce, reuse and recycle materials used both at home, at work and at church.
- *Replace a light bulb!* Exchange an incandescent bulb with a compact fluorescent bulb. They last ten times longer and use only one-fourth of the energy.
- *Use your own mug!* When you buy coffee, bring your own mug. Each year Americans throw away 23 billion Styrofoam cups. 500 years from now, the foam cup you used this morning will be sitting in a landfill!
- *Visit the Farmer’s Market!* Buy locally produced foods instead of goods that are trucked in.

Check out the Earth Day web-site at www.earthday.org for more information. Take the Ecological Footprint Quiz and find out how many planets would be needed to sustain life if everyone on earth lived as you do!

Consider this...

Abundant Living: As you welcome Christ into your life, is your shout of “Hosanna!” a message that carries Jesus’ hope for a cleansed and forgiven Earth? Americans consume 32 times more than people in the developing world. That means more greenhouse gases, more waste and greater economic inequalities.

Over the last 30 years, U.S. material consumption increased 57 percent. In 1992-2000, raw material usage increased by more than one third. In 2002, the United States used a total of 22.7 metric tons of stuff per person, 50 percent more than Europe.

Identify stuff in your life that is unnecessary or can be reused or borrowed from within your community.

Reprinted from Living Earth, ELCA web devotions, 2008.

Adult Opportunities

April Women's Circle
**"The People of God:
Unity in the Midst of Diversity"**
Barriers to Resurrection
Romans 15:7

Martha Circle

The Martha Circle will meet Monday, April 18, at 1:30 p.m. Hostess is Betty Bengtson.



Adult Studies and Events

Cornerstones Potluck (Seniors age 55 and better)

Are you interested in participating in senior fellowship? Bring a friend and a food item to share and come for potluck lunch on Tuesday, April 19, at 11:30 a.m. We'll gather in Stoltz Hall to share food and conversation.

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. For more information, speak to him.

Monday Night Study

Beginning Monday, May 9, at 6:30 p.m. we will gather to study selected books of the Bible. Our study will take us through Philemon, the Letters of John, Titus and Colossians. Pastor Dave leads this study. Bring your Bible and a friend for study and conversation.

Women's Bible Study Begins Wednesday, April 27 "Song of Songs"

We meet to continue our study of the "Uppity Women of the Bible" by Hebrew Bible professor Dr. Lisa Wolfe. We will study the Song of Songs on Wednesdays beginning April 27 and through May. You may choose the 9:30 a.m. or 6:30 p.m. study group. Come for lively discussion and bring a friend!

Welcome New Steward/Members!

First Lutheran's doors are open to all who seek a church home. We welcome the following stewards into mission and ministry here:

Janet Brutger

Paul and Wendy Isder, and Jessica and Kayla Geraghty

Cory and Tara Schlagel and Khloe

Adam and Rose Surma and Anton

Kristina VonBerge and Alexis, Brooklyn, and Samantha

Check out the information about the new stewards on the gathering space bulletin board and welcome them!

New Items from the Library

In the Likeness of God, by Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey is a new inspirational book to read during your Lenten journey. Families with young children may enjoy The Smile That Went Around the World and The Invisible String, both by Patrice Karst. Snuggle up on the couch with your little ones to watch a new Veggie Tales DVD, An Easter Carol. Many more interesting items are available for your use in the library. Happy reading!

"Children First" Christian Preschool Update

Greetings from the "Children First" Christian Preschool!

March was a month of 'messy' fun. Children painted planets and stars, made dinosaur eggs from 'goopy' papier mache, and celebrated St. Patrick's Day by cleaning up a leprechaun mess.

Thank you for your support of the preschool at the annual Fish Fry and Silent Auction held Friday, April 1 at the Little Falls VFW. Whether you sold tickets, donated an item for the auction, worked before or during the meal, or came to enjoy the meal, all is appreciated—thanks!

2011/12 enrollment for the community begins April 1.

Class offerings are:

- ☺ Noah's Animals (33 mos-3 year olds) Monday and Wednesday, 9:00-11:30 a.m.
- ☺ Noah's Animals (33 mos-3 year olds) Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00-11:30 a.m.
- ☺ Jesus' Gems (4-5 year olds) meets Monday and Wednesday, 9:00-11:30 a.m.

- ☺ Jesus' Gems (4-5 year olds) meets Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00-11:30 a.m.
- ☺ Friday Friends (33 mos-5 year olds) meets Friday, 9:00-11:30 a.m. for those families wanting a three-day experience for their preschooler.
- ☺ Registration fee is \$50.00 and is non-refundable. Monthly tuition is \$80.00 per month. Friday Friends class will be an additional \$35.00 per month. Brochures and registration forms are available in the First Lutheran Church office or by contacting Gail.
- ☺ Interested families with preschoolers are invited to a "Come and See" Day, Monday, April 4, 5:00-7:00 p.m. This is an opportunity to visit and play in the classroom, meet the staff, ask questions and enjoy a snack.

Thank you to all who keep us in prayer and support us in so many ways. Your on-going encouragement is so much appreciated! God's blessings to you all.

Yours in Christ's Service,
Gail Hittesdorf, Director

Confirmation Ministries

Second Grade: The second grade confirmation sessions on First Communion begin Sunday, April 3. At their first class students and parents make clay chalices and patens. Students and parents will experience a Christian Seder Meal on Sunday, April 10. Second graders will have their feet washed and receive Holy Communion together on Maundy Thursday.

Seventh Grade: students will have class on the Apostles' Creed at Luther Crest Bible Camp during the week of June 19-24. Pastor Dave leads this class. If you have not returned your registration, please do so or call the church office with your intentions. Thank you!

Sunday School News

- ☺ Palm Sunday, April 17, all kids please gather in Stoltz Hall just before 9:30 a.m. We will process into worship with palms and we will sing during the service.
- ☺ Parent handouts for the current rotation "The Lord's Supper" are located on the Sunday School Volunteer signup board. These handouts will assist families with learning at home. Help yourself to a handout.
- ☺ Sundays, May 1-22, K-Fifth Grade begin the rotation theme "Easter People." Will you share your time and talent? Sign up to teach a station or just come and get in on the fun!

**News of the Family:
Funerals**

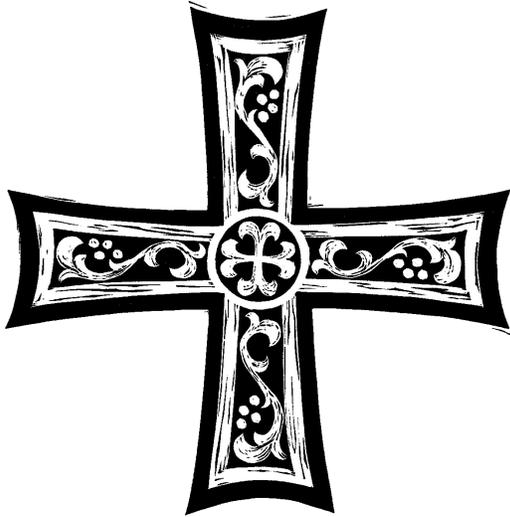
Clare Olson died on March 14. Her funeral was held at First Lutheran on March 18.

Ruby Anderson died on March 27. Her funeral was held at First Lutheran on March 30.

May God's love surround the family and friends of these faithful servants.

Wedding

Abby Waddell and Christopher Mraz were united in marriage on March 5. Congratulations and prayers of blessing as they join their lives together.



**Thank you to all who faithfully support
Christ's mission at First Lutheran Church
with their mail-in offerings!**