



December 2017

November 29, 2017

Advent and Christmas Worship



Advent One: Sunday, December 3:
Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.
Sunday School at 9:35 a.m.

Wednesday Advent Worship:

Wednesdays, December 6, 13 and 20
at 7:00 p.m.
Holden Evening Prayer

Advent Two: Sunday, December 10:
Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.
Sunday School at 9:35 a.m.

Advent Three: Sunday, December 17:
Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.
Sunday School at 9:35 a.m.

Advent Four: Sunday, December 24
One service of Worship at 10:00 a.m.

Christmas Eve

Sunday, December 24:
**Festival Worship at 3:00, 5:00
and 10:00 p.m.**

Holy Communion at all three services

First Sunday of Christmas:
Sunday, December 31
Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.

Come and Worship!

Come, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come

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“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.”

Galatians 4:4-5

What if God came down and walked around central Minnesota tomorrow? The legends of most ancient peoples tell in some way about gods and goddesses visiting earth. They come and go sort of capriciously, sometimes showing divine favor, other times visiting disaster.

These legends were of little comfort. More often than not these appearances were feared—in fact, many cultures intended to keep the gods at bay by offering sacrifices to them. Walking among the massive stones of Stonehenge in 1987, I tried to imagine what was in the minds of the ancient people who dragged those boulders great distances to get them to the Salisbury Plain in south-central England nearly 4,000 years ago. They were used for astronomy and meteorology (quite an advanced observatory for the day!), and it was certainly also a place of sacrifice to the gods. Whether it was the perception of the gods of the ancient inhabitants of the British Isles or the Vikings or early Canaanites, a god was revered, but often thought of like a nasty landlord who would get you in trouble if you didn't pay the rent. One worshiped, not because you hoped the gods would appear, but rather for fear that they might. To be unnoticed by the gods and to be left alone by them was a relief, because gods and goddesses, as the ancient people imagined, never became a part of the sufferings of man and woman; they hovered off in their own space.

How different is the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible came to us, and comes to us,

in Jesus Christ, became one of us and remains with us through the Holy Spirit. He came to be born in a manger, and to later suffer and die for the sins of the world. Our God came to bring the blessings of heaven to earth, and to reclaim us for the Father's kingdom.

This is a far cry from Zeus or Apollo or Molech or Odin. These are characters from myths and legends, but Jesus is the true Word made flesh, come to live among us, to show us the love of God. As pastor and writer Alvin N. Rogness once put it, “The pivotal event in the history of the world is this visit! It is not the rise and fall of a civilization, the discovery of the wheel, or the breakthrough into space travel. It is infinitely more. We are born, we live, we die. This is true of people and of nations. This melancholy sequence is broken by the visit of Jesus. Death is not the end for us. Forgiven and restored, we shall live with him forever.”

Come and celebrate these glad tidings as we meet for worship during Advent and Christmas seasons. *See the schedule on page one.* All are welcome to come and share in the joy of his love!

Pastor Jake Dyrhaug





Christmas Poinsettias

Your donations towards 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. This year we will order several large plants instead of the individual plants. Your donation of \$10.00 will defray this expense, additional funds received will support the global barnyard project. Submit your request to Susan in the church office by Friday, December 15.

Advent Wednesday Worship December 6, 13 and 20 at 7:00 p.m.

In preparation for the coming of the Christ child we gather to worship each Wednesday during Advent using the service of Holden Evening Prayer. Invite a friend to come with you and let the quiet beauty of song prepare your heart for Christ's birth. Refreshments will be served following each service by the youth attending the ELCA National Youth Gathering.



Advent Devotionals

You may wish to set aside a time for Advent devotions during December. There are many resources available for your use, both hard copy and online. One resource is God Pause, provided by Luther Seminary. You can sign up for a daily email at <http://www.luthersem.edu/godpause/>. We will also have the copies available at church. Contact the church office if you would like to receive a copy in the mail.



Council Highlights

- Heard that First Lutheran will provide and serve Share A Meal on Thursday, December 28 at 6:00 p.m.
- Heard that staff evaluations have been completed.
- Long-range planning retreat scheduled at Luther Crest Bible Camp for February 9-10, 2018.
- Thankful for the rejuvenation of the youth program.
- Thank you to all who continue to support ministry at First Lutheran and beyond with their time, talent, and financial gifts. God's work. Our hands.



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

From all of us on the First Lutheran
Church Staff Ministry Team

Adult Opportunities

Men's Bible Study Breakfast

All men of the congregation and friends are invited to a Men's Bible study. The weekday study meets on the first and third Wednesday of each month (December 6 and 20) at 7:00 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 Jake.

Book Club

The Book Club will not meet in December. Watch for the newly selected books and keep reading! For more info, contact Tifanii Dahl at 632-8207.

Office Volunteer Appreciation Event Wednesday, December 20, 10:00 a.m.

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 during this past year, **you are invited.** Please come for fellowship, treats, and our thanks to you for your service. Your ministry is vital to the mission of First Lutheran. We look forward to seeing you there!

Thrivent Choice©

Many First Lutheran members are also members of Thrivent Financial and are eligible to designate Thrivent Choice dollars (contributed by Thrivent) to the non-profit organization of their choosing. Funds can be designated on-line or you can receive a form for designation and assistance in the church office.

If you are unsure whether you are eligible to direct Choice dollars, please contact your Thrivent representative. First Lutheran Church and "Children First" Christian Preschool are able to receive designated Choice © dollars. In 2016, these dollars amounted to over \$2,600 in additional funds for ministry here. Thank you for your support!

Martha Circle

The Martha Circle meets Monday, December 11 at 11:30 a.m. at Pizza Ranch for lunch.



The Gift of Generosity

Thank you to everyone who has supported First Lutheran Church this past year with their time, talent and financial contributions. We are thankful for your continued faithful and generous support.

Numerous members appreciate the convenience of automated giving through Simply Giving®. If you would like a convenient way to make regular offerings or if you plan to make an additional gift before the end of the year, we encourage you to look into our electronic giving options. As the pace of life speeds up, especially around the holidays, you may find electronic giving a most welcome way to make contributions. Contact Susan Gustner in the church office for more information. Thank you!

2017 Giving

The last date for offerings received to be credited for the year 2017 is Sunday, December 31, 2017. Thank you for your faithful giving throughout the year.



**High School Holiday Lock In
Friday, December 8, 8:00 p.m.
through
Saturday, December 9, 8:00 a.m.**

High school students are invited to this twelve hours of overnight fun. We will have games, food, worship, and maybe even a little sleep! Please let Diana know if you plan to attend by Tuesday, December 5. Adult assistance is welcome and needed. Thank you!



**Annual Lutefisk Dinner
Bethel Lutheran Church
Tuesday, December 5
4:00-8:00 p.m.**

Sister congregation Bethel Lutheran has served this annual holiday meal for many years. First Lutheran is offering helping hands for the meal again this year. We will provide support as they host the dinner. Consider how you may assist with this event, here are some possibilities:

- ☞ Setup in early afternoon, or take down following the meal, both on December 5
- ☞ Assist in the kitchen on December 5
- ☞ Serve tables in two shifts, 4:00-6:30 p.m. or 6:30-7:30 p.m.
- ☞ Bake pies – apple or pumpkin
- ☞ Bake white or rye bread
- ☞ Bake holiday cookies
- ☞ Tickets \$16.00 advance, \$17.00 at the door

Of course, you can also attend the dinner and enjoy this annual holiday event and fellowship.

**Burning of the Greens
Epiphany Service and Supper
Saturday, January 6, 2018**

First Lutheran will celebrate the Feast of Epiphany on Saturday, January 6. The “Burning of the Greens” evening starts at 5:30 p.m. We will share supper, worship and gather around a bonfire of our church’s Christmas tree, as we celebrate Jesus Christ, the Light of the Nations. You may wish to bring your Christmas tree or a bough or branch to add to the fire. This evening is for the whole family, bring a friend as well. Dress for the weather as part of this evening we will be outdoors letting our light shine!

If you would like to help with the service, or can assist with a chili supper, please contact the church office.

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 10. 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 VanDenheuevel at 320-232-9366.



Share A Meal Thursday, December 28

Each Thursday evening, Oasis Central Minnesota Share A Meal is served at First Lutheran. Many groups in the community take turns serving a free nutritious meal for anyone who wishes to come for food and fellowship. First Lutheran will provide and serve the meal on Thursday, December 28. We plan to provide a delicious meal to the guests. Watch for ways that you can contribute to the meal. If you can assist with serving or preparing the meal, please contact the church office. Thank you for your support of this ministry!

Can Care Collection

Keep saving those aluminum cans!

Save a can – Save the earth –

Save our youth budget!

Place your cans in a securely tied bag by the garage door. Keep those cans coming!

Who is my Neighbor? Opportunity

The Salvation Army of Morrison County is recruiting bell ringers for the Red Kettle Christmas Campaign which helps to support people in poverty who turn to the Army for assistance with needs. The campaign will take place at Little Falls WalMart and Coborn’s store on each Monday through Saturday through December 23. If you are available to volunteer as a bell ringer for one hour or more, or would like more information, please call Betsy at 320-360-0332.



God’s Work – Our Hands Thank you!

- ☞ Thank you to those who delivered meals to the homebound during the week of November 6.
- ☞ Thank you to those who provided items or worked at the Lutheran Care Center Fall Sale.
- ☞ Thank you to all who ordered a fresh balsam wreath! Your purchase supports youth ministry at First Lutheran.
- ☞ Thank you to all who volunteered to assist with the Lutefisk and Meatball Supper on December 5.
- ☞ Thank you to all who use their Thrivent Action Team Grant to do ministry!



Advent Craft Sale
Saturday, December 2
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. Thank you for your ongoing generous support!

Confirmation Ministries

Fourth Grade: Four-week class on Holy Baptism begins Wednesday, January 3 and meets each week thru January 24, at 7:00 p.m.

Seventh/Eighth Grade: Class resumes on Wednesday, January 3, at 7:00 p.m.

Mentor Program: Eighth Grade confirmands will be selecting a mentor to walk with them on their faith journey. First Lutheran members are encouraged to prayerfully consider how they can participate in the mentor program and if asked by a student to please say "Yes!"

God's Global Barnyard Project

The Sunday School children are participating in the God's Global Barnyard project of ELCA World Hunger. For families around the world, an animal can make a world of difference. Children are sharing their offerings and challenging one another to provide funds for the purchase of an animal. You can participate in this project too! Check the youth table in the gathering space for the ornament display and ways to support this global mission project. Thank you!

Sunday School Christmas Program
"Emmanuel: God with Us"
Sunday, December 17, 3:00 p.m.



Sunday School Christmas Program "Emmanuel: God with Us" is Sunday, December 17, beginning at 3:00 p.m. Families, guests and friends of all ages are invited to attend.

Sunday School children and leaders will rehearse the songs during the Sunday School hour. Watch for an additional rehearsal time. Volunteers are welcome to organize costumes and props and to help with direction. If you can assist with this wonderful annual event or for more info, contact or Diana Kempenich, 632-6667 or Becky Nelson, 749-2336.

Sunday Morning Education Ministry

Thank you to everyone who participated and led stations for the last rotation, "Isaiah: Fulfilling the Prophecy." It was exciting to see the activities, food and art projects.

A new rotation theme, "Christmas Around the World" begins Sunday, December 3. Through games, music, cooking and art children will wait and prepare to celebrate the birth of the promised Savior, Jesus.

Come for Sunday School at 9:35 a.m. All ages gather in Stoltz Hall for opening time. Preschool and Pre-kindergarten meet in the Ruth/Naomi Classroom in the education wing. TREK Rotation (K-5) meets in Stoltz Hall. Grades 6-8 meet in the Youth Room, Grades 9-12 meet in the Sarah Room with Diana Kempenich.

Parish Nurse News

Tracy Moe, RN Parish Nurse

The Gift of Health: The Greatest Gift

“So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. *Luke 2:16-19*

As we approach Christmas, we can celebrate and embrace the greatest gift that God has given us. In addition to remembering those gifts that God gives us, reflect on the gifts that you can give to your own body and to others during the season.

- ✳ What gifts can you give your body this holiday season?
- ✳ What healthy holiday memory can you make?
- ✳ How can you share a giving spirit with others this Christmas?
- ✳ What is the greatest gift you could give yourself?
- ✳ What is the greatest gift you could receive?

Lord, thank you for the gift of health that you have given us. Help us as we celebrate you in this season to celebrate the gifts that you give us each day. In your holy Name, Amen.

Reminder: The cold and flu season is a good time to do what we can to stay healthy and not spread illness to others. Worshippers share the peace of Christ with one another as a sign of the Christian community fellowship we share. For those who are experiencing respiratory or cold symptoms, please remember to sneeze into the crook of your elbow, wash your hands, and/or kindly consider refraining from handshaking. You are always welcome to use the hand sanitizer that you will find in locations around the church or consider carrying your own small bottle. Your prayers for others who are ill are appreciated. Thank you!

Getting to Know You

The Congregational Life Ministry Team hopes to share a regular edition of this column to help worshipers get to know one another. If you would like to be featured, please contact Cassie Neumann, 218-831-0554. Watch for another feature in February. This month we feature Paula Monahan. You may see Paula singing in the choir, prepping holy communion, reading scripture, and operating the media. Thanks, Paula!



Question: How long have you been a member at First Lutheran?

Response: Since 1976.

Question: Outside of your faith, what is most important to you?

Response: Family

Question: If you didn't have to sleep, what would you do with your extra time?

Response: See more of my seven grandchildren.

Question: What job would you be great at?

Response: I would love to be a music therapist.

Question: What song do you have completely memorized?

Response: “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty”

Question: What is your favorite thing about being a member at First Lutheran?

Response: I consider FLC my family.

Question: What is the most heart-warming thing you've ever seen?

Response: Birth of my children.

Question: What are the best things that happened to you last week?

Response: Visiting my 93-year-old dad and spending a weekend at Linden Hill on an annual quilting retreat.

Question: What place would you most like to go?

Response: I would like to go to India again.

Question: What is your favorite day starter?

Response: A cup of coffee and reading the paper with my husband.

"Children First" Christian Preschool

Greetings!

"Children First" Christian Preschool had a busy November. We began the month with a Fall Pumpkin Party! We learned about our Five Senses, Nutrition and Healthy Bodies/Food. What is your favorite food? Our field trip to Little Falls Health Care Services was a fun experience as we sang songs with the residents and learned about the violin from the volunteer musicians. We ended the month celebrating Thanksgiving! Be sure to visit our Gallery Hall (next to the church kitchen) to see our projects.

December activities will include Pajama Day, Music and Celebrating Christmas. We will take our field trip to visit and have Christmas fun with the residents at Little Falls Care Center. We are pleased to have the Early Childhood Class from Little Falls Community High School, visiting our classroom in December.

All are invited to celebrate with "Children First" at the Preschool's Christmas Program, "Christmas in our Jammies!" on Thursday, December 21, 10:45 a.m.-11:30 a.m. in the First Lutheran Church sanctuary. Preschoolers should wear their pajamas that day. We are looking forward to sharing Christmas joy with everyone!

Our last day of Preschool for 2017 is Thursday, December 21. We will enjoy a Christmas break while the staff prepares the classroom for the New Year. Classes resume Tuesday, January 2, 2018.

A reminder that all preschoolers age 33 months-Pre-Kindergarten are welcome to experience the fun, educational activities and the spiritual growth in God's love. "Children First" registers Preschoolers all year long. If you know of interested families, please encourage them to check us out. If families are interested in creating a three-day preschool week, consider enrolling in Friday Friends class. The class is an additional \$35.00 per month. A phone call or verbal "yes" registers you for this class.

Reminders that Campbells is no longer offering the Labels for Education Program and we have disbanded the collection of ink cartridges. We continue to offer the Coborn's/Cashwise More Rewards Program points. They are no longer shown on the Coborn's/Cashwise receipts but instead are part of the electronic More Rewards Program. Please sign up to be a More Rewards Member. Sign up online or with the Coborn's/Cashwise stores. Once a More Rewards member, sign into your account online and choose "Children First" Christian Preschool. "Children First" receives cash from the points collected as you shop.

God's Creation 2018 Calendars are available for purchase at \$10.00 each. Proceeds support the preschool.

Thank you to Thrivent and Thrivent members for Thrivent Action Team assistance. We appreciate the sharing/caring/serving ministry opportunities you provide our Preschoolers.

"Children First" Christian Preschool Advisory Team and Staff would like to thank everyone for their contributions of time, talent 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!

Gail Hittesdorf, Director



News of the Family



Jovie Anne Jahnke, daughter of Mat and Darci Jahnke was baptized on November 19. Welcome to the kingdom!



Items for the **January NEWSLETTER** are due on **December 20, 2017!**



**Church Office is closed on Monday,
Christmas Day, December 25.**

Annual Meeting—Sunday, January 28, 2018
Following the 10:30 a.m. service